

County of San Diego: 2019 CSAC Challenge Awards Executive Summary

TITLE: ONLINE MARRIAGE APPOINTMENT SYSTEM

OVERVIEW: The County Clerk has made scheduling appointments for marriage licenses and ceremonies available online to the public 24 hours a day.

CHALLENGE: County Clerk marriage services were available by appointment only, which required over 26,000 annual contacts – either in person or by phone during regular business hours – to schedule, change, or cancel a marriage license and/or ceremony appointment. Unfortunately, during periods of increased call volumes, customers would become frustrated with the wait time and abandon the call without scheduling an appointment, which resulted in either a trip to our office or calling back and waiting again. Customers making in person appointments had to drive to one of our five locations, take a number and wait in line for assistance. Communication regarding confirmations was limited to verbal interaction at the time the appointment was made. Appointment reminders were non-existent.

The legacy appointment system also presented additional challenges; since our five locations were not integrated into one system, staff had to open each system separately to check availability.

SOLUTION: The County Clerk recognized the challenge and identified a technological solution that would improve customer service and workflow. The decision to implement the new Online Marriage Appointment System made the process simpler for customers by allowing them to view and schedule appointments 24 hours a day. The system was implemented within three months of contracting, and strategic changes to the website drove customers to the new online appointment system.

The new system allows customers to view a calendar with available appointment times for all locations while facilitating the scheduling of their marriage license and/or ceremony appointment on their computer or mobile device. Customers that prefer speaking directly to a staff member still have this option. The new system integrated all five locations and services into one system, providing staff with advanced search capabilities and features. This allows staff to see all available and scheduled appointments any day of the week, by location, and service type. The Online Marriage Appointment System greatly improved customer communication by sending email confirmations so that they can view, modify, and cancel appointments online. Additionally, customers have the option to opt-in and receive text messages and will receive an email (and/or text) reminder 24 hours before the appointment.

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INNOVATION: The County of San Diego is a destination wedding location. The San Diego County Clerk schedules appointments for more than 25,000 marriage licenses each year, making it the second highest issuer of licenses in the State of California.

The overall goal was to greatly improve the customer experience by implementing current technology that allowed the customer to choose a convenient day and time to make, change or cancel their appointment. By making the appointment process available online, customers have the flexibility to schedule, modify, or cancel an appointment 24 hours a day. By sending automatic confirmations and reminders, customers are kept up to date on any information regarding their appointment and are provided links to pertinent information, such as fees and applications. Customers are also provided with an embedded link to a generic email account, that is monitored by staff, should they have any questions throughout the process.

Having transparency in the appointment process allows customers to know what time and dates are available, allowing them to coordinate their wedding date with ease.

RESULTS: The number of appointments through the Online Marriage Appointment System have steadily increased since it was first implemented. Since inception through April 2019, 80.6% or 12,507 of the 15,512 appointments booked in our marriage calendaring system, were made by our customers. For the month of April, the percentage of appointments booked by our customers was 85.0%.

This in turn has led to fewer phone calls to the call center and, in April 2019, the number of phone calls received was reduced by 33.7% when compared to April 2018. In addition, 73.1% of customers are also elected to opt-in to receive text message notifications and reminders for their appointment.

REPLICABILITY: The program can easily be replicated for other California Clerk's marriage services. Additionally, the system would be easily replicated for other county departments with services requiring appointments. The calendaring appointment system is used by the County of San Diego Clerk of the Board for passport services and by the Land Use and Environmental Group for scheduling inspections and consultations.

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