City of Charles Sturt improves efficiency, services

Electronic records less costly to administer, more accessible to staff

(hp logo)

> "Our Information Management Services team register all correspondence sent to the City into TRIM. The integration of TRIM with our corporate applications empowers staff to provide a better service to our residents and ratepayers. Moving forward, our challenge is to leverage the implementation of TRIM to continually improve our service to our internal customers and, ultimately, our residents and ratepayers."
> —Peter Auhl, Manager of Information Services, City of Charles Sturt

HP customer case study: HP TRIM software allows a city council to achieve efficiencies and improve level of services to residents

Industry: Public sector

Objective:
Improve and streamline records management and access

Approach:
Implement electronic records management

Business Outcomes:
• Streamlined processes have reduced administrative overhead
• Faster processing of documents
• Processing invoices cut from hours to minutes
• Improved level of service to residents
• Easier to launch new services, processes

Like most municipalities, the City of Charles Sturt, located just west of Adelaide's CBD, once relied exclusively on paper-based records. But in today's environment of population growth and modern legal and regulatory requirements, paper no longer suffices. The City's Council, responsible for everything from waste management to planning and development to capital works and permits, was investigating ways to achieve improved service to their residents. Storing its records on paper meant identifying their location and exact contents was cumbersome. The records could not be audited efficiently, and their security could not be meaningfully ensured. And the City considered mechanisms to improve its ability to service customers, meet legal obligations and internal governance requirements.

The City knew it needed a software tool that would address these issues. As it considered its options, however, it also faced two other key constraints. One was technology-based: the City had recently upgraded its core line of business applications. Any new software solution would need to cost-effectively integrate with its new Windows®-based business environment.

The new system would also have to be accessible to the staff, which was accustomed to the City's existing paper- and e-mail-based processes.

Comprehensive records repository
The City of Charles Sturt found the solution it sought in HP TRIM software, a document and records management application.

The City assembled a team to implement the software, including designing new file management processes and training staff. Understanding the need to empower the business to embrace the technology was a key deliverable in the project lifecycle. The plan was to design new services internal customers would find easy to adopt.

Customer solution at a glance

The City's Information Services team first integrated the software with Microsoft® Office and other desktop applications so that every relevant document or e-mail created could be stored by TRIM. Next, the team integrated the tool with the City's other business applications, writing COM objects to deliver information from the records system to users in real time. The result: A comprehensive repository of records and documentation that can be accessed by users as soon as they sit down in front of an application.

Invoice processing times cut from hours to minutes

The City's Information Services team understood that for true business acceptance, a legislative approach to implementation would be faced with resistance. Leveraging the product to provide process improvement initiatives through workflow technology was a key factor in the project's success.

Today, the new TRIM-based workflows power a variety of different business processes, managing processes from inception to version control to closure and meeting a variety of compliance and reporting requirements.

In some cases, the City has used the software to improve existing, manual processes. Processing invoices, for example, used to take days under some circumstances; today the procedure can be completed in 15 minutes, even when high volumes of invoices come through the system at once.

In other cases, TRIM has enabled the Council to create new procedures. It has launched an application called PROOF, for instance, which allows its parking inspectors to use mobile technology to improve the dynamic information flow into the City's systems. The offences are logged into a corporate application, complete with the corresponding images in TRIM software. Accessing the case records is more streamlined as a result; most enquiries can be addressed in a single transaction.

The Council continues to consider how TRIM can assist the City's business. Recently appointed Manager of Information Services, Peter Auhl, says "whilst the implementation of TRIM has realized benefits to the City from a compliance viewpoint, there is potential to move the product to a more Service Oriented Architecture. Our challenge ahead is to leverage the implementation of TRIM to continually improve our service to our internal customers and ultimately, our residents."
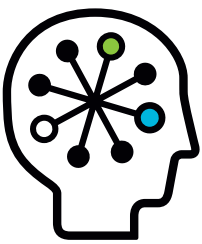
Efficiency gains 'are very real'

The new system is far more user-friendly and flexible than the old paper-based system. It has also allowed the City to reduce overhead. "Efficiency gains, particularly in internal process improvement, realized by TRIM are real," Auhl says. Whenever a document is generated by the City's business software for development applications, for instance, it is automatically registered into and managed by TRIM software. This process ensures the record is immediately accessible to the entire organization and removes the need for double handling—which reduces administrative costs.

In addition, the City's suppliers now leverage the TRIM Software Development Kit (SDK), delivering additional substantial cost savings in software development and staff training.

Empowered to do more for residents

TRIM has helped the Council make its services more sophisticated and consistent. Every document the City receives is imaged by records staff, for instance. "All correspondence sent to the Council is registered into TRIM by our Information Management Services team," Auhl notes. This helps improve the efficiency of the City's internal business processes and forms a foundation the City can build upon for future process enhancements.

As TRIM and its workflow features have become an integral part of the City's operations, staff can do their jobs more quickly and efficiently, improving services to residents. The improved access to records has also fundamentally changed the City's operations.

Technology for better business outcomes

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