



NAPA SUPERIOR COURT Customer Services



To improve customer service and help court clerks recover from piles of busywork, the Superior Court of California, County of Napa set out to find a solution that would support 24/7, self-service capabilities to residents. The court found ATI and the Edify platform; among other benefits, Napa residents now have real-time, convenient access to important information and the Court saves time and money—it even reduced staff and the amount of Failure to Appear jury notices.

Napa Superior Court Enhances Customer Service, Saves Time and MONEY with Interactive Services Platform from ATI

The Superior Court of California, County of Napa focuses on its mission “to render fair and equal justice; to inspire trust and confidence in the legal system; and to serve the public with courtesy and efficiency.” The Court recently investigated automated, self-service technology solutions in both a proactive effort to serve citizens and as a reactive response to workload challenges.

the SITUATION

The Superior Court of California, County of Napa, www.napa.courts.ca.gov, serves a population close to 132,000 strong spread across 754 square miles (according to the 2003 population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau). Court proceedings and related functions are handled by close to 100 professionals, including six Judges and two Commissioners. The County seat is located in the City of Napa.

The California Administrative Office of the Court (AOC) sets priorities for the statewide judicial plan; county courts set strategies to support it. “Napa Court has strategic and operational plans that cover general areas ... such as access to justice, expedition and timeliness, independence and accountability, equality, fairness and integrity and public trust and confidence,” explained Jeannette Vannoy, Information Technology Manager for the Superior Court of California, County of Napa. “Any automation that we do addresses at least one of those components.”

the CHALLENGE

Napa Valley—words that evoke scenes of lush vineyards and rolling hills. Just like any U.S. location, the valley famous for its wineries is served by a county government that follows established procedures to best serve its citizens.

In addition to enhancing access or timeliness, automation for certain processes proved essential just to keep them operating, including the process for juror notification, deferment and disqualification. “There were two full-time people handling it,” Vannoy said, then she corrected: “Actually, there were two full-time people buried in it.”



Every week, the Court issues approximately 1,100 jury service summons. And every week following issuance, it handles an average of 500 requests for Deferment of Service or Disqualification of a Juror, communication that used to be handled via mail, fax, phone—usually voicemails—or in person. *“Basically, it was all done manually by the jury staff;” Vannoy said. “They were buried in busywork opening mail and returning phone calls. It wasn’t an effective use of staff time ... and the amounts (of summons and requests) were growing so the staff members assigned to that division were not able to complete the work in a timely manner, at no fault of their own.”*

At least recorded messages could be used to provide appearance information to the remaining pool of jurors—but that method came with its own problems. “The jury staff would record this very lengthy voicemail,” Vannoy explained. Jurors were then required to call after 5 p.m. on Friday to be informed whether they must appear for jury service at the Courthouse on Monday morning. After listening to instructional details they had to wait through an entire list of jury pool data to determine their assigned numbers and status.

The system posed significant issues recognized by the Court:

- *Jurors were stuck in long calls and did not receive personalized treatment. “Citizens complained that the system was cumbersome,” Vannoy said.*
- *Many callers could not reach the message during peak times due to limited available ports on the voicemail system.*
- *Jurors who were called to service but temporarily released did not have updated information during the day.*

While the Court’s IT team provided the capabilities for the Jury staff to post information on the Web, it was in a document that was time-consuming to edit and post on a daily basis. Time-intensive processes caused work back-logs; once jurors arrived at 8 a.m. Monday morning, other calls and paperwork would have to wait for staff members to start juror orientation, walking jurors to court-rooms and so on.

Prospective jurors who could not or did not show up were issued a Failure to Appear notice without the ability to request to be rescheduled and given another opportunity to fulfill their civic duty before facing negative consequences, such as being required to appear before the judge or the possibility of being fined. “That was a secondary process for jury staff members to manage,” Vannoy stated.

Like the jury system, employees in the Criminal and Traffic (or Minor Offense) divisions were often on the phone handling questions or talking with citizens who had to come to the Courthouse in person. “Our intention of implementing automation for Criminal and Traffic wasn’t as focused on making processes more efficient—which is naturally part of it—but providing better service to our community,” Vannoy said.

Serving a diverse community also carries its own set of requirements. “We didn’t have an easy way for Spanish-speaking people to communicate with staff members,” Vannoy said. When callers selected the option to speak Spanish, the previous voicemail system would direct them to bilingual employees. If these staff members were unavailable, callers would have to leave voice messages. In a county with almost 24 percent of residents of Hispanic or Latino origin, voicemails could pile up quickly.



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the SOLUTION

Working with ATI, the Napa Superior Court implemented a comprehensive interactive speech and self-service Web system that allows the public to obtain real-time information via the telephone or Internet at any time. “By providing these ‘extra’ services we hope it makes the experience people have with the Court a more positive one,” Vannoy said.

