



National District
Attorneys Association

Beating the backlog: A more productive prosecutor's office

In March 2022, NDAA invited a panel of guests to discuss case backlogs, prosecutor burnout, and possible solutions.

During the online event, sponsored by Thomson Reuters, prosecutors past and present, as well as judges and legal IT experts, shared some of the changes they have made to improve productivity and streamline case flow where they work.

This e-book contains a summary of their presentations and the conversations that took place during the webinar.

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The current court system infrastructure, inclusive of prosecutor, public defender and judicial offices, is woefully inadequate to adapt to a post-pandemic world that incorporates a heavy focus on technology.¹

NELSON BUNN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL DISTRICT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

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Allysa Gambarella

Program Director, NDAA

Beating the Backlog was the best attended webinar we have ever run, which is a testament to the urgency of the issues at hand.

Prosecutors were already feeling the strain of high caseloads and growing volumes of digital evidence before COVID-19. But difficulties in getting cases resolved due to quarantines and social distancing have caused backlogs to pile even higher.

But is the legal profession ready to meet these challenges head on? Nelson Bunn, executive director of the National District Attorneys Association, says, "The current court system infrastructure, inclusive of prosecutor, public defender, and judicial offices, is woefully inadequate to adapt to a post-pandemic world that incorporates a heavy focus on technology."¹

It's encouraging, however, to see the approaches that prosecutors, courts, and technologists have taken to address these issues. Now, as we emerge from what we hope is the worst of the pandemic, I'm excited to hear how these changes may have long-term benefits to our profession.

What follows are summaries of the presentations that our guests gave during the event. I hope this e-book inspire you to take action in your jurisdiction.



About the panel



Allysya Gambarella

Program Director, NDAA

HOST

In her role as program director, Allysya Gambarella provides support to prosecutors and law enforcement by managing the development and implementation of training courses for NDAA. Before joining the association, she worked as a prosecutor in New Jersey and New Mexico for 17 years. She is a graduate of the University of Delaware and holds a JD from Seton Hall University School of Law.



Karen Gorham

Superior Court Administrator,
New Hampshire Judicial Branch

Karen Gorham has been the superior court administrator in New Hampshire since 2015 and was a prosecutor in New Hampshire and California for 25 years. A member of the American College of Trial Lawyers, she has focused on operational efficiencies, leading to criminal and civil e-filing and electronic warrant submission projects over the last five years.



Andrea Kilby

Director of Business Development for
Case Center, Thomson Reuters

Andrea Kilby works with prosecutors, courts, government organizations, and law firms implementing digital working practices to create collaborative environments that drive productivity. Previously, Ms. Kilby spent over 10 years in child protection prosecutions. She holds a postgraduate qualification in collaborative transformation, which she applies to public purpose projects.

About the panel



Patrick Muscat

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney,
Wayne County, MI

Patrick Muscat has served in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office for nearly three decades. He has also served as a subject matter expert in the fields of authenticating digital evidence, body-worn cameras, litigation technology, and video evidence. In addition, Mr. Muscat helped draft Video Evidence: A Primer for Prosecutors, a resource guide published by the Department of Justice's Global Information Sharing Toolkit.



Deborah J. Nicastro

Presiding Judge, Garfield Heights
Municipal Court, OH

The Garfield Heights Municipal Court is a fast paced, multi-district court in northeast Ohio that is completely digital and online at ghmc.org. By going paperless starting in 2004, adopting Zoom for remote hearings in 2020, and taking advantage of a web-based system for the exchange of discovery in 2021, Judge Nicastro has created a completely digital environment for all court users.



