

Laserfiche Helps Meet Needs of Low Income in Minneapolis Minnesota



Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin is a community action agency working in all of Suburban Hennepin County to improve the lives of low-income people. A community action agency (often called a CAP) is a nonprofit organization established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty. Community action agencies help people to help themselves in achieving self-sufficiency. Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin (CAPSH) is one of nearly one thousand CAPs that operate across the Country. CAPSH offers services to individuals through outreach, energy assistance programs, home ownership services, and financial counseling. Additionally, its Planning and Development department assists nonprofit's and other service entities in becoming more effective.

One of the Agency's largest departments, Energy Assistance, is also one the greatest producers of paper files. Each year the Agency processes about fifteen thousand applications. Each application ranges from ten to forty pages. CAPSH is required to keep these applications for seven years. This has resulted in a huge storage issue. At the end of 2008, CAPSH found itself out of space to process and store applications and needed to look at electronic document management software.

After talking to several other CAP agencies that had implemented document management software, CAPSH selected and purchased Laserfiche in the fall of 2009. Cindy, in the Energy Assistance Department, was given the task of scanning and worked with Chad Brinkman, Laserfiche engineer from Solbrekk, to make the process as efficient as possible. They noticed that all application files had a page printed from E-Heat, their main software application used to manage the energy assistance program. That page became their cover sheet for batch scanning. On the page was all the important information they needed: client first name, client last name, social security number, household number, and program year. But, over the years the E-Heat program had changed and so had the location of this important information on the printed page. Chad created a Laserfiche QuickFields session using Zone-OCR and Pattern Matching that could find the information, no matter which year it was produced. In addition, Laserfiche Real-Time Look-Up was used to validate the accuracy of the information by retrieving information out of E-Heat and comparing it to the values captured by Zone-OCR.

Armed with this powerful Quickfields session, Cindy was able to take a batch of application files and scan them all at once. Laserfiche Quickfields separated the batch into individual applications, stored each application in a folder it created, and populated its index fields. With this automated process, Cindy was able to completely empty fourteen four-drawer filing cabinets the first year, and by the second year, every department's documents were all scanned and recycled.

Cindy said, "I remember the mess we had before Laserfiche. Files everywhere. People's desks were piled high. A misplaced application file could take many hours to find. But, now with Laserfiche, any application file can be found in just moments." She said she would recommend that any organization implement Laserfiche because it will really make them more efficient.

CAPSH's Finance Director, Win, said when he needed an old finance report in the past, he would have to search for it in one of 30 banker boxes. Now, he has all those reports available at the click of his mouse. He says, "you just can't imagine how you appreciate that time savings when you are busy."

Overall, Laserfiche has allowed the employees of CAPSH to focus more time and energy on meeting the needs of the low-income families that come to them for help.

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