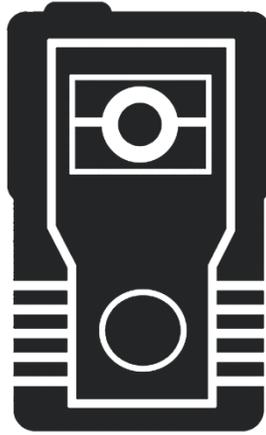
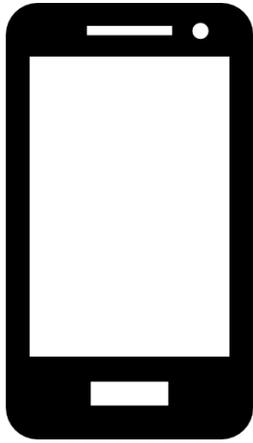


Managing digital evidence is not the complete answer



As digital devices continue to take over every facet of society, the necessity for the police to have the ability to manage the terabytes of digital evidence being collected, produced and shared daily has become a critical operational requirement. The most current remedy is the inclusion of a Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) that acts as the repository of all digital assets. Unfortunately, DEMS are only part of the solution.

Combined with having a DEMS to handle the expansive array of digital evidence, the other element that police departments must not overlook are the documents contained within their Records Management Systems (RMS). No matter how expansive the digital tsunami will be, documents and court forms will continue to be generated and be provided to the prosecutor with the related digital evidence.

The question that needs to be considered is how do police departments effectively manage and share the complete disclosure package with their justice partners? Having disparate systems was one option but it meant having far too many business processes to operate efficiently. The solution that is crystalizing is to unify police RMS with their DEMS data and incorporate a Case Management System (CMS) such as eJust-CMS to automatically identify, filter and assemble the entire prosecution package. With recent technological advances, the reality of integrating information is now possible and affords the opportunity to share, via a secure cloud, the complete disclosure package to all justice partners. The benefits are a worthy consideration as police strive for efficiency and cost containment improvements.

The impact of the present state of disclosure

In the mid 1990's, the province of Ontario regulated a file management protocol stemming from an inquiry which examined the Paul Bernardo murder investigation. In his report, Justice Archie Campbell outlined some critical faults on how police manage and share information amongst each other and equally significant was his finding that police did not have an established filing system for their major cases. Based on his report, the Major Case Management (MCM) protocol was developed where reports were stored or "filed" in what came to be known as a "file 52" format.

Although the era of Justice Campbell's report was not long ago, the majority of information gathered by the police was largely composed of documents, photos and video interviews. These assets were included into the MCM filing system and stored in banker's boxes. With the dawn of electronic information management, boxes were replaced by a computer filing system. This process was suitable for a few decades, however, with today's digital explosion, we encounter police agencies using the same filing structure but also requiring other systems to store data. The end result effectively collapses the value and impact of the "file 52" format and it's like having a pile of paper on the table again instead of one complete and organized case. In short, this is one big step backwards.*

What needs to be considered in moving forward is simplicity of work. Keeping it simple but being effective and efficient is one of the major cornerstones of any business and law enforcement is no exception. With simplicity of use at the forefront, the latest versions of DEMS are getting better yet they still require the user to complete the disclosure package by utilizing separate software applications. Further, DEMS do not have the ability to automatically identify relevant documents that are related to the charges being laid as does eJust's case management system.

The solution

By joining DEMS and RMS data, it would enable a CMS such as eJust-CMS to function as the information filter and assembler. In addition, by bridging a DEMS with eJust-CMS into a site-specific configuration, it would allow the automatic compilation of all relevant information into one disclosure package. Many operational and cost containment benefits can be realized in this process. For example, police would be able to:

- Reduce the amount of sworn and civilian personnel required in the production of charge and disclosure packages to a core processing team that becomes specialized in their tasks
- Assemble a fulsome, standardized charge or prosecution package that is site-configurable to police and prosecution specifications
- View a video interview and its transcript simultaneously and be able to tag critical passages of text and body language of the subject
- Have “one view” of all data
- Reduce the time required to produce cases by at least 55%

The opportunity as we see it is for eJust Systems working with DEMS vendors to provide an “end to end” automated information highway to record, store data, assemble and lastly, be able to transfer the information to the prosecutor and defence counsel or any other justice partner that has a stake in a case.

It is widely accepted that the police’s responsibility in terms of disclosure is to disclose the entirety of each case to the prosecutor. Conversely, it is the prosecutor that decides if there is sufficient evidence to proceed and what case information will be provided to the defence counsel. This delineation of duty remains intact and nor should it change, however, by combining key data systems, the disclosure business process can become integrated and will result in gained efficiencies by the police and their justice partners. It is a need that the public justly seeks to ensure they are getting the best service while containing cost.

By listening to our clients and being cognizant of the technological changes taking place, eJust Systems continues to make upgrades to not only keep pace but to be at the forefront.

For my next blog I will discuss methods we recommend to our clients in centralizing charge and disclosure production and utilizing specially trained civilians and fewer officers to perform this function.

[*https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/inquiries/cornwall/en/hearings/exhibits/OPC/pdf/56_MCM_Manual.pdf](https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/inquiries/cornwall/en/hearings/exhibits/OPC/pdf/56_MCM_Manual.pdf)

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