



Municipality Leverages Laserfiche to Serve Business Systems and Cyber Citizens Alike

Picture a stack of letter-sized documents the height of the Empire State Building. Now imagine a building inspector, A/P clerk or voter being able to find and review the blueprint, invoice or Board Agenda he or she wants within just a few seconds by clicking a handy icon. In this way, a single Electronic Content Management system meets the needs of multiple departments. That's the ongoing mission of Database Manager Alan Holt of Framingham's Technology Services Department.

"We've been with Laserfiche and General Code [now ICC Community Development Solutions] for well over a decade now," said Holt. "If Laserfiche has built it, we probably found a use for it." Framingham continues to build its foundational repository on a project basis, converting 100 to 150 banker boxes of paper a month. "I always know when we've removed paper from an area," commented Holt. "A few weeks later, you'll see an email asking if anybody wants some free filing cabinets or storage boxes." As Framingham's technical evolution continues, increasingly documents are digital from the get-go.

Paperless Payroll Skips the Printer

"We no longer routinely print and distribute paper checks, pay stubs and payroll reports," said Holt. Instead, the following happens:



"We also store all of the supporting information for that payroll period in Laserfiche, including attendance, reimbursement requests, and Worker's Compensation claims," concluded Holt.

Building Inspector iPads Open Portals to the Past

In the office and out in the field, when a Building Department staffer enters a parcel or permit number into the Accela land management application, there's a button that grants them immediate access to all the documents stored in Laserfiche that have to do with that property. "It's seamless," said Holt. "Users can browse through permit applications, photos, complaints and inspection reports dating back to the 1950s. As far as users know, they're still inside the permitting system."

Holt enabled this access by doing a couple of things. "Over a span of years we went into dark rooms and offsite storage and dragged out property records and scanned them into Laserfiche," he said. "We tagged them with permit numbers in Laserfiche Template metadata. I used the Laserfiche Software Developers Kit to create an interface to provide a document management window within Accela and access its database to share values," explained Holt. "Having the permit number key enables the systems to support user searches on a variety of other criteria, such as address and property owner.

"We integrated Laserfiche Mobile with the Accela iPad app because it does a better job of displaying documents. In particular large format documents like blueprints are easier to work with," said Holt. "If an inspector knows that Wi-Fi or

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cellular data coverage is spotty at the property he's headed to, he just downloads all the building records to his iPad from Laserfiche in advance."

And the paperless revolution continues. "When homeowners submit paperwork, the building department uses Laserfiche Scanning software to capture incoming documents right at the counter now," said Holt. "And we started to require commercial users, like contractors, to submit permitting documents digitally." Those documents become available within the Accela app virtually immediately thanks to Laserfiche integration.

Automation Streamlines Back File Conversions

Meanwhile the scanning of Framingham's legacy records continues. "In the past three years, we quadrupled the size of our Laserfiche Repository," said Holt. "We're past 1 ½ Terabytes of storage and something like 4 million pages."

Holt took advantage of some other Laserfiche capabilities to facilitate this process. "Laserfiche Workflow creates folder structures and populate metadata for batches of files coming from our scanning vendor. Workflow adds the images to the folders automatically," he said.

"If a department spots problems during their QC, we might use Laserfiche Quickfields to extract metadata for a small issue, say 10,000 pages or fewer, instead of sending the batch back to the vendor."

Architecting a Common Look and Feel

Laserfiche Forms will also figure in Framingham's future as time and resources allow. "After attending some user conferences and community presentations, I've started to play with Forms. Compared to the native forms within other applications, Laserfiche Forms are easier to work with and provide a better user experience. Laserfiche is a wide-open tool that lets me add interfaces to other systems. So I can create a form – like a fire permit – in Laserfiche and send it and attachments to Accela. I've been testing and evaluating prototype Laserfiche Forms. They work great," he said.

Holt envisions standardizing form design across multiple applications. "I'm working toward a Google experience so that as you type, the form shows an increasingly narrow list of matches till the contractor finds the property he wants even with sketchy input from the homeowner, for example," said Holt. This works, he explained because, "Laserfiche can query master address lists within other systems, validate the information and push information back to complete the form."

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Laserfiche: Key to History and Future

As you can tell, Alan Holt is bullish on Laserfiche at Framingham. In his words, "We beat the heck out of our Laserfiche products. And ICC Community Development Solutions has provided the user support to be successful with each of our many implementations. Everybody loves Bruce Cadman, our Solutions Account Executive. We count on their Solutions Consultant to teach us and support us on the technical side. And our Technical Trainer does an outstanding job of training the trainer for Framingham's Laserfiche users."

Next up? "Permit Framingham: Plan – Build – Grow" is an initiative aimed at boosting development by guiding applicants through the complex permitting process. "I want to backend this process with Laserfiche to provide all the records management," Holt said. And so another 5,000 permits and certifications a year could be automatically added to the sky-high virtual stack of documents at Framingham.