

Miami-Dade County, Florida

- 2.4 million citizens
- 2,000 square miles
- Largest county in Florida

Business Challenge

- Decrease dependence on paper and enhance workflow processes
- Utilize current technology to address rapidly growing workload
- Optimize business operations
- Ensure information safety and security
- Provide information accessibility by various agencies

Business Solution

- Tyler Technologies' Odyssey[®] solution

Business Results

- Implemented Odyssey in a completely paperless way
- Optimized business efficiencies and court processes
- Streamlined workflow (saved hundreds of hours per week)
- Set-up secured access and disaster recovery contingency plan
- Improved information accessibility via the Internet
- Deployed a single fully integrated system

Business Challenge – Implement an Efficient, Paperless Court

Miami-Dade County is the most populous county in the State of Florida, making up approximately half of the South Florida metropolitan area with 2,000 square miles, and is home to a flourishing and diverse community of 2.4 million citizens. The Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners is the governing body of unincorporated Miami-Dade County, and has broad, regional powers to establish policies for services that transcend city boundaries. The government provides major metropolitan services countywide and city-type services for residents of the unincorporated areas.

Growing Pains

In 2002, county officials were faced with the daunting task of replacing a rapidly deteriorating and antiquated 20 year-old legacy case management system.

“(Our old system) wasn’t suitable for a large, urban court that wanted to move forward in a paperless (file) environment,” commented Tom James, Chief Information Officer of the Clerk of Courts for Miami-Dade County. “We really had to find an alternative to that system.”

Security Concerns

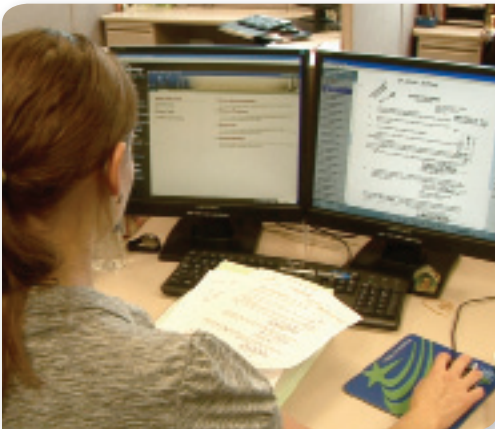
Document security was also a concern. “One of the first things that I experienced when I walked into this courthouse was somebody coming down the steps that had both arms full of files,” Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of Courts for Miami-Dade County, remarked. “I said, ‘Pardon me, sir. You know, those are official files. You can’t leave the courthouse with those.’ He said, ‘No, this is my divorce, my files.’ We made copies for him, but there are files walking out of courthouses all across America. One week later, the courthouse basement was flooded, drenching the lower two shelves of open files. Thousands of paper files were affected. Huge vans with freeze-dry facilities circled the courthouse for over a month. It was clear to me that paper, viewable by one person in one place at a time, was antiquated -- so 20th Century.”

File Storage and Safety

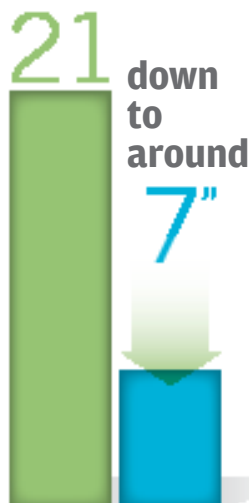
“The other issue was file storage,” said Mark Martinez, Division Chief of the Family Courts Division of the Clerk of Courts for Miami-Dade County. “The file room can handle approximately 500,000 files and we wanted a solution where we wouldn’t have to handle so much paper. At one point, we were spending almost eight hours a day hole-punching pleadings just to put them in the file,” Martinez reflected.

“We don’t believe in having multiple systems to perform different functions. We believe in having one system that’s fully integrated that does the work of the court.”

— Tom James, Chief Information Officer of the Clerk of Courts for Miami-Dade County



“We have streamlined our processes and we have reduced the number of manual steps that it takes to process a piece of paper from



“There’s been an artificial distinction, I think, between case maintenance and case management that’s been legislatively mandated in Florida for a number of years now,” James iterated. “But in Dade County, we really believe that we are all on the same team — that we are here to serve the community and to provide a court where people can litigate their differences. We want it to be the most effective and efficient system that it can be.”

Business Solution – Tyler’s Odyssey Case Manager Solution

Faced with a mounting case-load, an inefficient legacy case management system, a desire to streamline their workflow and go paperless, Miami-Dade court officials began searching for a solution.

“We considered building our own (solution) then we began looking at a variety of case management vendors at various conferences,” James commented. “We watched the developments around the state with interest as various implementations were going on. We started talking to Tyler about Odyssey four to five years prior to us acquiring the package.”

“What happened was the court decided they needed a calendaring system since they are functionally responsible for setting cases and they looked very closely at Tyler’s Odyssey calendaring module,” James continued. “We saw that as a great opportunity to piggy-back on their initiative and we put together a joint project plan to acquire the Odyssey system.”

