WebLink Wonderland

Mountains are for snow, not paper, in Vail, CO

When you think of Vail, you think of a winter wonderland of world-class skiing by day and cozy, snowed-in evenings in front of a roaring fire by night. So do the wealth of seasonal visitors and second homeowners that make their way to the outdoor recreation destination in numbers that can quadruple the town's modest population of 5,000 residents. "Vail's a small town with a huge national and international visitor population which can grow to over 20,000 at times," says Michael Wolfe, the Town's records manager.

As these seasonal influxes fueled Vail's local economy and luxury real estate market, they also highlighted a need for the town to address the resulting challenges to its infrastructure. By 2007, town administrators looked for ways to lessen municipal government's footprint on the mountain community. An idea from years prior had by now developed into a need: conducting government with less paper. "We were at the point where we had so much paper, it was either build a warehouse or go electronic," Wolfe explains. "Vail real estate is so expensive; you really can't build a warehouse in the valley."

When Wolfe joined the town in April 2007, he was encouraged that its records manager position was an IT one. "Business technology and information management are enough of a priority that the Content Manager is part of the IT group. It seemed logical given our overall goals for greater reliance on automated tools and the establishment of an electronic records management system," he explains. "So often, when IT takes on the task without adequate content management, the result is an electronic black hole that corresponds to the former paper black hole."

With technical support for the idea, Wolfe began to develop staff support as well. "Each department had one or two people who dealt with records and were interested in making some changes. I worked with them to look at applications." After a needs assessment and departmental demonstrations by Laserfiche reseller Jen Harris of Peak Performance Imaging Solutions, Wolfe and the record custodians chose Laserfiche.

In addition to the great support from Peak Performance, he cites both ease of use and flexibility of administration as deciding factors.

"Laserfiche is an application easily managed by someone in a non-IT position. The security and other administrative elements of the application are easy to administer," Wolfe explains. "We could provide tight security to anything we didn't want disclosed, such as social security numbers and other PII, as well as broad access to other town departments and eventually, to the public."

In July 2007, implementation began with the scanning of clerk's records and the conversion of Human Resources PDF images from a legacy imaging system to TIFF files, which Wolfe notes "made it a lot easier to search and a lot easier to add pages to later."

With his strong background in nuclear and legal records management, Wolfe made it a point to establish quality guidelines and procedures for storing content in the new system. "In Colorado you can replace paper with electronic records if you follow certain guidelines. The

Organization Profile

The Town of Vail, CO, is famous for having the second largest single ski mountain in North America.

Situation

While seasonal population influxes fueled Vail's local economy and luxury real estate market, they also hightlighted a need for the town to address the resulting challenges to its infrastructure.

Solution

Vail chose Laserfiche due to its ease of use and administration. Since implementing Laserfiche in April 2007, Vail already has 105 users in a dozen departments.

Benefits

- The Town has been able to destroy 664 boxes of records (364 boxes of backfiles scanned and 300 boxes of duplicates and records beyond retention destroyed). In the recovered space are new offices.

- Human Resources and Risk Management are completely paperless.

- The Clerk's office uses Laserfiche to publish municipal agendas and town council minutes.

- Community Development, Legal, Public Works, Fleet Management, the Fire Department and Finance staff all use Laserfiche in various capacities.

- The Town's Special Events Coordinator posts event permits on WebLink so officers can review them right in their vehicles.

Laserfiche®

Colorado Municipal Retention Schedules were developed for the paper environment, but they apply regardless of media. Vail had actually done a pretty good job of managing paper records in accordance with municipal retention schedules, so our job was really just taking the right next steps to better management in an electronic environment."

Wolfe set up the Laserfiche Records Management Module using retention schedule numbers mirrored in the e-folder structure. "The records management structure reflects the retention requirements, while the document management side mirrors the Town's organizational structure and the paper world," he says. "So it's easy to check the records management folders, click on the Record Series Properties and update retention information as the State schedules are updated."

By April 2008, several other departments began their respective pushes to reduce paper volumes. The progress was steady and growing. "We have 105 users in about a dozen departments," he says. Now, Human Resources and Risk Management are completely paperless, the Clerk's office uses Laserfiche to publish municipal agendas and town council minutes, while Community Development, Legal, Public Works, Fleet Management, the Fire Department and Finance staff have all been accessing the system in various capacities.

For their next step, departments are eyeing various ways to automate how information is gathered, updated and, most importantly, used. "We want to exchange more information between applications we're already using and Laserfiche," Wolfe says.

That's not to say there hasn't been some very real tangible progress already. "We've been trying to build up our volume of records to make the system more powerful and useful – like it is to HR already," Wolfe says. "We have over 42,000 documents, which consist of 1.7 million TIFF files weighing in at 189 GB and 12,300 electronic documents which include PDFs and Microsoft Office documents totaling 114 GB in Laserfiche at this time," he adds.

"From a paper management perspective, we've been able to destroy 664 boxes of records. We scanned 364 boxes of backfiles and got rid of 300 boxes of duplicates and records beyond retention. We even built out a couple of offices from the saved space."

The real benefits of Laserfiche, he's found, are the ongoing ones. "The most savings come from recovering staff time. For example, Open Records Requests that used to take two weeks and many photocopies to fill can now be addressed in minutes by looking up the information in Laserfiche and posting the response via WebLink or sending an e-mail."

This has done more than make existing staff more efficient, Wolfe says, it's actually lessened government's footprint in the townspeople's eyes.

"Laserfiche helps us create a situation where we're not growing staff and, over time, the existing staff will be able to do more because they have better tools. You're touching on goals the community has – even finding parking for municipal employees can become an issue.

"The broader community is very diversified with second home owners from all over the world, so that's the next step. The longer term goal is to get information out there and available on the Town website for residents," he adds.

But even now, the system serves the informational needs for life safety officers regarding locations and traffic re-direction during seasonal celebrations. "Our Special Events Coordinator can post event permits which include street closures and barricades on WebLink," Wolfe explains. "Officers used to have to paw through files to get the right wad of paper. Now our naming convention is by day and event, so officers can just call up the information via the Town's Wi-Fi network and review the actual permit right in their vehicle."

Usefulness to law enforcement is also driving Vail's next project: bringing the Eagle County Sheriff's Office onboard to store case photos in Laserfiche with an integration into its Intergraph public safety system. "We just purchased an additional repository and the Laserfiche Software Development Kit (SDK)," Vail IT Director Ron Braden says. "Once we beta the Sheriff's Office, we will bring all our law enforcement agencies on board."

About Laserfiche

A resource for more than 27,000 public- and private-sector organizations around the world since 1987, Laserfiche creates simple, elegant enterprise content 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.

Your Next Step

Visit **laserfiche.com/gov** to get a free white paper on implementing an electronic document management system. Or call **(800) 985-8533** to get answers now.

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