



DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT

Most organizations are continually looking for faster and more efficient ways to meet the needs of their customers. While businesses are typically motivated by profit, government agencies are motivated by the desire to better serve their constituencies. This is especially true for Law Enforcement, an institution under constant pressure to ensure public safety with increasingly limited resources.

THE SITUATION

The Detroit Police Department was looking for the most effective way to store and retrieve information gathered by their Crime Lab and Evidence Technician Units. After evidence is collected from a crime scene, these units are responsible for safely storing it for indefinite periods of time. In the event that the evidence becomes relevant to making an arrest or proving a case, the Police Department requires a system that ensures immediate and flawless retrieval capability. OnBase Document Imaging and OnBase Full Text Indexing, developed by Hyland Software, have made this possible.

Prior to adopting a client-server information management system, the Detroit PD was spending \$80,000 a year on paper and microfilm to store such evidential information as crime reports, sketches, and lab work. Yet even at this substantial expense, the time-consuming process of retrieving archived documentation was contributing to an increasing backlog of cases.

THE SOLUTION

2nd Deputy Chief Gloria Reynolds turned to G-A Computer Systems, an OnBase Solution Provider, to assist her in selecting and implementing a solution that would fit the department's specific organizational needs. A discussion of the department's specific needs generated a comprehensive list of requirements. That list included a client-server architecture, a Windows-based user interface, and compatibility with the department's Novell network system. As for the specific document management system, G-A recommended OnBase. "We told them that along with their other requirements they needed a secure system that offered cross-referencing and color capability," relates G-A principal Chuck Baffo. "Not everyone can offer that, but we knew that OnBase could."

The Detroit PD purchased OnBase Document Imaging, OnBase OCR/Full-Text Indexing, and enough OnBase Clients to accommodate 50 users. The installation, conversion, and configuration process was straightforward and the users learned to use the OnBase system quickly.

THE RESULT

Two locations at the Detroit Police Department are currently using the OnBase System. Documentation for crime scenes, sketches, blood and DNA sample information, and analytical work are now scanned into the system using three Fujitsu scanners. Both the Crime Lab and Forensic Units use Plasmon stand-alone optical disk drives and Optisys/Global Net disk management storage software.

OnBase has eliminated the need for microfilm and, according to Reynolds, the time-savings are immediately apparent. "We know that we are operating more efficiently," she says. "We no longer need to go through the time consuming process of checking and double checking our work like we did using the old method of storage and retrieval. With microfilm, we had rolls of film with thousands of pictures and we needed to know an exact case number in order to find any information. Now, when we need information, OnBase gives us several different ways to retrieve that information instantly."

The system was originally adopted so that Forensic Technicians, Firearms Examiners, and Crime Lab Technicians would be able to archive crime scene documents. However, the department has discovered in the years after its installation that OnBase has provided two unanticipated benefits. The first is that the system has been adopted by the Purchasing & Requisitions Unit, where it is used to store and cross-reference directives, purchase orders, and invoices. The utilization of OnBase in this way has helped to streamline the PD's purchasing process and also control expenditures.

The second unexpected use of OnBase is revealed during the course of investigations. With the OnBase Full Text Indexing Module, the Police Detectives are now able to link together cases based on similarities, such as the type of crime or street name. This capability is used as a tool to uncover new leads and has actually accelerated the progress of many investigations.