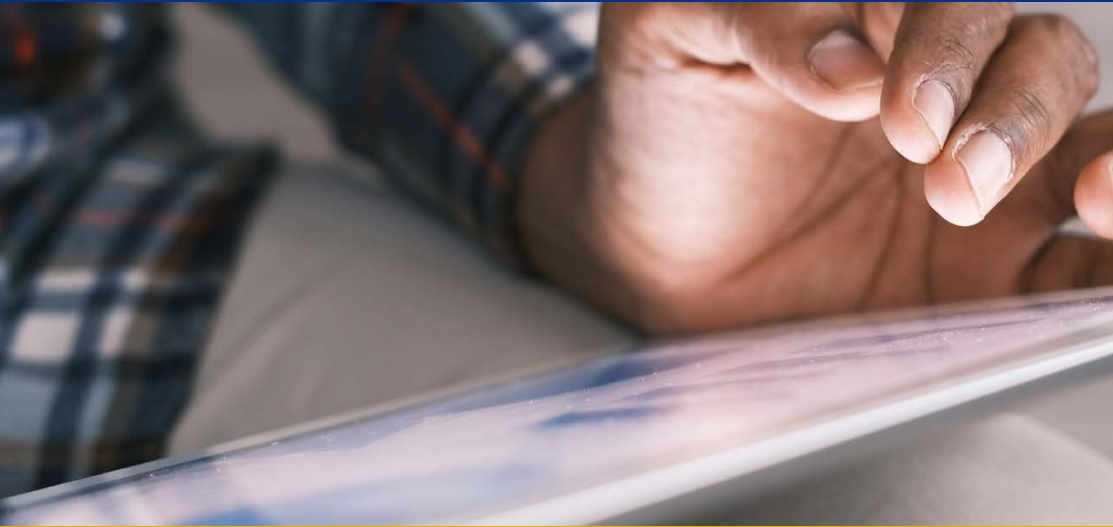
Jennifer Webb-McRae

Prosecutor, Cumberland County, NJ

Since January 2010, Jennifer Webb-McRae has served as the first African American and first female prosecutor of Cumberland County. In 2017, she became the county's first full-time prosecutor to serve a second term. A graduate of Rutgers Law School, Ms. Webb-McRae also serves on the NDAA board and has been active in the community as a past member of the Vineland Planning Board and Vineland Board of Education.



Using digital evidence



Patrick Muscat
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney,
Wayne County, MI

I head up a division of more than 40 prosecutors who handle digitally complex cases including homicides, nonfatal shootings, and major drug cases.

Digital tools are crucial to our work in Wayne County. We have had cases, for example, with 900 pieces of video evidence. In Detroit, business owners can link their surveillance camera feeds to a centralized system that the city has access to for law enforcement purposes.

There are also the common data sources of body-worn cameras and license plate spotters. An evidence management system that is user-friendly and efficient is therefore vital to prevent attorneys from being swamped by the data available to them.

Not only does this make good sense, but attorneys are now becoming duty bound to learn and use the most appropriate technology. Thirty-one states have adopted an Ethical Duty of Technology Compliance, forcing offices to engage properly with the digital tools that help them deliver justice more effectively.

A model digital evidence system

What does a good digital evidence process look like and what are the major features of an ideal system?

The first feature is intake. Many organizations use a secure cloud to eliminate the manual efforts of burning and hand-delivering CDs or USB drives. But training the different law enforcement agencies that upload evidence can be a challenge. For example, a forensic image incorrectly uploaded to evidence.com can generate hundreds of unnecessary folders. Any system must be user-friendly to all uploading agencies.

Many cloud tools include online redaction capabilities, so that attorneys don't have to pull exhibits, edit them, and re-upload newly redacted exhibits. This also greatly accelerates the discovery process.





To maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology.²

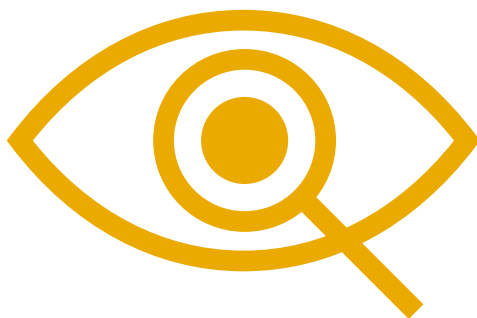
TAMARA POGUE, COMMISSIONER, SUMMIT COUNTY, COLORADO

Any process must factor in reviews by attorneys, clients, courts, and the jury and should account for demonstrating the probative value of the exhibits presented.

Finally, there should be protocols in place to securely store evidence post-trial and accommodate freedom-of-information requests. Typically, these are different from the protocols used for intake and discovery.

The power of visual evidence

A digital evidence system that can handle photo and video evidence should also allow for easy presentation of that evidence during a hearing. Clear presentation of visual evidence is, in my opinion, one of the most effective tools that attorneys have available to them. In *What Juries Really Think: Practical Guidance for Trial Lawyers*, which appeared in the *Cornell Law Review* in 2018, the authors note:



“Another common topic throughout the responses (96 jurors, or 19.1%) related to attorneys’ use of technology and/or visual aids during the trial. Thirty-five jurors listed attorneys’ effective use of technology or visual aids as their most positive comment, while twelve listed the lack of use (or ineffective use) of technology or visual aids as their most negative comment.³”

In my teaching on these topics, I draw a distinction between linear and nonlinear presentation tools. Linear ones take the form of a traditional presentation, such as a sequence of slides. Nonlinear tools are specifically designed or adapted for litigation, allowing attorneys to present material as needed.

