



Review and Assessment of the Louisiana Supreme Court Information Technology Operations

Client Agency

Louisiana Supreme Court
New Orleans, Louisiana

Participating IJIS Institute Staff

Paul Wormeli
Executive Director

Steve Ambrosini
Director of Operations

Scott Serich, Ph.D.
Senior Project Manager

Participating IJIS Institute Consultants and Firms

Linda Hill, *The Archer Group*
Sharad Rao, *Tetrus Consulting Group*

Dates Services Provided

August 26-28, 2009

Overview of Technology Assistance Request

The Louisiana Supreme Court (LASC) requested technical assistance to provide an overall assessment of how to improve the IT operations of the court as a whole and make it more efficient and productive. Specifically, the court was interested in having the TA Team review, evaluate, and make recommendations on the LASC IT functions and operations, both in the Clerk's Office and the Judicial Administrator's Office (JAO). The TA Team recorded its findings and made recommendations that are detailed in the full report.

Among the TA Team's primary findings was that the Clerk IT function lies in a unique position to enable the justices, judges, and supporting staffs to carry out one of the Court's primary mission objectives to, "protect and promote the rule of law."¹ Its customers are among the state's most highly-educated and highly-skilled legal knowledge workers. These clients can ill

¹ *Strategic Plan of the (Louisiana) Supreme Court, 2005-2009, page 2 (Mission Statement)*



afford to experience losses of productive time due to IT failures, particularly in disposing of matters requiring expedited treatment² and as they move more and more toward anytime, anywhere provision of services.

The JAO's IT function, on the other hand, lies in a unique position to leverage economies of scale (common approaches) and network-effect economies (standards for information sharing) across the state court system and in, "...cooperat[ing] with other branches of state government."³ Its primary strategic duties are to develop and promulgate methods for improving aspects of trial and appellate court performance.⁴ Its ultimate customers are the people of Louisiana who ultimately bear the economic cost of supporting the somewhat "fragmented structure of the Judicial Branch."⁵

The TA Team's primary recommendation is for the Court to build upon the existing, very talented, and very dedicated, but still dispersed, IT operations by creating a single, customer-centric IT organization under a new position of court-wide chief information officer (CIO).

One of this officer's initial duties should be to create an IT Strategic Plan that supports the broader strategic objectives of the Court and provides a roadmap for the Court's IT functions. In particular, this plan should focus the roles of the various divisions within the organization, including direction-setting to promote an even stronger service orientation to its diverse customer populations, from the highly-skilled legal knowledge workers to the extensive and disparate statewide courts.

A second important initiative should be to create the foundational building blocks for a tightly-integrated IT organization, one in which the optimization of IT resource use across the entire enterprise can be achieved. This should be accomplished by clearly differentiating the posture that each division should adopt (i.e., cost center, service provider, strategic planner, or strategic enabler) with respect to each of its assigned functional areas.

Type of Technology Assistance Services Provided

For this particular engagement, the issue area of interest was primarily "IT management and resourcing." The work formally commenced with the completion of two intake questionnaires; these responses provided extensive background information. Supplemental documentation was also provided to the team during and after the onsite visit.

A conference call was held June 3, 2009, prior to issuing the call for consultants, to review the questionnaire responses and ensure that the TA engagement needs were properly understood.

The IJIS Institute provided a team of experts representing a consortium of IJIS Institute member companies and possessing the required experience and expertise in court IT management. A

² *Ibid.*, page 3 (Goal 1.3)

³ *Ibid.*, page 17 (Goal 6.2)

⁴ *Ibid.*, page 12 (Goal 5.3)

⁵ *Ibid.*, page 18 (Potential External Factors Affecting the Ability of the Supreme Court to Implement this Strategic Plan)



second conference call was held August 21, 2009, to introduce this team prior to the site visit and ensure that appropriate preparations were being made on both sides.

The TA Team performed the site visit August 26-28, 2009, at the Supreme Court building in New Orleans. A series of meetings were held to sharpen the TA Team's focus and allow team members on both sides to engage in more detailed question and answer dialogs.

Overview of Observations and Recommendations

A copy of the TA report can be found on the IJIS Institute website at www.ijis.org.

Contact Information

IJIS Institute
Scott Serich
Senior Project Manager
scott.serich@ijis.org
(703) 726-1913

or IJIS Institute
info@ijis.org
(703) 726-3697