

Virtual Courts Become a Reality for Criminal Justice System

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) pilot virtual solution for handling first hearings has recently gone live in London and Kent. The pilot is intended to deliver improvements in the business process and associated costs for the police, prosecutors and magistrates.

The Situation

The Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR) was seeking a technology solution to underpin a significant business change - the Virtual Courts program. The delivery of this unique multi agency project was a new challenge for OCJR, as each agency brought its own set of business objectives, governance and working relationships. The solution necessitated alignment at all levels to be successful. Additionally, with the current economic climate, OCJR was seeking a solution which fit within the restricted budget and maximised return on investment, as well as aggressive delivery timescales to meet political agendas.

The Solution

In collaboration with OCJR, Capgemini undertook the design, development and deployment of the prototype

and technical management of the Virtual Courts pilot. Virtual Courts incorporates the use of document sharing for the sharing of case file papers between agencies. Video conferencing enables a virtual first hearing between the magistrates court and the police station where the defendant has been charged. These give the potential to reduce the time from charge to first hearing from days to just a few hours in most instances. Only secure links are used to join up the agencies involved.

The Result

A prototype was initially run in the summer of 2007 for three months with the aim of evaluating the

“ Capgemini has helped OCJR and our partners make Virtual Courts a reality. Their technical expertise across a range of disciplines has helped to shape the technical design of the project and their programme support has contributed to its effective delivery. ”

Edward Gretton,
Head of Project Delivery Unit, OCJR



technology to support the business process. Based on the success of the prototype the current pilot project was initiated covering sites at Her Majesty's Courts Service, Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service and two police forces (Metropolitan Police Service and Kent Constabulary) with the aim of exercising the business process with a larger volume of cases. Other police forces have shown significant interest in the project. The pilot is scheduled to run for 12 months.

It is anticipated that the pilot will demonstrate demonstrable efficiency savings and have a positive impact on confidence levels within the Criminal Justice System and wider public. The pilot though in its early stages is already demonstrating the potential to speed up the delivery of justice.

How Virtual Courts and Capgemini Worked Together

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is committed to delivering simple and timely justice that makes the best use of all available resources. A key lever for achieving this is the innovative use of technology to reduce inefficiencies, speed up processes and improve the experience of using the system for everyone involved. Capgemini has partnered many change programmes in Criminal Justice. Through this we have been helping Criminal Justice organisations overcome significant challenges delivering and adopting transformational service both from the perspective of local area implementation teams, and from a central IT provision perspective. Virtual Courts is a bold and innovative criminal justice service which forms a cornerstone of the strategy for multimedia services supporting cross Criminal Justice System (CJS) business processes.

Capgemini's role has included design, supplier management of the third party suppliers engaged by OCJR

to provide video conferencing and document collaboration services for the project. The potential impact of Virtual Courts has been recognised up to the Secretary of State level and is trailed in the 'Independent Review of Policing', headed by Sir Ronnie Flannagan - "Following completion of the pilot evaluation, urgent consideration should be given to rolling out virtual courts, both geographically and in terms of the categories of cases they can cover", recommendation 22.

Capgemini has built on earlier success and is now working with the Office of Criminal Justice Reform and the MoJ

to capture learnings from the pilot and plan for the future.

Edward Gretton, Head of Project Delivery Unit, OCJR, comments on the partnership: *"The project has necessitated working across a complex multi agency picture and Capgemini has worked effectively in this context to help produce a solution that works for the project and is consistent with the individual agencies' technical strategies"*.



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More information is available at www.capgemini.com

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The Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR) is the cross-departmental team that supports all criminal justice agencies in working together to provide an improved service to the public. As a cross departmental organisation the OCJR reports to the Ministry of Justice, the Home

Office and the Attorney General's Office. OCJR's goal is to deliver the National Criminal Justice Board's vision of what the Criminal Justice System will look like in 2011. It will do this by providing Local Criminal Justice Boards with the overall framework and guidance to facilitate reform at a local level.

More information is available at: www.cjsonline.gov.uk/the_cjs