



Case Study: Roanoke County

Roanoke County, Top 10 Digital County Winner, Takes Advantage of Low-Cost Service Delivery Option Via Hosted Citizen Request Management

Background

Roanoke County, located along the northern border of Virginia, has been consistently named among the most technologically advanced, cutting-edge county governments in the U.S. by The Digital Counties Survey, conducted by the Center for Digital Government and the National Association of Counties. From 2004-2006, Roanoke County ranked first as the most high-tech county in the country for its size, and ranked second in 2007 and 2008.

Challenge

As a county that values interaction amongst citizens and staff, Roanoke understood the value of a Citizen Request Management (CRM) solution. However, the notes-based system the county had in place was unreliable and far too cumbersome to use. What's more, the hardware and software were no longer supported by the vendor and the county's internal IT staff did not have the specific knowledge required to support the application.

With CRM serving as a critical application for customer service representatives, the county needed a new solution. But, the county was faced with several challenges. For one, like most municipalities, the county was faced with doing more with less. There was no funding for a new solution. Second, the county would be tasked with converting an enormous amount of sensitive data to a new application. Third, there was no additional IT staff to support a new application.

Roanoke County soon realized that its old CRM provider was acquired by The Active Network, a leading software technology and marketing solutions provider to municipalities of all sizes. Active contacted Roanoke County to upgrade the application and during these discussions, Roanoke was introduced to Active's hosted CRM solution.

In the past, Roanoke County had shied away from hosted applications, also known as software-as-a-service, due to a lack of information security, privacy and unreliable connectivity internally. Bill Greeves, Director of IT for Roanoke County, notes, "In recent years, companies like The Active Network have really advanced to offer very secure hosted software solutions."

Solution

To make the software selection, Roanoke County's IT and user departments scoped their problems and needs. From there, they relied on analysts and peers, surveying other Virginia localities for vendor recommendations. Elaine Carver, CIO of Roanoke County, notes, "We received very positive feedback from organizations using

Customer at a Glance

Customer: Roanoke County, VA

Solution: Hosted Citizen Request Management

URL: www.roanokecountyva.gov

"We chose Active's hosted CRM solution because it required minimal upfront costs, allowed for a fast deployment, and required no license fees."

- Elaine Carver, CIO,
Roanoke County

Roanoke County's Tips for a Successful Implementation:

- ▶ Be realistic about expectations for the CRM system. Determine what your core values are and what is operationally important.
- ▶ Involve both users and senior-level managers in the process to obtain early buy-in.
- ▶ Re-evaluate how you do business and what information is important to collect from your citizens.
- ▶ Change is dramatic, so allow enough time for a learning curve.
- ▶ Deploy in one area and expand from there.
- ▶ Maintain effective communication between vendor and staff to achieve desired results.

Active's in-house solution. We were already using Active's recreation management software in our parks and recreation department, so that made us feel even more comfortable with the transition."

In 2008, Roanoke County upgraded to Active's hosted, browser-based Citizen Request Management solution. Going hosted meant that Active would manage the technology by hosting and managing the county's data securely, off-premises using the latest technology infrastructure. For Roanoke County, this meant avoiding major IT investment costs, subscribing to the software service rather than purchasing software licenses, and being able to access their applications via the Web.

Carver notes, "We chose Active's hosted CRM solution because it required minimal upfront costs, alleviated the burden of customization and upgrades, held Active accountable for our server uptime, allowed for a fast deployment, required no license fees, and made better use of our resources."

Implementation

"Our IT and user departments and Active's team jointly developed a specific business/project plan for the user department. While the word 'partner' tends to be overused, Active really did partner with us to get the CRM system up and running."

In the last year, Roanoke County not only deployed its hosted CRM solution, but it also began setting up its payroll system in a hosted environment. Greeves says, "Both deployments have gone very well so far."

Carver adds, "The deployment for Active's CRM solution was very fast and at a low cost. We didn't need additional staff, hardware, replacements, patches or software upgrades."

Results

For Roanoke County, Carver and Greeves agree that Active's hosted CRM system allows county staff members to focus more on citizens, as opposed to back-end services.

Greeves continues, "We have the agility to address issues more quickly, plan our budgets more accurately, take advantage of a dedicated, knowledgeable staff at Active, and take advantage of best-of-breed solutions and enhancements without an RFP process or server downtime."

Carver notes, "We have a very happy user department, which as many municipalities know, is important. Our non-technical system administrator is able to maintain the system without IT assistance and our call center agents have improved data entry, search capability and overall accessibility."

Carver and Greeves also note that the feedback from citizens has been great. Through Active's hosted CRM software, citizens can submit requests and inquiries via the Web, for things ranging from damaged signs to missed trash services pick-up. They can also take advantage of Active's Knowledge Management solution which provides a knowledgebase containing answers to frequently asked questions. "Selecting Active's hosted CRM was a great decision for us and I foresee that it will prove to be even more positive as we expand it out into other areas."