

Case Study: Town of Paradise

Local government digital transformation initiative enables a digital work environment to improve employee experience and public services

About our customer

The Town of Paradise is a municipality located in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador near the capital city of St. John's. Currently serving its population of about 23,000 residents, the town continues to grow and meet the expectations of an increasingly younger generation of residents, through modernization efforts. In 2015, the town implemented Laserfiche technology — a robust, electronic content management (ECM) solution — to help drive efficiency and a more frictionless experience for residents. Today, the town continues to evolve by automating processes and solving new business challenges.



Challenge

- Slow, manual processes using paper-based documents
- High storage costs for documents
- Needed a secured solution to digitize content for residents, law enforcement, actions reporting, building inspections, correspondence, and accounts payable

The Town of Paradise manually processed all documents, forms, invoices and records, which resulted in slow turnaround times for responses, actions and payments — and presented a challenge for document storage. The town began searching for a local government digital transformation solution to digitize content and core processes (especially for records management), minimize storage costs, and facilitate better, faster service to citizens. In their research for a solution, they found out their neighboring municipalities were using Laserfiche through Ricoh, and they reached out for guidance and implementation of a new solution.

Solution

- Selected Laserfiche to improve business process automation, document management and electronic forms
- Created over 30 automated workflows
- Scanned over 400,000 files to save physical space and costs

Laserfiche was initially implemented to manage the filing of civic documents and to develop workflows and forms for processes such as accounts payable, building inspections and correspondence management.

The town, with Ricoh's help, has already digitized well over 400,000 files, establishing efficient scanning initiatives to continue supporting its digitization initiative. The physical space saved from document storage has allowed the town to hire more employees, which has subsequently expanded the scope and reach of services provided by a growing team. As the town grew, Ricoh ensured appropriate server and firewall settings were in place and Laserfiche was functioning properly for use internally and externally in the field.

With Laserfiche in place, the Town of Paradise identified four main areas where digitization and automation would make a large impact due to a high volume of inbound documents: law enforcement issues and actions reporting; building inspections; accounting; and mail. The town wanted to streamline data capture, centralize content management and better track information as it moved through the organization.

Better enforcement

The issues and actions reporting process is used by the town's municipal enforcement officers (MEOs) when investigating public and private property and municipally licensed and permitted premises to ensure compliance with acts, bylaws and regulations. While the process was digital, it didn't work well because MEOs couldn't update information from the field because it was hosted on an external database. Rather, MEOs had to travel back and forth between project sites and the main office to submit forms and build reports.

To address the most pertinent document access issues for MEOs, the town developed a new form using Laserfiche, which enabled MEOs to use tablets in the field to provide live updates, which are recorded in the Laserfiche repository, eliminating the need for the external database. During the pilot run of using the form, eliminating the external database saved \$2,500 and decreased processing time by 37%.

The town also leverages the collected metadata for a high-level view of action history, open tasks and other metrics. This serves as an efficient way to delegate tasks digitally between management and employees while also improving and accelerating responsiveness to issues and action requests.

“Our AP team can now easily track where invoices are within the approval process and, as a result, can process payment for invoices in a more timely and efficient manner.”

— Cathy Broydell, Manager of Finance, Town of Paradise

Improved building inspections

Next, building inspection forms were updated, making the process more transparent and eliminating paper forms. The Town of Paradise benefits from improved reporting standards and tracking initiated by digital forms, which now enable employees to upload pictures, automate emails to stakeholders, and support legal compliance by providing a clear, digital record of actions taken by employees on each project. With inspections centralized in one location and accessible with a click of a button, inspectors can easily input notes and take pictures if required.

“Laserfiche Forms has been a great tool for building inspections,” said Dawn Doody, Administrative Assistant at the Town of Paradise. “It saves time and is more efficient and user-friendly for the whole department.”

Automation offers business continuity

Workflows through Laserfiche assisted in automating accounts payable (AP) processes. During the pandemic, this workflow was vital to the on-time delivery of invoices and payments to vendors as employees transitioned to hybrid and remote roles. It also allowed the accounting division to better monitor outstanding items.

“To say the workflow functionality has improved our overall AP process is an understatement,” said Cathy Broydell, Manager of Finance at the Town of Paradise. “The development of an AP workflow has allowed invoices to electronically move through the approval process seamlessly and has improved collaboration among every employee who is involved with the AP process. Our AP team can now easily track invoices throughout the approval process and pay invoices in a more timely and efficient manner.”

Similarly, new workflows were created for correspondence that routes scanned mail to the appropriate department or user without in-person interaction.



Results

- Increased efficiency in back-office tasks by 30%
- Eliminating the external database reduced processing time by 37%
- Building inspections are more efficient, have fewer errors and are user-friendly
- Automated workflows provide business continuity

Overall, the Laserfiche initiative contributed to optimizing costs, reducing processing times for key services and improving responsiveness to residents. Since deploying Laserfiche Forms in 2020, the town has worked to improve the user experience and quality of form submissions so that management can develop a better understanding of both employee and resident needs.

Reporting standards and tracking processes initiated by digital forms have enabled employees to upload images, automate emails and support legal compliance with a digital footprint for each project.

“If we had entered into the pandemic with thousands of undigitized physical files in our office, we would have faced more significant challenges in business continuity,” recalled Elizabeth Piercey, Manager of Purchasing and Risk Management. “As staff worked remotely, Laserfiche provided a way for us to access crucial information in a centralized location at our fingertips. This enabled us to respond to residents more efficiently during a stressful period.”

The Town of Paradise now has 30 active workflows across departments, which has resulted in a more comprehensive and functional digital work environment and future business continuity.

The combined initiatives have provided employees with confidence in their own digital transformation efforts, and the town is working to identify more areas to automate using Laserfiche.

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