

2011 Court Admin/Clerk to Board Best Practice Application

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NACRC 2011 BEST PRACTICES SUBMISSION

BUSINESS FILING AND REGISTRATION (BF&R) KIOSK

Background

The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) implemented a new Business Filing and Registration (BF&R) kiosk application in April 2011. This process was previously performed by incorporating the associated filings into a recording system which separated them from other County Clerk functions and the outdated mainframe system.

BF&R receives and processes approximately 175,000 Fictitious Business Name Statements per year. Pursuant to the Business and Profession Codes, the County Clerk is required to maintain and to provide accurate business information for the public.

The Problem

Before the BF&R Kiosk module was developed, the process of filing a Fictitious Business Name Statement (FBN) was done manually. This required extensive processing time. Although the system functioned properly, it had limitations on incorporating and expanding to a higher level of automation. Fictitious Business Name Statements were filed, inputted, indexed, and cashiered through several manual steps to properly track pertinent information.

The Department was in need of developing a system that could efficiently and effectively track and link incoming documents to monies collected from associated fees throughout the filing process. The system needed to be able to ensure that the RR/CC could meet legal filing requirements and timely track and identify expiration dates of businesses that are no longer operating.

Program Description and Objectives

The BF&R System provides efficiencies that reduce staff involvement and processing time, expedites the financial components, and eliminates the Indexing process. The BFR module includes a kiosk/web application that provides customers the ability to electronically submit their applications via a kiosk system module. Business requests that can be made through the kiosk station are listed below:

- Fictitious Business Name Statements (FBN)
- FBN Renewals
- Proof of Publication
- FBN Withdrawals
- FBN Abandonments

FBN Services (Renewal, Abandonment, or Withdrawal) are also automatically added to Joint Enterprise Development Interface (JEDI) document recording system as a linked document to the original FBN Document after filing.

The primary objective for developing the BF&R System was to automate and streamline processes surrounding filing a FBN. The internal development of the system also alleviates the prohibitive cost associated with building, maintaining and supporting a system that will accommodate the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerks volume and processes.

Project Implementation

System development began in the summer of 2008. During the first phase, the RR/CC's IT team developed system specifications, wrote the code, developed and proofed user screens with Recorder Bureau staff, resolved issues and produced user manuals. During the second phase which began in January 2011 Recorder and IT staff installed additional servers, new work stations, public kiosks, and computers to replace old cashiering stations. Additionally, further system reviews were conducted along with an extensive training program with testing procedures. The system was successfully implemented in April 2011.

Technology Required

- Multiple Application Servers communicating together over the internet and intranet using Microsoft .Net 3.5 Windows Communication Foundation Web Services
- Microsoft SQL 2005 database servers in a clustered configuration
- Fiber channel Storage Area Network (SAN) used in the central data center to ensure reliable access

- All database transactions are ACID and performed on servers separated from the application layer

To ensure efficient customer services, reduce costs and provide for the ability to reduce training needs, the decision was made to replace the mainframe-based system and create a new application within the framework of the existing property documents and vital records systems. Both of these systems shared common revenue subsystems and security. In addition, the look and feel and process models for both systems are similar. It was a natural choice to model the new Business Filings System after the previous systems which would also ensure accurate financial data integration.

Program Costs

The cost of the program was minimal as a result of utilizing in-house resources and tightly integrating the new system with the existing framework used for both property documents and vital records. Much of the security, imaging, database connectivity, and workflow code was re-used and applied to the new system. The project required the purchase of 20 Kodak ScanMate desktop scanners, 20 electronic signature pads, and six receipt printers. The total hardware cost for the solution was approximately \$15,000.

Program Success and Best Practice

The Business Filing and Registration System went live as scheduled in April 2011. To date, efficiencies have been gained by having the public type in the information into self-service kiosks. This allows for the customer to verify and correct their business information. In addition, the customer is able to walk away with a business filing document immediately after payment. The previous system required an extensive batch process, which would delay the customer from obtaining a copy of the filing for more than two weeks.

The new kiosk application enhances the Records Management System in the BF&R Section by providing a complete audit trail of each businesses operating status. Additionally, the filing process has been streamlined by shifting the Indexing component to our public and eliminates the function from our Indexing operators.

The up-front cost savings from internal development, system maintenance, and enhancements, also creates an ongoing savings. The new kiosk has the following benefits:

- Detailed tracking of all requests and storage of customer data and signatures
- Electronic routing of requests allowing for efficient use of staff time
- Use of the Internet or Kiosk-based application request modules rather than having to fill out lengthy paper applications