

Case Study

Government



Marion County Prevents Identity Theft With the Help of Kofax Ascent and VRS Technology

Overview

The Marion County Clerk of the Circuit Court in Ocala, Fla. maintains all county court files and records, ranging from mortgages and deeds to court judgments and traffic tickets. Recently, the agency implemented an automated redaction solution designed to remove such sensitive information as Social Security numbers, bank account numbers, and credit and debit card numbers from public records. Using the Kofax Ascent platform and Kofax VRS (VirtualReScan) technology, the Marion County Clerk of the Circuit Court was able to leverage the capabilities of redaction software developed by Kofax Certified Solution Provider Computing System Innovations (CSI) and comply with a Florida privacy mandate in less than seven weeks.

The Challenge

Under Florida's current public records law, citizens are responsible for requesting that their private information be removed (or redacted) from public documents to minimize the potential for identity theft. But as of January 1, 2007, such responsibility will no longer rest on individuals' shoulders. Rather, after this date, clerks of the court must automatically redact Social Security numbers and similar data from public records upon receipt, thereby ensuring that all sensitive information is kept confidential in line with Florida's open-record laws.

“Ascent played a major role in enabling the Marion County Clerk's office to process such a large volume of documents in a short period of time, as well as to achieve compliance with the mandate ahead of schedule and before any other counties could do so.”

To comply with the mandate, the Marion County Clerk decided to begin redacting data from existing documents long before the 2007 deadline. At the time, the county already had more than 7 million official records dating back to 1965 that were electronically stored in an image archive solution developed by NewVisions Systems Corp. “We decided that implementing a software solution would be the best way to handle the redaction process,” says Jack Suess, chief deputy clerk of administrative services for the Marion County Clerk of the Circuit Court. The clerk's office chose IntelliDact, a redaction solution developed by system integrator CSI, but the agency still needed an efficient means of extracting information from documents and delivering it to the redaction application. It also required a solution to enhance the quality of images scanned from documents.

The Solution

Only Kofax' Ascent Platform and Kofax VRS technology were considered as potential complements to IntelliDact. “The experts at CSI told us that for maximum efficiency, we had to have a solution that would execute information capture, processing and delivery alike,” Suess explains. “Ascent was the only application with this essential capability.”

The decision to address image enhancement by deploying Kofax VRS proved equally easy to make. “In order to properly complete redaction, you need the best possible digital image,” Suess notes. “However, many paper records are hard to read because they are old



KOFAX[®]
A DICOM GROUP COMPANY



and deteriorating, are printed on colored paper, or are carbon copies of original documents, such as traffic tickets for example.

As we learned from CSI, only Kofax VRS gets around these obstacles by making scanning more efficient and enhances the quality of scanned images.” With the solution, paper documents are scanned, then automatically sharpened, cleaned, and perfected by Kofax VRS before Ascent collects and delivers them to IntelliDact. IntelliDact uses unstructured data recognition technology to search documents for sensitive information and automatically slate it for redaction. The process is based on business rules provided by the Marion County Clerk’s office. For instance, the business rules may prompt the software to search for keywords such as “Social Security Number” or “SSN,” then look to the left, right, above, or below to locate that number and mark it for redaction.

“Kofax VRS was equally instrumental in paving the way for success: It helped the agency to achieve a 99.7% redaction accuracy rating from its redaction solution. No matter how good a data recognition technology is, it will fail if the information on the front end is unreadable; as the old saying goes, garbage in, garbage out.”

Results

Once all beta tests of the system were complete, CSI copied the Marion County Clerk’s entire database onto independent servers and began the redaction process on all 7 million records in its back file of images. The job took just six weeks and four days, making Marion County the first county in Florida to successfully comply with the redaction mandate.

Ascent played a major role in enabling the Marion County Clerk’s office to process such a large volume of documents in a short period of time, as well as to achieve compliance with the mandate ahead of schedule and before any other counties could do so. “Without the seamless collection, transformation and delivery of critical information to IntelliDact provided by the Kofax technology, it would have been difficult to move documents through so quickly,” says Suess.

“While our statistics indicated only 8% to 10% of our records would actually contain information that would require redaction, we had no way of knowing which documents they would be, so we had no choice but to evaluate every document for possible redaction.”

Suess adds that Kofax VRS was equally instrumental in paving the way for success: It helped the agency to achieve a 99.7% redaction accuracy rating from its redaction solution. “No matter how good a data recognition technology is, it will fail if the information on the front end is unreadable; as the old saying goes, ‘garbage in, garbage out,’” he observes.

By delivering unmatched image quality, Kofax VRS made it easier for the redaction software to look for and accurately identify sensitive information. These capabilities also saved time by reducing the need to rescan documents, as well as by eliminating such document preparation tasks as orienting pages in the same direction before scanning and permitting users to scan black-and-white and color documents in one batch rather than two separate ones.

Both Kofax Ascent and Kofax VRS technology continue to be an integral part of the Marion County Clerk’s redaction solution. New records are now redacted as they are scanned and hard, unredacted copies of all documents are maintained in the files for those citizens that require them. “The delivery to IntelliDact by Ascent, and the ability of Kofax VRS to facilitate accurate optical character recognition for records that contain sensitive information, mean compliance with the mandate is a no-brainer for us,” Suess concluded.

For more detailed product information, visit us at: www.kofax.com, or call us today at: (949) 727-1733.



Kofax Image Products, Inc.
16245 Laguna Canyon Rd.
Irvine, CA 92618
Tel: 949-727-1733
Fax: 949-727-3144
info@kofax.com
www.kofax.com

Computing System Innovations
791 Piedmont Wekiwa Rd.
Apopka, FL 32703
Tel: 407-598-1800
Fax: 407-598-1879
info@csisoft.com
www.csisoft.com