

Case Study

Northampton County, Pennsylvania

“For more than three decades, Conduent has helped us transform and modernize IT operations for Northampton County. They didn’t just handle an initial transition and then rest on their laurels. They reduce costs and increase service, year after year, and it makes a tremendous difference, to us and to our users. We trust them and they’re essential to our team.”

– John Stoffa,
County Executive



The Challenge

Northampton County, Pennsylvania, is known for its hometown charm, scenic surroundings, and rich history in coal, iron and steel. But Northampton is also a managed services pioneer. Back in 1979, it became one of the first counties to outsource its entire IT operation to Conduent. Today, the relationship is still going strong, with a recent contract renewal and a litany of technological success stories to its credit.

The whole thing began when County leaders realized that they didn’t have the in-house expertise needed to install, operate and maintain a mainframe computer system, to support its 17 departments and their emerging technology needs. Acquiring those human resources and paying appropriate salaries, benefits and retirement (two to three times over for each position, factoring in future retirees) was a cost drain the County’s budget just couldn’t afford.

By moving all technology responsibility to Conduent, leaders believed they could save money on overhead, gain a top-tier IT department and more readily take advantage of new tools and technologies as these became available.

The Current Solution

In its current form, this partnership is based on a 23-person (originally 35 in the mainframe environment) Conduent team which functions as one of the County’s 58 divisions. Serving as the Information Services Division within the

County’s Department of Fiscal Affairs, Conduent is responsible for complete life cycle management of all IT resources, ranging from physical and virtual servers, printers and PCs, commercial application support, custom application development, to video conferencing, Voice Over IP and Unified Messaging. Conduent activities are overseen by a governance structure which includes a governing body, the Information Services Governance Committee (ISGC). The ISGC and its subcommittees represent the interests of the three branches of County Government and all County departments and divisions.

In early 2003, we started building out the infrastructure to migrate Northampton County from its early network of hubs and modems to a more modern, switched network. With its 10Gb backbone, 1Gb Desktop throughput, virtualized blade servers, and incorporation of the latest database and operating systems, this reliable, strong-performing infrastructure became the foundation for continuous process improvements organization-wide.

With the right technological environment in place, our team could work directly with various County divisions, examine workload and business processes, and identify areas where we could interject innovation to increase efficiency, eliminate steps or enable the divisions to do more with less.

Notable projects have followed ever since.

Thanks to an amendment adding our Electronic Payment Cards as a legally required alternative, the County was able to migrate to a 100 percent paperless payroll.



We assumed the primary support role for HR and Finance's migration to an ERP-based solution in 2008, saving the County \$400K in annual maintenance, support and hosting costs. Just as importantly, it provided numerous efficiency gains, including countywide electronic purchase order processing. Thanks to an amendment adding our Electronic Payment Cards as a legally required alternative, the County was able to migrate to a 100 percent paperless payroll. We implemented a courtroom video conferencing solution which enables expert witnesses and inmates to "appear" in court proceedings without physically travelling to the Courthouse or Magisterial Judges Office, thus reducing costs and improving the safety of everyone involved in the process.

A new pilot program for the Parks and Recreation department eliminates lines, waits and paper by enabling citizens to reserve space at County park facilities and campgrounds online, simply coming to the office to pay any related fees. Not only does

this process save time, but it also creates a database of electronic records the County can use to see usage trends or identify violators if County property is damaged in any way.

Another initiative for the Weights and Measures division replaced paper inspection forms previously used by field inspectors. Now, inspectors record all information on an electronic form and submit these before leaving the physical site. Everything is fed back into the database without rekeying.

We recommended and recently completed implementation of a custom application for the Juvenile Detention Center. The case management solution tracks juvenile residents from intake to discharge and includes all relevant case information such as relatives, visitors, treatment, housing and much more. The comprehensive solution includes dashboards and reporting for at-a-glance views about the residents and facility capacity.

These examples are only a small sampling of three decades of ITO success stories in the County.

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The Results

When the County of Northampton's leadership decided to outsource the entirety of its IT operation to Conduent more than three decades ago, they believed it would reduce FTE costs and enable County employees to stay focused on their core duties. The value gained from this engagement has extended far beyond the original vision, and continually delivers substantial results:

- A 23-person department and a \$3.5 million budget which includes the Conduent contract keeps Northampton County Information Services going strong. Most significantly, the IS division now operates with 12 fewer staff members than when the original contract was initiated in 1979 and with an increased workload.
- Through this arrangement, the County has evolved from mainframe to a fully integrated system, utilizing virtualization and the latest technologies to drive efficiencies and reduce costs.
- In addition to FTE cost reductions, this contract has reduced technology spend by leveraging the buying power of Conduent. For example, Conduent saved the County \$600,000 on a major software purchase in 2008 and was able to garner a 58% savings for the County over other purchasing vehicles during a 2012 upgrade of all County switches. These examples are just two of the many exhibits using the buying power of Conduent to benefit the County. This savings does not reflect the reduction of man hours previously spent in purchasing contract negotiations.

- To increase uptime, Conduent takes a proactive approach to maintenance by using scheduled downtime to handle upgrades, hardware replacements and vulnerability remediation.
- In January of 2011, when the County elections office had to verify over 500 petitions containing over 21,000 signatures (the highest number in PA history), they turned to Conduent for assistance. In just five days, Conduent developed an application that enabled Conduent and County elections staff to automatically compare signatures and validate the entries. The elections office was then able to meet a mandated deadline for signature verification which it could not have otherwise achieved.

For more than 30 years, Conduent and Northampton County officials have worked together to help the County reduce costs, increase efficiency and streamline processes organization-wide.

The beauty of this story is, thirty-plus years later, the partnership continues. Conduent recently won a competitive re-compete and was awarded a new contract beginning in 2014 – ensuring a shared future featuring more innovation, more cost savings and more success stories to come.

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