

ELECTRONIC RETURN RECEIPT™ AN INSTANT WINNER AT FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT

Over \$100,000 annualized savings using Neopost's PrintMachine with eCertified Mail™/Electronic Return Receipt™

As with most government agencies, the operating budget of Franklin County Municipal Court in Columbus, Ohio, is stretched paper thin. Within its criminal traffic division alone, 12 staff positions remain unfilled, with little relief in sight. With that in mind, the Clerk of the Franklin County Municipal Court, Lori M. Tyack, believes that any innovation that promises to reduce operating costs and improves efficiencies must be considered. Clerk Tyack found that the Neopost "PrintMachine" software with its electronic return receipt capability could potentially create a significant time savings for staff and a cost savings to the City of Columbus as well.

Roy Ball, former Director of Operations for the Court Clerk's office, said, "The Electronic Return Receipt™ from the United States Postal Service® for Certified Mail® had the earmarks of a winner. We were paying \$2.30 per piece for Certified Mail® and our annual volume is about 80,000 pieces. By adopting the process of receiving only the electronic notification, you save \$1.20 per piece of mail. Given our volume, that equates to well over \$90,000 a year in savings. To put it in staff terms, that equals two additional staff personnel."

END-TO-END SOLUTION

In 2009, Ball and his colleagues at the Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk's Office began investigating various approaches to electronically integrate Certified Mail™ with Electronic Return Receipt™ from USPS®. Early in 2010, Clerk Tyack invited four vendors to submit proposals for a software solution that could work with the Court's case management system from CourtView Justice Solutions Inc.

They selected Neopost's PrintMachine software solution with integrated eCertified Mail™ and Electronic Return Receipt™ capabilities. Ball said, "Neopost gave us an end-to-end solution that worked well with our existing court case management system, and PrintMachine's open architecture also gives us the flexibility to integrate with other systems as our applications evolve."

Neopost completed a thorough survey of the procedures used to handle a daily volume of about 200 certified mailings and the subsequent logging and filing of receipts at the Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk's Office. It was a very labor intensive, manual process that involved five people and culminated in morning and afternoon trips to Columbus City Hall's mailroom, where substantial fees were incurred for metering and mailing. The study identified numerous opportunities for fee reductions along with materials and labor savings that ultimately led to decreases in the annual cost of Certified Mail® at the Franklin County Municipal Court by more than \$100,000 annually.



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The Clerk selected the PrintMachine solution in May and installation took place during the first week of June. This required just one meeting with the Clerk's technical team and Neopost. Configuring the system did not take long. The technical team used sample documents to configure the system on where to put the address and barcode on the mail documents.

Neopost also worked with the USPS® to secure necessary approvals and resolve integration issues before putting the system into the production environment. A key component to finalizing the installation included training of the Franklin County Municipal Court staff. For the remainder of the month, PrintMachine was used on a pilot basis while the technical team put it through its own regression and unit testing procedures.

Ball said, "The level of support we received during installation, and continue to get, is exceptional. Before I started working here, I spent seven years as a systems analyst for two software vendors. I only wish that some of my projects would have been that successful."

HOW IT WORKS

"The way PrintMachine works is quite ingenious because it did not require us to change any of our procedures," said Ball. "We tell CourtView to print the same piece of paper it always printed. This information is captured by a virtual printer in PrintMachine which, in turn, drives our existing printer to generate a different format complete with barcode and mailing address correctly positioned for a window envelope."

The Clerk also installed a Neopost DS-80 folder/inserter, which eliminates some, but not all, folding and envelope stuffing labor. Since several different locations generate documents that must accompany a given mailing, some manual labor still exists.

Now, instead of driving mail to the City of Columbus, it is picked up by the USPS®. After pick up, the USPS® scans the barcode at various stages of the delivery process to electronically account for postal fees, receipt confirmation, and mail piece tracking. The system has also been configured to download and store receipt confirmations as PDF files. This eliminates a substantial amount of keyboard entry and manual filing.

INSTANT SUCCESS

The new system was well received from the very beginning. "The entire change was about 90% transparent to our end users," said Ball. "The only thing that they noticed was that the cover sheet now had a barcode on it and that we are using different envelopes. That gave everyone, judges, attorneys and Court staff, a lot of confidence."

"What's great about the PrintMachine solution is that the savings are virtually immediate. That's pretty rare nowadays, especially when you start talking about technology. We did have initial outlays, licensing fees and so forth, for the software. But our monthly costs are right around \$2,300 and we are saving about \$6,600 per month, based on a \$1.20 per piece reduction in postal fees. So that is a real time savings of \$4,300 per month," he continued.

He said that the Franklin County Municipal Court would also realize an additional annual savings of about \$18,000 due to the purchase of window envelopes instead of the multi-part mail form incorporating the traditional "green card." There were also significant labor savings which allowed the Clerk to reallocate staff to other tasks.



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MORALE BOOSTER

The value of the increased productivity has not been lost on staff members, however. The same head count now completes more work. "That has boosted morale by taking a little bit of the pressure off our hard-working team. So while the people equivalent of the hard savings we have realized is two, it really seems like four," Ball concluded.

Clerk Tyack expects to realize other savings down the line by integrating PrintMachine with other systems. The Accounting/Finance Department, and the Civil Division for example, have applications that could generate savings with this technology.

Inquiries about the solution are also coming in from other courts in Ohio and beyond. Legitimate opportunities to instantly reduce operating costs are few and far between these days. Court system personnel who hear about Franklin County Municipal Court's eCertified Mail™ and Electronic Return Receipt™ success are very eager to find out if it's something that can be implemented in their jurisdictions.

AWARD WINNING PROGRAM

This program was recognized by the City of Columbus for its "outstanding and innovative improvement in the work environment." The program received the Mayor's "GOLD AWARD" for significantly improving efficiency and effectiveness of City operations.

ABOUT FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT



In 1916, the General Assembly of the State of Ohio created the Columbus Municipal Court. On July 5, 1955, the Columbus Municipal Court received countywide jurisdiction and, in 1968, the State Legislature changed the name of the court to the Franklin County Municipal Court. The court has two judicial divisions. The General Division operates with fourteen judges and six magistrates, and the Environmental Division has one judge. In 1979, the court moved from its facilities in City Hall to the Franklin County Municipal Court building, located at 375 South High Street in Columbus, Ohio.

ABOUT NEOPOST USA

Neopost USA Inc., headquartered in Milford, Connecticut, is the American operating company of Neopost S.A. based in France. With its two flagship brands of Neopost and Hasler, Neopost USA partners with its customers to help them achieve higher levels of efficiency, control and value in their mailing operations. Neopost USA is known for its broad line of mailing and shipping systems and mail support equipment, such as mailing machines, postage meters, folder/insetters, address printers, tabbers, mail sorting and tracking systems and mail center management tools. Its equipment and systems are supported by a combination of direct sales and a network of independent dealers providing sales, supplies and service to their customers.

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