



Background

Monumental Process Servers, Inc. is a process serving company (i.e. provider of legal notices such as summonses) serving Maryland and Washington, DC. Clients include law firms, government agencies, and out-of-state process servers requiring a local presence. With more than 800 clients, serving 11,900 notices per year, their data management needs are significant. Simply put, they must ensure that each document is served to the appropriate person at the required time. Mistakes have far-reaching consequences for the company, the client, and the person being served.

Problems

MPS was using a custom database application written in a DOS version of Delphi, a high-level programming language, to manage its cases and billing. The company was using a Netware network with Windows 95 workstations. MPS was concerned that: 1) the author of the custom application was no longer supporting it; 2) the files were not being backed up; 3) the DOS application could not be modified to meet the changing business needs; and 4) the system lacked the user-friendly capabilities needed for day-to-day operation by the staff.

Solutions

Programmers at The Data Tamer implemented solutions in a phased approach to minimize disruption of daily operations and accommodate the available budget.

First, we set up automated nightly backups, (first onsite, and later offsite) of the database and all other data on the network server.

Next, we migrated the Delphi database and application into the more familiar Microsoft Access, maintaining the basic structure and features. At the same time, MPS replaced Netware with a Microsoft Windows network.

The Delphi application allowed users to create and store templates for its various documents, such as affidavits and letters, but the only way to output the documents was to print them. They consisted of simple DOS plain text with no formatting features. So we set up the ability to create Microsoft Word boilerplates in the Access application to produce fully editable Word documents, which could be outputted to various other applications and stored electronically.

Following these initial improvements, MPS we incorporated the ability for the Access application to automatically produce and send emails to the stored list of clients using Microsoft Outlook. Now, with minimal staff involvement, clients routinely receive notifications by email or fax of completed services, as well as their account balances.

With the MPS employees now operating more efficiently and using well-known Microsoft Office applications, we implemented the next improvement by creating a web application to give MPS' clients online access to information about their cases.

Based partly on The Data Tamer's improvements, MPS has increased its client base and work volume, and is actively growing. With each growth spurt, incremental improvements further streamline the data-management functions to support the current operations and facilitate future growth.

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