For my opening statements, I use linear tools, and for direct and cross-examination, I use nonlinear ones. In Michigan, we have two closing statements. For my primary closing, I use a linear presentation, against which the defense argues. Then in my rebuttal, I load my slides into my nonlinear software, and I can bring up any one of them simply by hitting a button.



² American Bar Association, *Model Rules of Professional Conduct* | Rule 1.1: Competence. Accessed April 2022.

³ Honorable Amy J. St. Eve and Gretchen Scavo, *What juries really think: practical guidance for trial lawyers*, *Cornell Law Review*, vol. 103, March 2018. Accessed April 2022.

Presenting digital evidence effectively needn't be complicated. Here are five simple but effective techniques:



Callouts

Taking a full digital exhibit and calling out a particular relevant point (such as a clip in a video) can be especially powerful.



Visually link evidence to other elements of a case

When lawyers ask me about how to become a high-tech trial lawyer, I tell them they can achieve this without using any technology. Reading the jury instructions and elements of their cases that are relevant to the digital evidence they're presenting and building appropriate questions into direct and cross-examination will get them there.



Demonstrative and summary exhibits

Depending on your jurisdiction, demonstrative exhibits are only used during witness testimony or closing. While summary exhibits, if you can get them admitted, go along with other evidence and can be used during jury deliberation. I use both, and you can find timelines in the teaching materials I share at the end of this article.



Transcriptions

Especially with voluminous exhibits, it's important to generate a transcript. There are many tools that automate this, and even if an automated transcript is only 80% accurate, I highly recommend doing so because it allows attorneys to quickly search through the volumes of evidence looking for keywords. Of course, attorneys must watch the videos to verify the content, but transcription greatly speeds up initial searching.

Justice delayed is justice denied



Jennifer Webb-McRae

Prosecutor, Cumberland County, NJ



We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

The title of this presentation comes from a quote commonly attributed to British statesman William Gladstone. It was also evoked by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his famous "I have a dream" speech of 1963, where he spoke of "the fierce urgency of now." The legal maxim accurately reflects the consequence of current challenges in our criminal justice system.

As an administrator in Cumberland County, I have focused my efforts on providing our prosecutorial office of 115 professionals with the tools they need to process cases quickly and efficiently. When the pandemic hit, this mission took on a new complexity. Now, as we come out of the pandemic and learn to live with COVID-19 in the long term, we can consider how we apply the tools we have adopted to our future work with the fierce urgency Dr. King refers to.

The repercussions of case backlogs are numerous. Witnesses die, forget details, or move away. In some cases, there is time for witnesses to be intimidated into not testifying at all. When people have to wait to receive legal redress, it can feel as if they have no legal remedy at all, and victims lose both interest and confidence in the justice system.

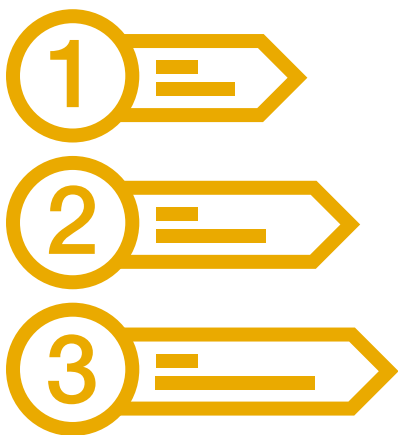
Meanwhile, families continue to suffer. In cases involving domestic violence or sexual abuse, this may be a continuation of offenses. If defendants have not had their day in court, they may be prevented from working or seeing children. Postponements and multiple hearings also affect incomes when people need to take time off work. And children can be particularly affected if they have to reappear in court multiple times to relive traumatic events that may have taken place years before.



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Some might welcome the fact that defendants are incarcerated for long periods while awaiting trial, but this costs taxpayers dearly — not only for the costs of the incarceration, but also for the cost of supporting minors and families if the household's main income earner cannot work.



What to prioritize?

For the foreseeable future, we must prioritize crimes with speedy trial mandates. This means trial within two years of incarceration for the most violent crimes, including murder and first-degree crimes like sexual assault, robbery with a firearm, and attempted murder. But as the system focuses on the most serious offenders, crimes that we call quality-of-life offenses (burglary, shoplifting, simple possession) get less attention. We know if we turn away from these offenses for too long, we have bigger problems later.

Crime doesn't take a holiday. Cases continue to pile up, so we must employ strategies that work on both the front end (pre-indictment) and back end (post-indictment) of the pipeline to even begin to dig ourselves out of this hole.

