Pennington County, South Dakota, Department of Equalization

County Office Saves Time With Better Mobility and Accuracy in the Field

Challenges

Like most busy county offices, time was a valuable commodity for Pennington County’s equalization team. Because data collection was such a time-consuming process, they inspected about 2,000 of their 50,000 tax parcels per year, which meant it could take 20 to 25 years to reappraise the entire jurisdiction.

Appraisers spent several days collecting data, then reentering the same data into the county’s computer-assisted mass appraisal (CAMA) system. Sometimes, they returned to the office and discovered they were missing data or that a paper sketch didn’t match. They would then go back to the properties to verify, correct, or collect missing information. Appraisers also spent a great deal of time downloading pictures from a digital camera and attaching them to property cards in the CAMA system.
The department recognized that neighborhood reappraisals were consuming a huge amount of labor and paper. In addition to time spent in the field and reentering data in the office, they also printed neighborhood maps and two- to three-page property cards for each parcel.

While the county employed the cost approach to value residential properties, their appraisers would often research sales of comparable properties to gauge the accuracy of their values. The appraisers had to conduct this often time-consuming research in an application outside their CAMA system.

**Solution**

To help the data collection and reappraisal processes become faster and more efficient, the county hired additional appraisers and instructed them to work independently, instead of on teams.

They then turned to Tyler Technologies to implement an integrated mobile solution in its Orion appraisal and tax software. The county purchased 15 tablets for their appraisers and worked closely with Tyler staff for hands-on training both in the office and in the field.

According to Shannon Rittberger, Pennington County’s director of equalization, the changes were felt immediately.

“Orion’s integrated mobile solution made us a whole lot more efficient,” said Rittberger. “We were able to look at more properties faster. Now, we’ll be able to cover the entire county every five to seven years.”

Pennington County also added a sales-comparison model to value most residential properties, while still retaining the cost approach for select remote properties. During the valuation process, appraisers can quickly pull up five comparable properties for each subject property in their CAMA system and incorporate factors such as location and style of property. They can also map those comparable sales within the CAMA system.

The county can now provide comparable sales data to both property owners and the review board to support the assessment. Mapping those comparable sales within the CAMA system has also become an important visual aid.

The equalization office took important steps to make this once time-consuming process much faster and more efficient. And, by looking at more properties more frequently, they get better data, which also makes their values more accurate.
Results
Pennington County is now using Orion’s integrated mobile solution to increase efficiency in the office and to streamline the reappraisal process. Because of their efforts, they can:

• Eliminate wasted labor hours and the need to print property record cards and maps
• Make property data changes on a tablet in the field
• Take pictures with the tablet and attach them directly to the parcel
• Reduce neighborhood reappraisal preparation from several days to less than a day
• Reduce building permit preparation from a week to less than a day
• Complete nearly 3,000 building permit inspections in half the time
• Increase property inspections to nearly 10,000 a year

The office has produced more accurate valuations with fast, easy access to more current property data. And, as an unexpected bonus, the public’s perception of the office has improved, especially when they can make changes to a taxpayer’s record in real time on a computer rather than scribbling down changes on paper.

Appraisers in the county are feeling the difference, too. They are achieving on-the-spot accuracy in entering data and eliminating unnecessary redundancies. They have greater independence and control of their daily workload by not feeling tied to an office all day. And they can do their jobs with greater ease by not having to carry maps, print cards, clipboards, and cameras when collecting data.

In Their Own Words:

“Tyler was absolutely wonderful to work with. They spent time in our office and trained our staff. They spent days both here in our office and out holding tablets with our appraisers in the field. I can’t say enough how important it is to have your software experts in your office and, in this case, in the field with your staff.”

— Shannon Rittberger, Pennington County Director of Equalization
Learn How Orion Solves Your Office’s Biggest Challenges

The introduction of an integrated mobile solution to your existing Orion software can eliminate many manual processes, which will result in:

- Significantly more efficient and accurate data collection
- Fewer wasted resources in the field — such as time, money, and gasoline
- Easier access to data in the office and out in the field
- Continual improvement and training with Tyler’s EverGuide® initiative

The first step in implementation is to contact us for a complete analysis of your office’s needs. By working together, we can find out which functions would be the most effective for your jurisdiction in both the office and the field.

Get Started Today

Contact Tyler today to learn more about Orion products and services, as well as our many other industry-leading Appraisal & Tax Solutions.

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