



SUCCESS STORY FOR GOVERNMENT

Marion County

Marion County has partnered with BerkOne to launch a new electronic warrants system, built on Kofax Enterprise Software technology. By digitizing documents and automating submission, review and approval processes, the county can issue search warrants in minutes—helping law enforcement and judicial officers work more efficiently to maintain public safety.

Challenge

The Marion Superior Court is the busiest county court system in the state of Indiana. As part of its activities, the court processes more than 4,000 warrants every year, enabling law enforcement officers to gather important evidence and preserve public safety.

In many cases, warrants are required on a time-sensitive basis. For example, if an officer pulls over a motorist suspected of driving under the influence (DUI) and needs to conduct a blood test, there is a short window of time during which such a test can reliably be performed, as blood alcohol concentration diminishes with the passage of time—making it critical to obtain the necessary warrant quickly.

Amitav Thamba, Chief Technology Officer at Marion Superior Court, explained, “In the past, when an officer needed a warrant, he or she had to physically track down a judge who could review and grant the request. Most of the time, this involved travelling to our central Arrestee Processing Center (APC) to find a judge. If an officer was at the outer limits of the city, it could take almost half an hour to reach the APC, possibly even longer depending on traffic conditions. Then the officer still needed to find a judge, get the warrant signed and printed, and return to the scene to serve the document.”

“When you take into consideration the travel time and cost, and the impact of having an officer essentially off the beat performing an administrative task, it added up to a great deal of wasted time, effort and money,” added Pauline Beeson, Director of the Marion County Arrestee Processing Center.



The largest county in the state of Indiana, Marion County is home to more than 900,000 people. The Marion Superior Court has exclusive jurisdiction over all criminal cases filed in the county and is comprised of 36 elected judges, 29 commissioners and magistrates, as well as more than 750 administrative staff.

Products in Use:

- ◆ Kofax TotalAgility®
- ◆ Kofax Transformation™
- ◆ Kofax Import Connector™

Focus: Warrant processing

Partner: BerkOne

“We first started working with BerkOne and Kofax solutions about six years ago, and it is a partnership that has delivered consistently excellent results for Marion County.”

Amitav Thamba, Chief Technology Officer, Marion Superior Court

“We knew that there had to be a better way to manage search warrant processing—one that would free up our law enforcement and judicial officers to focus on more important duties.”

Solution

Marion County joined forces with BerkOne to develop an innovative electronic warrants system. Built on Kofax Enterprise Software, the system replaces paper files with digital documents and streamlines submission, review and authorization processes.

Thamba stated, “We first started working with BerkOne and Kofax solutions about six years ago, and it is a partnership that has delivered consistently excellent results.”

Beeson continued, “Several vendors presented offerings that weren’t closely tailored to our jurisdiction’s laws and processes, so we would have needed to perform considerable customization to use them effectively. But the Kofax solution proposed by BerkOne took our unique requirements into account and very closely matched our vision.”

Using the new system, law enforcement officers complete an electronic warrant form—containing a submission page and the warrant itself—and submit it via email from their vehicle’s computer. The email content and any attachments are sent to a dedicated inbox, then imported into a central repository.

The submission page is automatically separated from the warrant for privacy reasons. The system automatically extracts key information such as the submitting officer’s name, along with the date and time of the submission, before entering the item into a review queue. The warrant request is initially reviewed by a county clerk before being sent to a judge for approval.

Both clerks and judges are automatically notified via email when a new warrant is awaiting their review. If a submission in a clerk’s queue is not processed within 10 minutes of receipt, the clerk receives another email alert. Similarly, judges are given 25 minutes to review and approve or deny a warrant; once this time period has elapsed, the job is automatically assigned to a secondary judge, who is notified by email and given 10 minutes to complete the review.

The system also sends automatic updates to the submitting officer at various points in the process— notifying them when their submission has been received and when it has been added to a judge’s review queue.

If a judge requires additional information to process a warrant, he or she can follow up with the submitting officer

directly. Here, officers can fill out an updated submission form and submit it via email to a separate inbox dedicated solely to updates. Any new emails and attachments are automatically linked to the original submission, and the judge can complete the review using the new information.

Once a warrant has been granted, the system creates a final PDF document, comprising a cover page summarizing the submission details, submission form, the warrant itself and a return form. After serving a warrant, the officer must bring the return form to the APC to confirm that this step has been completed.

Marion County initially rolled out the new system to a small test group, and is currently working to make it available to the county’s entire police force—comprising approximately 1,400 law enforcement officers.

“Officers have seen how the system has made life so much easier for their colleagues, and have been clamoring to work with it,” noted Beeson. “We expect the wider launch to go smoothly; the solution is incredibly intuitive and we believe that new users will be able to get up to speed very quickly.”

“Kofax technology is helping us to shape a much more streamlined approach to warrant processing.”

Amitav Thamba, Chief Technology Officer, Marion Superior Court

Results

The new electronic warrants system is already delivering impressive results, and Marion County only expects these to multiply once the solution moves into full production.

“Existing users are reporting that it takes an average of 18 minutes to have a warrant approved and returned to them,” Thamba explained. “Faster turnaround times mean that officers can get on with their police duties.”

“Take, for instance, our DUI taskforce, which is working more effectively than ever. When an officer stops an individual suspected of driving while intoxicated, instead of potentially waiting hours for a search warrant, he or she can submit an electronic warrant request, then drive the suspect to a hospital. Usually, by the time that officer has reached the hospital, the warrant will have been approved and they can have the blood test performed without delay.”

In addition, the new system is making life much easier for everyone involved in the warrant process.

“Officers no longer have to drive around to track down a judge or wait around for a warrant to be granted. Going digital will also dramatically reduce the amount of paperwork that our clerks must process,” she explained.

“Similarly, our judges benefit from a better work-life balance. In the past, law enforcement officers would often converge at the APC to ask a certain judge to approve a warrant. Today, once a warrant request is entered into the system, it is randomly assigned to a judge on call. We’ve also distributed tablet devices to judges, so they can check warrants whenever they are on call. Not only has this resulted in a more predictable workload for judges, the more flexible way of working has allowed us to reduce the number of court personnel by ten people, reassigning them to other areas, as judges no longer have to be physically present at the APC around the clock.”

Marion County expects the new approach to significantly improve visibility and control of search warrant processing. At every step in the process, law enforcement officers will have clear insight into the status of a warrant, and judicial officers and clerks will be able to review and process documents more efficiently.

Thamba concluded, “Kofax technology is helping us to shape a much more streamlined approach to warrant processing. We are empowering law enforcement teams, clerical staff and judicial officers to work more quickly and conveniently than ever before, which allows us to fulfill our mission to provide effective and efficient justice for all.”

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