Front-end solutions (pre-indictment)

In New Jersey, we are fortunate to have an information management system in place across most of the state. This allowed us to continue our work electronically when the pandemic first hit. We also came to appreciate several of our other tools that were in place before the pandemic.

We have an Electronic Complaint Disposition Record (eCDR) system to enter and manage municipal complaint summonses and warrants. This lets us receive complaints from the police departments electronically and allows us to screen them faster.

Similarly, police use our eDiscovery system to upload discovery. It also enables prosecutors to screen cases and review discovery to make downgrade and dismissal decisions faster. Defense counsel can access discovery from this system, so information sharing is faster and less resource intensive. As prosecutors, it's important to remember that we control the pre-indictment backlog. Our state releases criminal statistic reports showing how efficient all 21 counties are in processing pre-indictment backlogs. I can monitor this, benchmark our county against a state average, and follow up with supervisors to see how we can improve.

Often this means troubleshooting "system" issues, like bottlenecks where a particular agency is not providing an essential piece of discovery (such as a lab result, hospital records, or gun analysis). We operate under the principle that good managers fix systems, not isolated problems. Policies and procedures will endure after we're gone and can be applied to more than one issue.



Back-end solutions (post-indictment)

We have less control over post-indictment backlogs, and the problems at the back end are harder to address. But a state's case generally doesn't get better with age, so we have to be laser-focused on making appropriate offers at the beginning of cases. In some cases, we have implemented a supervisor review of plea offers to assure they are appropriate, uniform, and competitive, accounting for the fact that there will be long delays.

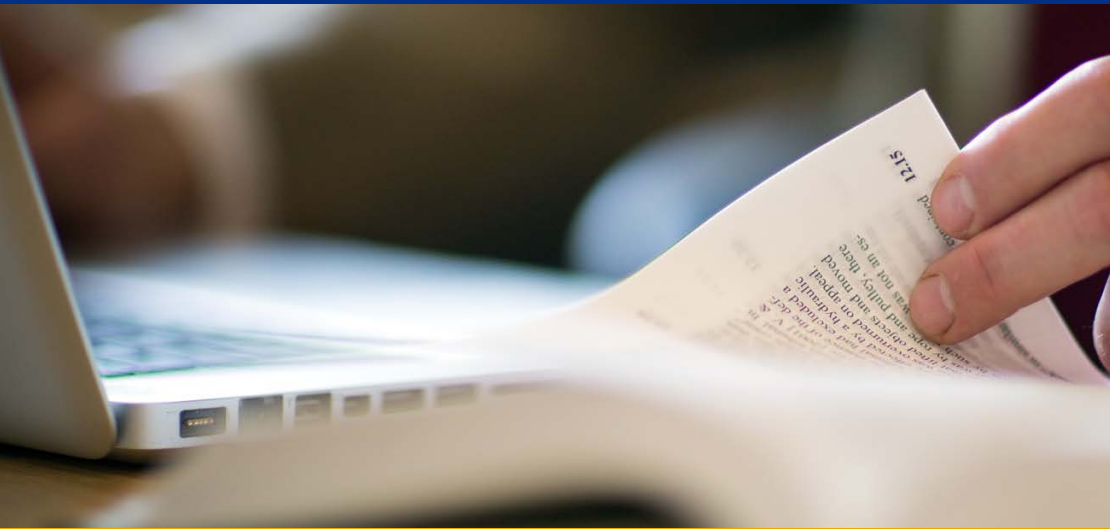
Offices should be asking themselves if they have a benchmark either internally or imposed by the court for when a case is overgoal. Supervisors should routinely review overgoal cases and work with assistant prosecutors to troubleshoot problems, and pleas should escalate unless there are changed circumstances. It's up to prosecutors to create a sense of urgency by letting courts know they are ready.

Finally, we should accept that COVID-19 is here to stay. We must prepare for periods when we can move fast and for times when case numbers will naturally slow things down. COVID-19 also means that virtual ways of working are now part of our day-to-day. Communicating urgency remotely is harder, and it is easier for parties to adjourn. My advice would be:

- 1 Take copious notes; preferably in an electronic information management system, so if someone else has to cover, they can see why the matter was postponed the last time.
- 2 Prosecutors should hold their adversaries accountable for delay.
- 3 Consider making plea offers good to a set date and consider asking that the set date be an in-person listing.
- 4 When it is time to put a matter on the trial list, that should be in person.
- 5 Consider stacking up trials. When one falls through, another will be ready. It will be crazy for a minute, but that pressure is what is needed to get the system moving.



