

Crime, Lost & Found Property Management System



Police National Legal Database

West Midlands Police required a force wide system to record and track lost, found, stolen and seized property and also to easily match recovered or stolen property

PDMS developed a new force wide browser-based system aligned with West Midlands Police's new Property Management business processes.

The system tracks Property Items and Records and associated information such as: linked names and addresses; current location and current status through the items full life history

The Property system is used by over 8,000 police officers & support staff and holds data on hundreds of thousands of Property items

"We needed a modern system that helped us manage our found and crime related property more efficiently. Ease of input and integration with existing applications were particularly important to us. The PDMS solution has delivered such a system, and through our Intranet, it is now well established and in use forcewide with around 8,000 users."

Chris Willetts Facilities Manager, West Midlands Police



New system helps West Midlands Police

Challenge

West Midlands Police is the second largest police force in the country, serving a population of around 2.63 million. Everyday, hundreds of items of property, ranging from mobile phones to bicycles are either handed in to the police by the public or removed from crime scenes as evidence. In general the main business objective is to facilitate the efficient return of property to the rightful owner or to dispose of items quickly and efficiently and overall to reduce the administration and storage burden on the force as a whole.

Following a competitive OJEU tendering process, PDMS were awarded the contract to develop and implement a new force wide Crime, Lost and Found Property Management System.

This was a complex project for a number of key reasons:

The nature of the property business procedures which have to deal with the complete lifecycle from initial data entry to the ultimate return or disposal while including a record of all events in a fully auditable manner.

The scale of the system, to cater for over 8,000 end users across 21 different Operational Command Units (Divisions) and to hold information on hundreds of thousands of individual items per year.

It was essential that the system also integrated with a number of West Midlands Police's other key line of business applications (e.g. Oracle HR and their Crime Data warehouse) in order to reduce data entry and enable sophisticated data searches.

Solution

PDMS developed the system using their Foundations TM Application Server and business components which already covered common business requirements, such as, authentication, access control and audit. The system is based on an Oracle/Unix based database in line with West Midlands Police's current technical policy. Presentation of the data uses modern stylesheet technologies to present the user with appropriate information and system functions depending on both user permission levels and workstation type. The core functions of the Crime, Lost & Found property system are as follows:

Storage of property records

including a pre-populated standardized property item description dataset which speeds up data entry processes, maintains data quality while also improving search and match results.

Seal management

including information on the location, status and transfer of the sealed bags with unique reference numbers.

Property disposal

including processes to return property to owner, to dispose either by destruction, auction or transfer to secure stores. Required documentation is produced by the system at all relevant stages in the process e.g. auction forms and collection letters.

System administration

to manage the set up of users and groups, OCU's and workstations and property definitions etc.

Searching for property

powerful search and match facilities integrated with the crime management system

Reminders

generates automated e-mails for a number of processes, to ensure property items are dealt with promptly by the designated Officer in Charge (OIC). The e-mails are configurable and are audited.

Auditing

all business function tasks, key events and processes are audited throughout the life history of the Property Item.

An essential requirement of the new web based system was the integration with existing databases, to reduce data entry and to enable sophisticated data searches. Interfaces were written to several key systems including: Oracle HR, the force Crime Data Warehouse and Name and Address Gazetteer.

PDMS' Foundations TM DataViewer was also provided with the Property system to give West Midlands Police a flexible and powerful reporting tool with standard reports but which also is flexible in order to respond to dynamic, intelligence-led policing requests.

The project team at PDMS worked closely with the West Midlands Police property project team and the IT Department and provided a number of key additional services including database management, infrastructure design, configuration and set-up.

The implementation of the system was phased through a period of 'cascade' style training implemented across the force. This strategic roll out was completed at the beginning of 2004 at all 21 Operational Command Units.

Results

Over 80 police stations and all property offices now use the software and it currently holds information on over 250,000 individual items ranging from watches to mountain bikes and can be accessed by over 8,000 officers and support staff.

Feedback from West Midlands Police has been very positive as the system helps them manage the Property Management processes more efficiently and effectively while the new browser based system gives faster, easier and wider access to property records in a secure environment.

The solution enables them to produce pro-active 'intelligence led' policing reports and to analyse possible trends, for example, 'lost passports reported by area or timeframe'.

The Crime, Lost & Found Property system has also been designed with flexibility in mind so that new features such as bar-coding, property item images, scanned signatures and mobile PDA use can all be easily implemented within the system.

The new system has not only saved the West Midlands Police Authority administration time and therefore reduced costs, but is helping to significantly improve performance in relation to the return of found or recovered property.