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) capabilities for Napa residents are part of the integrated Edify Voice Interaction Platform, a comprehensive multi-channel platform that automates, assists and analyzes customer interactions across all modes of communication. Applications built with Edify are scalable, multilingual and flexible, allowing organizations to easily integrate backend systems with multiple contact interfaces.

the RESULTS

ATI’s Jury Interactive module has been in production at the Court since 2003; the Criminal module—including criminal records search requests—is also live while the Traffic module is in final phases of testing. All have already returned or are expected to return considerable benefit.

Improved Customer Service

Rather than experiencing frustration with long voice messages, busy phone systems or trips to handle issues in person, Napa residents now have 24/7, self-service access to real-time information for Jury and soon Criminal and Traffic via the telephone or Internet. Callers use natural speech or touch-tone commands to submit requests or obtain court instructions. For instance, it is easier for jurors to confirm or postpone service with a few words via phone or clicks online. Additionally, Spanish-speaking callers receive information in their native language.

To find the right solution, the Court reviewed proposals from eight vendors. It chose ATI for a number of reasons; Vannoy pointed to ATI’s:

- **Integrated and comprehensive solution.** “We were looking for a complete platform, not just an IVR or Web-related solution,” Vannoy said. She explained ATI’s platform enables critical components—IVR, Web applications, workflow and record search capabilities—all from the Edify base. And, it supports development of additional self-service applications as needed.
- **Affordability and flexibility.** “When it boiled down to it,” Vannoy related, “the others that were not selected were largely on price or inability to meet the open platform we were looking for.”
- **High recommendations.** “We received a positive referral for ATI from a well-respected County organization. ATI has proven to be what (the County organization) said it would be.”
- **Exceptional customer service.** “Steve Viets (ATI president) put it well when he said it’s all about relationships,” Vannoy said. “It’s true about them as a company ... and as our projects progressed, it was the skills, project management and communication capabilities that make ATI one of the best I’ve ever seen at maintaining a positive vendor and technical relationship.”

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*Jeannette Vannoy, Information Technology Manager
for the Superior Court of California, County of Napa*



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Productivity

Two full-time employees used to be overwhelmed by paperwork and telephone calls. Thanks to automated processes, the Court reduced jury staff to one clerk working less than full-time processing this type of work. Now, this professional handles all responsibilities and provides personal attention to jurors without facing nearly as much of a backlog of time-consuming manual tasks.

"[Reducing overhead] wasn't a goal in the beginning, but it's a nice side effect," Vannoy said. There have been other unexpected but appreciated by-products of the system—"Failure to Appear notices have been dramatically reduced. Instead of adding a secondary process for jury staff members, the ATI system gives people the option when they cannot appear to select a new date."

In the Criminal and Traffic divisions, the Court reports fewer phone calls are directed to staff members since residents use the automated system to obtain answers. It requires less staff time—an estimated savings of five to six minutes per caller—to field requests and, since Spanish is now available in an automated way, bilingual clerks are not required as often.

For the Court's technical staff, it can be challenging to run enterprise network capabilities on a small scale. As a component-based, scalable solution, ATI's system and expertise enable the IT team to meet this challenge with relative ease and efficiency.

Cost-Savings

The ATI and Edify modular system is designed to provide full return on investment within 6 to 24 months. Considering overhead and supply savings, Vannoy reported the Court has likely achieved ROI and more since the system covers even a greater scope than the initial purpose of the purchase.

the SUCCESS

The Court managed a strategic approach to efficient product selection and implementation of an interactive platform. For organizations exploring similar solutions, Vannoy offered the following seasoned advice:

- *"Making a good vendor selection is integral to success. Considering the complexity and all the people that have to come together to make it work ... we feel that a large part of the success of our initiatives can be attributed to the fact that ATI is a good vendor."*
- *"Be aware of existing processes that will be changing and involve the staff members. For instance, we had judicial assistants assigned to teams to develop scripts."*
- *"It's important to have an open platform. That's been key for us, we haven't had to develop any kind of odd-ball proprietary systems that aren't compatible with our existing IT infrastructure."*

Overall, the Court has answered specific needs and leveraged the interactive platform for continued benefit. Napa Court employees likely recall the vintage it installed ATI solutions as "a good year."

ATI integrates custom solutions for some of the biggest and best known companies and public entities locally and throughout the United States. Clients include the **San Francisco 49ers, Chicago Title, CA Nurses Association** and several counties throughout California. As ATI continues

to expand, the commitment to personalized service will remain as strong as when the company was founded. The experience of ATI's sales consultants, technical and customer service personnel make ATI uniquely qualified to assist your company with your special CTI requirements.

Visit www.ati-cti.com or CALL 800-333-8394 and ask for an ATI IVR Specialist.