The court response to increasing caseloads



Karen Gorham

Superior Court Administrator,
New Hampshire Judicial Branch

At the New Hampshire Supreme Court, our priority when the pandemic hit was to enable jury trials with appropriate social distancing. Our second focus was to put in place the necessary technology and processes to enable our court staff to work and conduct hearings remotely.

After that initial drive, our focus turned to stakeholder communication — primarily involving prosecuting and defense attorneys through our Attorney Working Group. It was important for the court to understand systemic procedural issues that litigants faced because of the pandemic, and the group was instrumental in developing our jury trial protocols.

We initially met weekly, and as the pandemic eased, we continued to hold monthly sessions, which we still find useful to review rules, protocols, and scheduling issues from a systemic point of view.

Teaching the art of negotiation

During the pandemic, one of the things we heard from our attorneys — and our reports backed this up — was that they were resolving fewer cases since opposing counsels rarely had the opportunity to sit down together in person and discuss resolutions. Because most hearings were remote, attorneys simply didn't have the face time they once did.

We saw that a solution would involve opportunities to negotiate and bring back that face time. We hired Brian Lovins, a nationwide expert on evidence-based sentencing, for a half-day seminar with our prosecutors and defense attorneys across the state, where they learned about making appropriate pleas and counteroffers. That seminar proved incredibly popular, and I still get requests to share the recordings we made.





We followed this up with a one-day workshop hosted by the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program. That was a hands-on workshop with the same group of learners focused on practicing interest-based negotiation skills. Our goal in both cases was to help give prosecutors the tools to come to resolutions more quickly.

Resolution through mediation

But what if cases can't be resolved by negotiation? Attorneys could take their case to a judge for a dispositional conference, but judges have 50–100 cases a day, and the hearings are brief and high level.

We have long had a felony settlement conference, which is a very formal process where pleadings are filed, all parties have to agree to attend, and hearings can take a day or two to be resolved. We needed something quicker, so we came up with the idea of criminal mediation, requiring a request from one party only (either party or a judge).

Our chief justice and senior status judges host these sessions, which last 45–60 minutes. Anyone is allowed to attend, including victims, advocates, and law enforcement, and 95% of the cases that go to criminal mediation are resolved by plea. We have advised all our local court judges to schedule these mediations right away because they are so effective at achieving a resolution.

Prosecutor of the day

Another outcome of our Attorney Working Group was the idea that “parties just need time to talk.” In one of our counties, the court assigned a prosecutor of the day, where that attorney would make themselves available so that all defense counsels that had cases with them could come in to discuss the case.

If a defendant does appear and the case can be resolved, a judge is on hand to hear it. One good thing about remote technology is that this could even be a judge who was not in the same building. On the first day this was trialed in one of our medium-sized counties, the prosecutor resolved 45 of her cases. We are therefore encouraging this approach and ensuring that we have judges available to take pleas.

Finally, because a lot of felonies resolve as a “no time” misdemeanor or a “time served” misdemeanor, we are not requiring hearings for those cases and parties can electronically submit their plea documents for a judge to review and sign off.

These are just some of the real-world solutions we have found to help reduce our backlogs in New Hampshire.

One of our exciting upcoming projects is finding ways to reduce failures to appear, which is a significant cause of postponements and backlogs. One tactic we have in place is allowing defendants to request a remote appearance, which we usually grant. We are also piloting a text message reminder program for criminal cases, which supplements a similar program in family mediation, and has been shown to reduce failure-to-appear rates by 20–40%.



Digitizing evidence sharing



Deborah J. Nicastro

Presiding Judge, Garfield Heights
Municipal Court, OH

Our court in suburban Cleveland is a busy one, handling a great many small claims, civil cases, and traffic cases for different jurisdictions across the metro area.

During the pandemic, exchanging evidence among our many stakeholders emerged as a challenge for the court. Typically, attorneys would attend the pretrial with a DVD, for example, and the parties would physically exchange evidence, or the defense attorney would look at the prosecutor's files. Even before 2020, we saw too many delays because prosecutors had not received evidence from police, and this caused continuances, which got worse after the pandemic arrived.

In response, I began the search for a web-based evidence management system. The project was led by us, the court, rather than by our prosecutors. This approach made sense because of the number of stakeholder groups we have and the difficulties that emerge when trying to get so many organizations, with different IT systems, to work together deploying a common solution.

Any new system had to have three major functions: exchange of evidence, presentation to the court, and storage and retention. It also had to be secure. In our case, this meant satisfying all 10 of our law-enforcement partners that sensitive data would be stored in accordance with the relevant FBI protocols. The system we chose was Thomson Reuters Case Center, which users — including prosecutors, defense, judges, and our many pro se litigants — log on to via their regular web browser.



