Putting Boulder City on Easy Street

Document management's no crapshoot for Nevada's biggest small town.

Compared to other cities in Nevada, Boulder City is something of an anomaly. Unlike nearby Las Vegas and the rest of Henderson County, BC is relatively quaint, with a population of just 15,000. "We're close to Las Vegas, we're close to the Hoover Dam, but we're surrounded by 200 miles of land. It's like a buffer around us," explains City Clerk Pamella Malmstrom. "Clark County has been one the fastest growing counties in the country. We've taken steps to not grow so rapidly,"

But even as modest Boulder City seems buffered from the noisy neon of its neighbors, it still faced the same information management concerns as every other city in the state. Especially since late 2007, when the state legislature passed a resolution mandating that all government agencies in Nevada be able to honor requests for public records within five working days. Boulder City gets more than its share of requests for its public records. It's a relatively new city—it turns 50 next year—and many of its original citizens still live there. That makes for a very active citizenry.

"Sometimes it's a very hot political climate—voter turnout can be as high as 80%," explains Malmstrom. "The community is so hands-on. We get so many requests for records. Some citizens would call everyday. We wanted something to simplify all their requests for records."

When BC first implemented Laserfiche a decade ago, the town's reasons for needing an electronic document management system were as simple as they were familiar. "By 1999, everything was in disarray," remembers Records Clerk Teena Pickens. "Our filing cabinets were made of cardboard. It was a disaster."

Malmstrom's predecessor Vicki Mayes (now BC's City Manager) looked to the neighboring city of Henderson, which had also been researching document management solutions. Mayes researched other systems, but in July 2001, chose Laserfiche based on two simple factors: "Because of the cost and it fit our needs," relays Pickens. The age of the cardboard filing cabinet drew to a close and a new era began.

Boulder City implemented its new system, wisely, in phases. "We started in-house, so it was easier for us," Pickens remembers. "The permanent records were the first. We started with resolutions. As far as setting up folders, I thought about how it was going to be easiest for people other than myself to find what they were looking for. We set up a 'Resolutions' folder, then the different committees—'Planning,' 'Redevelopment,' etc. Then by years." "It was a lot of trial and error," Malmstrom admits.

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Boulder City's Best Practices At-A-Glance

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the system. People in general can be resistant to change. It's a learning process," she admits. "The more department heads see the benefits, the more departments come on board," she says proudly. "The whole city's using WebLink now—the police, personnel—everybody." Says Malmstrom, "Once people get the hang of it, Laserfiche is easier to use than Windows. It just takes a while to adjust."

Boulder City may be a small town, but it covers a large area, including the El Dorado Valley, home to the city's "Energy Zone," which is devoted to developing solar power—and where development is closely watched by the public. "People are very interested in anything that happens and they want to be able to research it," says Pickens.

"The BC Landfill is another hot topic," adds Malmstrom. "That's an understatement," Pickens laughs. "We had people who wanted to see land sales," adds Deputy City Clerk Lorene Crum. "We had enough calls from citizens where it made sense to make them available." BC had been using their WebLink plug-in internally since 2001, but by 2006, the addition of a security firewall allowed access to the public. But with public access came the need to file Boulder City's land sales to make them, well, more accessible. Explains Krumm, "We came up with a system where the agreements were apart from resolutions and ordinances."

Citizen buy-in has been near-unanimous. "The concerns and complaints have been few," Krumm says. "If you know what you're looking for you can find it in the folder structure." But, she says, that's only because a lot of care went into setting up those folders. "You have to think about how you want to set-up folder structures. If you don't make it easy, you're going to get more calls," warns Krumm.

One thing's for sure, fulfilling requests is easier. "When we have a request for a contract in the energy zone, you can be on the phone attaching it to an e-mail and sending it—as opposed to getting up walking down the hall, finding the file, going through 150 pages, locating the pages, copying them and then sending them out."

The most recent addition to the Boulder City Laserfiche family has also been the most resource-saving: Agenda Manager. "I'd been asking for Agenda Manager for years," Malmstrom sighs. When a 2005 primary election budget wound up unspent, Malmstrom requested the funds go to purchasing Agenda Manager. The results in her office were instantaneous. "Instead of printing out 23 500-page packets, people just look up agenda packets online," she says. "It just condenses paper and time."

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The rest of the city has followed suit, slowly but surely. "It takes a while to adjust to change, but once you get used to [using Agenda Manager], it makes everything much easier, especially if there are a lot of last-minute changes," offers Pickens. "I can't even imagine what we'd do without it." Next up for Boulder City is the introduction of Quick Fields as part of its latest acquisition—Laserfiche Records Management Edition, due early next year. "We're continuing to evolve," says Malmstrom.

One thing that hasn't changed, however, is one of the things makes Boulder City truly unique among the state's neon-cityscapes: "We're the only city in Nevada that doesn't have gambling," she explains. But doesn't mean Boulder City doesn't know how to have a good time. "We're actually small enough that we can still shut down the streets for community events," offers Malmstrom. It sounds so idyllic, you imagine someone could be passing out milk and cookies at these community events. "More like beer and margaritas," she laughs.

About Laserfiche

A resource for more than 25,000 public- and private-sector organizations around the world since 1987, Laserfiche creates simple, elegant document management solutions that help organizations run smarter. From streamlining digital records management to automating the agenda process, Laserfiche helps improve efficiency while integrating easily within any environment.

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3545 Long Beach Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90807 USA

(800) 985-8533 tel   www.laserfiche.com
(562) 988-1886 fax   info@laserfiche.com