“When it came to convincing people about the benefits associated with going to Odyssey,” Laurie Reaves, PMP, Computer Services Manager, Technical Services Division of the Clerk of Courts for Miami-Dade County interjected, “I could relate that to driving a car. Would you rather sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic, stacks of pleadings sitting on your desk to be docketed and filed, or would you rather take the express lane – Odyssey? It’s a no-brainer. You see this application for a couple of minutes and you know this is the way to go.”

A Partnership is Born

On October 26, 2005, Miami-Dade County officially signed the contract for Tyler Technologies to provide its Case Management software to the Clerk of the Circuit and County Court, as well as the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida. The project called for implementation of the Odyssey Case Management solution for civil, probate, family, domestic violence and mental health cases, along with electronic document management for all court documents filed in those cases. Judicial assignment and scheduling and court filing fees would also be handled by Odyssey.

“One of our goals is to continue to serve more customers online rather than in line.”

— Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of Courts for Miami-Dade County



As part of the project, Tyler also engineered Odyssey to interface with various other state and local justice systems, ensuring a powerful and flexible case management system.

The county brought in data for 2 million parties, nearly a million cases and 1.6 million scanned images in preparation for their Odyssey go-live — a massive amount of data. Miami-Dade's efforts represented one of the largest amounts of conversion data for an Odyssey system launch in Tyler's history. The result?

“Not only did we go paperless upon go-live, and with Odyssey at the same time, but we also introduced the most conversion data, the most complex conversion process Tyler had ever experienced, and it was virtually a seamless process,” Reaves continued. “When it came time to go live, it was like second nature, and that's what you want for success. You want people to feel that they already know it, they've embraced it, and they want it to happen. When you've got that going, you've got a win-win situation. We had that in Miami-Dade County.”

“We now have the ability to manage documents in a paperless environment, which was really important to us here in Dade County,” James said. “I believe we are one of the few Tyler clients that have implemented Odyssey in a completely paperless way. So it has really made us more efficient. We have streamlined our processes and we have reduced the number of manual steps that it takes to process a piece of paper from 21 down to around 7.”

Business Result – Doing More with Less

With their new Odyssey Case Manager solution up and running, Miami-Dade County started seeing results immediately.

“Within hours of us going live, we all looked at each other and said, ‘We could just never go back. How did we do it all that way before?’” Reaves explained. “It was so neat to go on that floor and see the faces on the clerks who are doing the filing and docketing, bringing up the image of the document and knowing exactly how to docket that pleading and just seeing this in action and saying, ‘Wow! Look how efficient this is.’”

“This (implementing Odyssey) would be something that would raise everybody up,” Ruvin said. “It gave us an opportunity to provide PC training to all of our employees and that empowered our workforce. It also gave them ownership in the overall vision, which I find is essential. Everybody needs to buy into the vision and feel a sense of their own enrichment.”

“I'm happy with it – it's what I expected and more.”

— Mark Martinez

Division Chief of the Family Courts
Division of the Clerk of Courts for
Miami-Dade County

“I wanted something that was image-based so we could handle the paper as little as possible. Once something is docketed, it’s filed, and that’s what Odyssey does for us.”

— Mark Martinez, Division Chief of the Family Courts Division of the Clerk of Courts for Miami-Dade County



“Now serving more customers online – rather than in line.”

“Odyssey is business changing and life changing... I’m so glad I’ve been a part of this.”

— Laurie Reaves

PMP, Computer Services Manager,
Technical Services Division of The Clerk
of the Courts for Miami-Dade County

“What Odyssey also does is give us flexibility,” commented Martinez. “In the future if we ever decide we want to have people to docket off-site we can do that too.”

“If I had to think about the biggest benefit in going with our Odyssey solution in Miami-Dade County,” Reaves said, “I’d have to say that it was business and life-changing — business-changing for our operations area and life-changing for everyone who does business with us in this community.”

Using Tyler’s Public Access application, all parties involved with a selected case may access pertinent information via the Internet.

“The Public Access module enables all the family court attorneys to see their case files on the Internet from the comfort of their office. That was a real benefit to the attorneys and brought them onboard very quickly in terms of supporting the system,” Tom James said.

“The staff, they love it,” Martinez interjected. “I hear from attorneys that deal with other areas of the law, wondering when they will be able to experience Odyssey. And I think that’s a testament to how great Odyssey is and what it does for us.”

James said, “We also found Tyler’s staff to be very accommodating, very professional and of course very knowledgeable from all the experience they have gained throughout the United States working with other clients.”

“They (Tyler) were partners every step of the way,” Reaves commented. “That led to teamwork. When you have a vendor come in and they are proud of their solution and they want to see you effectively use that solution — that feeds all the teamwork that follows.”

“Tyler was a partner every step of the way.”