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In a fast-paced, multi-district court with 12 prosecutors and 10 law enforcement agencies, standardizing the discovery process among all agencies expedites the disposition of cases and eliminates delays in exchanging information and viewing information in multiple formats.”

PRESIDING JUDGE DEBORAH J. NICASTRO, GARFIELD HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL COURT

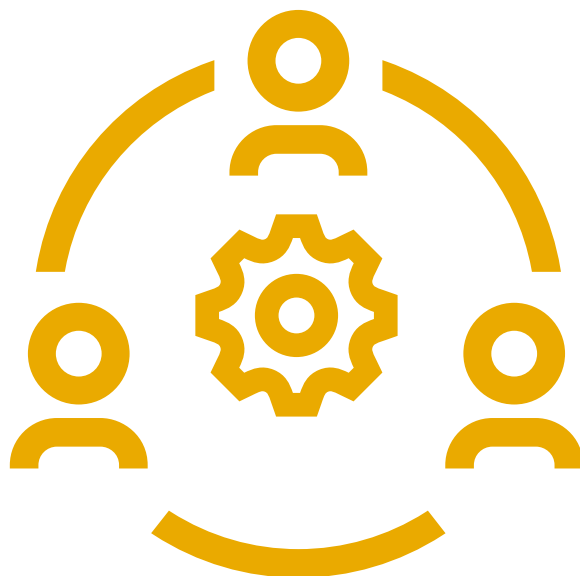
How it works

For criminal cases, a discovery request is filed with our clerk of court, and this triggers the reciprocal discovery provisions in Rule 16 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure. Our bailiff opens a case in Case Center, and an email goes out automatically to the relevant parties — police departments, prosecutors, and defense. In our court, we then manage access to evidence depending on the regulations of the jurisdiction that is handling the case, but different rules and permissions regarding this can be set in Case Center.

The evidence is then available instantly to the authorized parties, who can access it whenever they need to. Attorneys or litigants can present the evidence in court or on Zoom. After a case is resolved, we can easily respond to an evidence request or access evidence in the case of an appeal.

An extremely important feature for us was the ability for a prosecutor to mark the evidence “for counsel only” pursuant to Rule 16(F) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure. Attorneys control the order of submissions at trial and determine whether an exhibit will be admitted. They can also use Case Center to make public or private notes to exhibits or stamp them as required.

It is worth noting that we use Case Center as a repository only — not as a platform for filing motions related to discovery. All motions and pleadings are still filed with the clerk of court.





The most important benefit of our new digital evidence management system is that it's more streamlined and therefore faster. Case Center has completely resolved the discovery delays we had, which were mainly due to issues with burning DVDs, sending large files over email, and people being unable to open file types.

Better evidence sharing, faster caseflow

One of the reasons we chose Case Center was that it can handle more than 500 types of evidence, including documents, images, audio, and video. So far, we have not had a single prosecutor, attorney, or law enforcement department that couldn't upload a digital exhibit. Plus, the platform gives us unlimited storage, which is vital for the growing volume of body-worn and dash-mounted camera footage that features in our cases.

Because the system is entirely web-based, we didn't need intervention from our own IT staff to deploy Case Center. We have one bailiff who opens the case, but the system is entirely operated by the people who use it, while Thomson Reuters silently manages the back end.

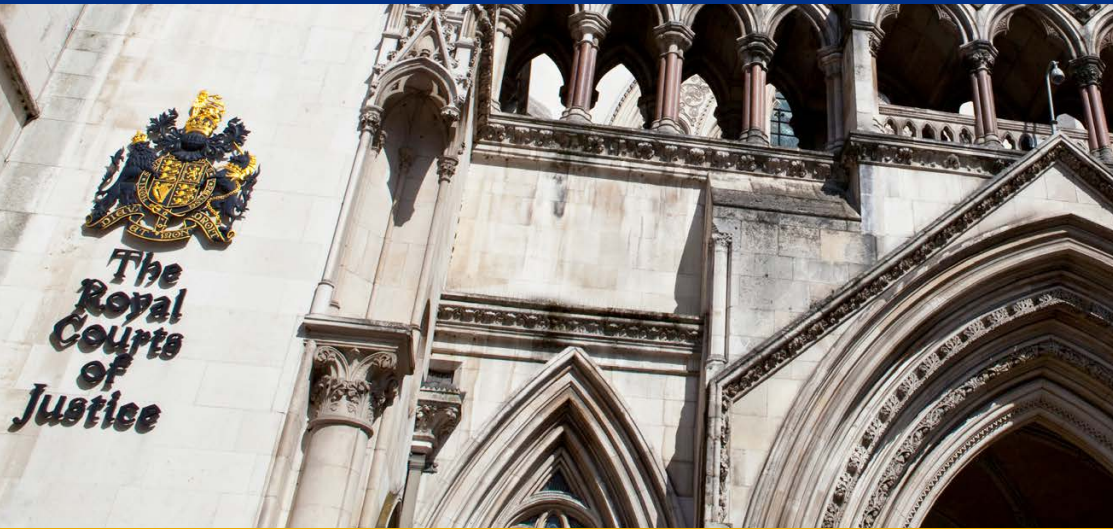
Evidence management is easier for our clerk. Physical DVDs and flash drives no longer need to be kept in marked envelopes and filed away, stored, and disposed of as mandated. Now all digital exhibits live in the cloud in a manner that complies with our state mandates regarding evidence retention.

