



Northern California District Attorney's Office Speeds Warrant Processing with DocuSign

Summary

- Accelerated warrant processing
- Increased availability of officers on the scene
- Maintained assurance of signature validity

In the Butte County District Attorney's Office in California's Central Valley, the staff is committed to providing professional, reliable services that keep all residents of Butte County safe. The DA's office implemented DocuSign and successfully accelerated warrant processing and increased availability of officers on the scene, while maintaining assurance of signature validity.

Challenge

For years, the DA Office's search warrant process was manual and inefficient. Officers had to fill out a search warrant, contact a judge (at night, this sometimes involved waking the judge with a phone call and subsequently driving to his/her house), have the judge read and sign the warrant, and then return to the crime scene.

According to Albert Tong, information systems analyst for the Butte County District Attorney's Office, the process was far from optimal. "It regularly took hours to get a single signature, and created numerous delays in the crime investigation and resolution process." It also left teams on the scene short-handed when an officer was gone for hours in search of a signature.

Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey knew that digitizing search warrant signatures would streamline the process significantly. By modernizing the approach to warrant authorization, he knew that he would enable his officers to focus their time in a more valuable way: on criminal investigations.

Solution

The Butte County District Attorney's Office selected DocuSign to help process search warrants significantly faster, without requiring officers to travel or wait for



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Albert Tong
Information Systems Analyst

signatures from judges. The judges are issued Apple iPads to they may able to sign off on warrants from any location.

Results

In 2012, DocuSign even played a key role in a high-profile SWAT operation in Butte County, enabling officers to quickly obtain a signed search warrant from a judge during a heated standoff with a heavily armed suspect. "Being able to reduce the team's wait time, which would have been an hour and a half without DocuSign, to just minutes using the iPad, helped our officers move forward quickly, and reduce the risk of harm to innocent bystanders," said Tong.

Before the county implemented DocuSign, it often took hours for officers to get a single search warrant processed. "Given the sheer geographical expanse of our county, our officers often had to drive miles and miles from a crime scene just to get to a judge for a signature," Tong said. "Today using DocuSign and the iPads, they can get a signature in minutes."

During heated situations, it's crucial that all officers remain on the scene and working toward resolution. "Leaving a crime scene to get a judge's signature



can create a manpower deficit that puts officers and bystanders at risk,” according to Tong. “Using DocuSign and the iPads, officers never have to leave a crime scene to drive to the courthouse or judge’s home in order to get signatures—that creates a much safer, more stable situation.”

DocuSign also helps out in the courtroom. “Sometimes, defense attorneys question the validity of warrant signatures in court,” said Tong. “With the secure online solution from DocuSign, we are easily able to provide an audit trail that confirms that the signature is valid.”



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