CASE STUDY

System-less In Seattle

INDUSTRY
Government

COUNTRY
USA

Access Sciences

In recent decades, the City of Seattle has experienced exponential growth. With more than 10,000 employees spread across 36 agencies, providing services to over 3,800,000 metro area residents is a daunting challenge that increasingly dependent on accurate, timely, and accessible information and records.

The City's deep commitment to Open Government adds another level of complexity. Any information, created by any employee, in any format, may be subject to public disclosure. Few of us outside of government have ever considered how difficult it might be to preserve and locate every bit of content that we create—from records that we know are important to casual communications that we may assume are trivial.

ISSUES

☑ Rapid digital disruption of established information processes

☑ High resource and monetary cost of public disclosure

☑ General difficultly locating daily information in a changing digital workplace

SERVICES DELIVERED:

- Business Case Development
- Change Management
- Contracting Process Support
- Current State Analysis
- Program Assessment and Roadmap
- Requirements Development
- RFP Development and Evaluation
- Software Market Capabilities Summary

The City of Seattle had decades of experience delivering this level of information management for paper records. But like most large metropolitan communities, the City and its residents had recently converted almost all their interactions to digital. Well-established paper processes provided no real guidance for how to deal with a rapid change that

generated dozens of different types and sources of electronic files.

Despite the digital disruption, the City had continued its reputation for timely and complete responses to public information requests. But timeliness and efficiency are two different things. With the rapid rate of change the City had no choice but to make enormous investments in people and manual processes to keep up. More than three dozen Public Disclosure Officers, along with their support staff, interacted with subject matter experts across all departments to identify and retrieve information on an "as needed" basis. It was labor intensive for the Public Disclosure resources and disruptive to the rest of the City's staff.

Recognizing these issues, the City issued an RFP for consulting services, and ultimately engaged Access Sciences to assess their electronic records management needs. The goal was to understand how the organization was dealing with the problem today, and to gain insight on a path forward that would improve the situation with new policies and software that the City might already own or acquire.

GENERATING LEADERSHIP BUY IN

Our team began by working with City executives to develop a high level view of the City's record management issues and to understand their vision for success. This important first step provided the principles that shaped and guided the project, and ensured that we were aligned with executive management on objectives and anticipated outcomes.

Armed with this strategic direction, we worked with the City to develop significant engagement across all departments. In order to ensure complete coverage of City agencies and functions, 72 interview/focus groups were facilitated with 292 employees. This level of analysis provided context that helped our team surface important requirements that proved instrumental.

The project team then reviewed the City's current records management policies, procedures, and processes, and compared these to industry standards to determine the maturity of the City's records management program. This helped the City understand whether there were foundational issues beyond the disruption created by the shift towards digital records.

SOLUTION

☑ Our team helped the City to develop strategy, requirements, increased stakeholder engagement with information governance, and a plan for moving forward with minimal risk.

RAPID ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW CONTENT

With all this information captured from almost 300 stakeholders, the next task was to transform the unstructured interview content into formal requirements that represented the City's needs. To eliminate what is normally a labor intensive (and expensive) manual process, the team used Access/IQ™, our auto-classification tool that quickly identifies patterns and connects interviews to actionable software requirements. Requirements were then prioritized to align with the City's strategic goals. The end result was more than a tool that could be used to evaluate software. Access/IQ provided an audit trail that would allow requirements to be tracked back to their source—a valuable link that is too often missing in large enterprise projects.

BENEFITS

☑ Buy in and support from City leadership

☑ Requirements that are customized to meet the unique needs of the City's 36 agencies

☑ Cost savings realized by reusing an existing software investment

To make formal requirements accessible to every stakeholder, Access Sciences provided a user-oriented description of each requirement so that potential vendors, City IT resources, the project team, and other stakeholders were equally aware of what the software is expected to do and why this is important. Combining the prioritized requirements list and our team's knowledge of electronic records solutions, we performed a gap analysis of existing City systems that were already used to store records and of other commercial electronic records products. Based on this analysis, we offered suggestions for a path forward that relied on in-house software for a low-risk pilot, and the establishment of an Information Governance Committee that could both judge the pilot outcomes and establish the path forward.

BRIGHT DAYS AHEAD

Access Sciences' prior experience with government agencies, knowledge of relevant technology, vendor-neutral approach, and domain expertise proved to be beneficial in progressing the City of Seattle's information agenda. The City was confident that the recommendations provided by Access Sciences were accurate and truly fit their needs.