Crucially, litigants like using Case Center, which has helped drive adoption. It even works on a smartphone, so anyone — not just a legal expert — can access it. Defense lawyers can invite their clients to join a case and look at the videos contained in it. This is a very helpful tactic, for example, in our cases involving operating a vehicle while intoxicated (OVI).

The most important benefit of our new digital evidence management system is that it's more streamlined and therefore faster. Case Center has completely resolved the discovery delays we had, which were mainly due to issues with burning DVDs, sending large files over email, and people being unable to open file types. So I can now encourage clerks and bailiffs to open cases within eight hours of a request, and police and prosecutors have usually uploaded their evidence within 24 hours.



Lessons from the modernization of the UK Ministry of Justice



Andrea Kilby

Director of Business Development for
Case Center, Thomson Reuters

In 2015, the UK Ministry of Justice deployed a new digital evidence management system, known internally as the Crown Court Digital Case System (CCDCS).

The ministry wanted to digitize the process of transferring material from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to the court. The CPS prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organizations in England and Wales. This modernization project also included the electronic presentation of case materials during court hearings. The contract was awarded March 31, 2015, and the ministry completed a full national rollout within a year.

CCDCS is currently in use at approximately 25 prosecutors' offices and 78 court buildings (with more than 500 courtrooms) throughout England and Wales. It connects to the Crown Prosecution Service case management system, allowing for seamless movement of materials between the two systems. There are approximately 26,000 users of CCDCS, which includes 1,500 judges, 3,000 prosecuting attorneys, 15,000 defense attorneys, 2,500 corrections and probation users, and 4,000 clerical staff.

The move was chiefly driven by budget cuts. In 2015, the CPS faced a 25% reduction in its budget but still had to handle as many cases as before. The only way to avoid an effective collapse of the nation's criminal justice system was a root-and-branch reform of key processes.

Who benefits from the Crown Court Digital Case System (CCDCS)?

1,500	judges
3,000	prosecuting attorneys
15,000	defense attorneys
2,500	corrections and probation users
4,000	clerical staff



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Strong collaborative working has brought about some truly significant improvements in the way we deliver justice, to the undoubted benefit of victims, witnesses, defendants, prosecutors, defense representatives, court staff, and judges.”

LORD JUSTICE FULFORD, VICE-PRESIDENT COURT OF APPEAL (CRIMINAL DIVISION)
OF ENGLAND AND WALES

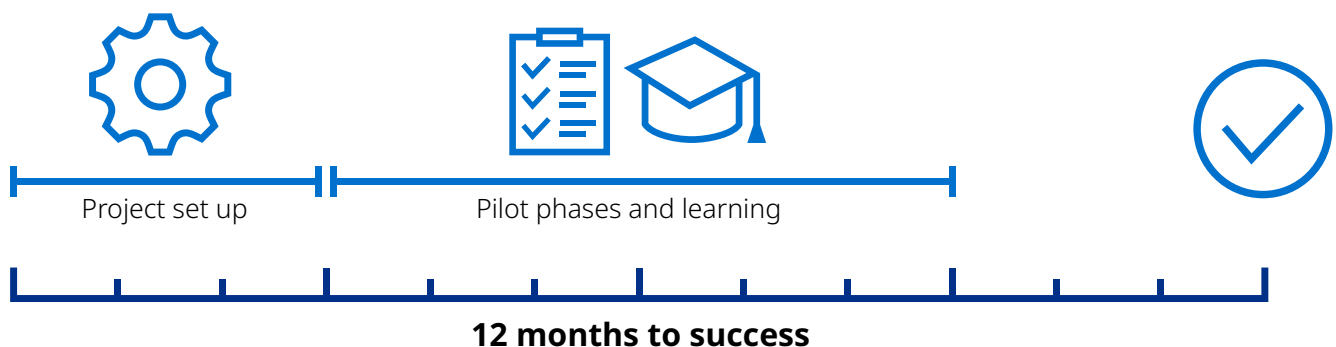
For the changes to be effective, they had to be both fast and collaborative. The CPS needed a working product, so there was no time to design a custom solution. This led to what was considered a bold move at the time — looking at cloud technology. This solution would mean that there would be no systems to install, and users could access the tool via their web browser.

Collaborative change meant engaging the whole criminal justice system, including the CPS, defense lawyers, courts, law enforcement, and prisons. Everybody had to buy in to improve accessibility, speed, and efficiency across the board.

12 months to success

By choosing an off-the-shelf solution, the CPS could set up its new system via configuration rather than by designing from scratch. The first three months of the process were spent setting up the project — defining existing processes and converting them into new digital workflows.

The second phase, months 4–6, were for pilot phases and learning. This involved deep engagement with the new system, collecting feedback, and getting to the point of rollout for the second half of the year. The 6-month rollout followed a “hub and spoke” model, with change coming to large regional courts first, which then helped smaller courts with the knowledge they had acquired.



These timescales were ambitious, but three guiding principles ensured success:



Testing at scale. The pilots took place at the largest prosecutors' offices and the busiest courts. This put the system to the test in high-profile cases and proved what benefits the prosecutors, courts, and defense would gain in the most demanding real-world settings. This also forestalled any potential criticism that the system wouldn't work in certain situations, because it was stress tested at the highest level.



Use only on new cases. The CPS pragmatically decided to let old cases run their courses using existing processes and that only new cases would use the CCDCS. In my experience, transformation projects usually fail at the interface between old and new systems, so having a clean break avoided this. It also meant that there was no burden on prosecutors to transfer data across mid-case.



Leave integration until later. The system was implemented as a standalone platform for speed. The CPS looked for the "big wins" of saving three hours per case to start with rather than saving three minutes by having two systems talking properly to each other. Only later did the CPS fully integrate its case management system with CCDCS.

50% fewer hearings to resolve a guilty plea

The benefits from the move arrived quickly and have proved to be long-lasting. CCDCS has made evidence-sharing more transparent and improved collaboration between all parties involved in the criminal justice process.

Having a single repository for documents, images, audio, and video that's available 24/7 gives parties more time to prepare for cases. This replaced ad hoc methods of evidence sharing via email, paper, and physical media storage and offers a future platform to handle the growth in digital evidence, especially video.

We saw a significant upward trend in the number of early guilty pleas entered, simply because prosecutors can share the evidence more easily. This saves resources across the system — the project's principal aim —and provides a swifter result for victims, witnesses, and defendants. There was also a decrease of almost 50% in the number of hearings that are required to resolve a guilty plea in the Crown Court. This result was achieved simply by having all the relevant case materials in the right place at the right time.

Finally, we found that reviewing evidence is a far more productive process overall because the new system is intuitive. The focus is no longer on documents, page numbers, or IT issues, but on the substance of the issue. Trials are shorter and less numerous, and the justice system can work through more of them more quickly.



About NDAA and Thomson Reuters

This webinar was brought to you by the National District Attorney's Association (NDAA) and its sponsor, Thomson Reuters.

The webinar featured the Thomson Reuters Case Center. To find out how Thomson Reuters could support your office, download the guide below, which contains practical steps that prosecutors are taking to modernize their processes, improve productivity, and reduce backlogs.



Download *The productive prosecutor's office: How to focus on the advocacy of justice — not the administration of justice*



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ABOUT NDAA

NDAA is the oldest and largest association of prosecutors in the country, with over 5,000 members. Its mission is to be the voice of America's prosecutors and to support their efforts to protect the rights and safety of the people.

Founded in 1950, NDAA is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit membership association that provides training, technical assistance, and services to prosecutors around the country in support of the prosecution profession. NDAA serves as a nationwide, interdisciplinary resource center for research, training, knowledge building, and accountability as it works to promote a fair and equitable administration of justice.

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Together with the professionals and institutions we serve, we help uphold the rule of law, turn the wheels of commerce, catch bad actors, report the facts, and provide trusted, unbiased information to people all over the world.

Our products include highly specialized information-enabled software and tools for legal, tax, accounting, and compliance professionals, combined with the world's most global news service — Reuters.

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