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Ways

Small Cities

Are Thriving With



AUTOMATION



INTRODUCTION

For the more than 16,000 municipalities in the U.S. with populations under 10,000 people, there is a familiar motto of doing more with less. Tasked with everything from policy-making and enforcement to local road maintenance and public libraries, local government organizations are just as busy as their larger counterparts. The challenge, however, is that with a smaller population often comes a smaller budget.

This is why investment in automation is becoming critical for smaller government organizations -- especially as budgets are tightened and tax revenues dwindle. With digital solutions, cities have been able to accomplish more and spend less. Here are a few stories from small cities running highly productive organizations on a cost-efficient budget thanks to automation solutions.



Borough of Emmaus, Pa. Saves \$30,000 Annually

In late 2015, staff at the Borough of Emmaus, Pa. (pop. 11,296), introduced [Peak Agenda Management](#) software to overhaul council meeting agenda preparation, and as a result, expect to save \$30,000 annually. Prior to implementing agenda management software, Shane Pepe, Borough Manager, and his staff members, relied on an entirely paper-based, manual method of agenda creation.

“The amount of man hours was labor intensive. My officers could be doing a lot of other things besides driving packets around town,” Pepe said. “And the Borough would have to pay me and pay my mileage for driving agendas to the Solicitor’s office. Our binder for the budget, for instance, was sometimes over 1,000 pages. It really was a logistical headache.”

Pepe, his staff, and the Borough Council knew there must be a better way to compile, create and distribute agenda items and agendas. When Pepe did a cost analysis to determine what the Borough would stand to gain if a system were put in place, the potential savings were enough to spur action.

“Our cost analysis on what an agenda management software would cost versus what we could save was revealing,” Pepe said. “We looked at both the hard costs and the soft costs - which is definitely something you have to do - and it was evident that we would come out ahead.”



It’s obviously a change to go to a system that you have to pay for, but our cost savings and our time savings and efficiency is definitely measurable.

- Shane Pepe, Borough Manager



Bald Head Island, N.C. Enables Council Members to Go Mobile

The historic Village of Bald Head Island (pop. 167) sits just off the coast of N.C., serving as a respite away from “mainland” living and allowing visitors a quiet seaside vacation in the warmer months. But for the permanent residents of the island, normal legislative challenges are faced year-round.

Smaller municipalities like Bald Head often struggle to justify the need and cost of an agenda management solution, but that doesn’t mean it can’t be done. [Peak Agenda Management](#) was designed for lower population communities, and its ease of use keeps deployment and training costs to a minimum and its price point low. That’s why Bald Head Island turned to it as a solution.

“Peak is much more user-friendly than our old system,” says Daralyn Spivey, Municipal Clerk for the Village of Bald Head Island. The program they used prior to Granicus “wasn’t that

easy” to use, and left staff using other applications to work around roadblocks in the system.

In 2015, the Village made the switch to Granicus. Since [Peak Agenda Management](#) was designed with the three pillars of ease of use, timeliness, and high-quality support in mind, it was exactly what the Village had been searching for. They decided to combine the out-of-the-box usability from Peak with iLegislate, a meeting efficiency application that sends agendas right to users’ tablets or desktops.

Spivey hopes that with the deployment of [Peak Agenda Management and iLegislate](#), Councilors will be able to accomplish all of their tasks seamlessly without having to create workarounds or jump between multiple programs.



Now [Council members] can just open up their iPad and go to work.

- Daralyn Spivey, Municipal Clerk



Castle Pines, Colo. Saves Valuable Time

The City of Castle Pines, Colo., is a small suburb that lies between Denver and Colorado Springs. With a population of just over 10,000 people, they were challenged by the amount of time it took to operate City Council meetings manually. “It used to take me about a day and half to get my minutes published,” says Sharon Washington, City Clerk.

In smaller towns and cities, it can be difficult to implement automation solutions when operating with a smaller budget. However, saving time by automating certain processes can save an organization money, effectively allowing the system to pay for itself -- which is what happened in the City of Castle Pines.

Once Washington was able to prove the benefits of a minutes automation solution, in-meeting processes began to run more smoothly. Now she can easily record

motions and other pertinent information during City Council meetings. She’s also able to publish her minutes immediately after a meeting.

Now the City of Castle Pines is saving roughly 40 hours of staff time per month, which gives them time to accomplish other things. Washington can publish her minutes immediately, and she no longer has to wait for items to publish her agenda - saving valuable time to focus on other duties. Councilors will be able to accomplish all of their tasks seamlessly without having to create workarounds or jump between multiple programs.



When you go to the City Manager for budget approval, be prepared to show them how much time it can save you, and that what you can do with that time is a bonus.

- Sharon Washington, City Clerk

CONCLUSION

The benefits of automation software are more than enough to justify any costs incurred, for both staff members and citizens alike. Having the ability to run meetings more smoothly and easily will allow for more time spent on citizen outreach and other important administrative tasks, including records management or website upkeep.

Not sure where to start? Check out the checklist to the right for details on steps to take on your path to automation.

ABOUT GRANICUS

Granicus provides technology that empowers government organizations to create better lives for the people they serve. By offering the industry's leading cloud-based solutions for communications, meeting and agenda management, and digital services to over 3,000 public sector organizations, Granicus helps turn government missions into quantifiable realities. Granicus products connect over 150 million people, creating a powerful network to enhance citizen engagement. By optimizing decision-making processes, Granicus strives to help government see better outcomes and a greater impact for the citizens they serve.

NEXT STEPS CHECKLIST FOR SMALL CITIES



OUTLINE GOALS

Write down what you hope to accomplish with automation software. Less time spent on agendas? Cutting paper and printing costs? Whatever you hope to gain from hours saved, the first step is to get it in writing.



HOST DISCUSSIONS

Speak with other office and administrative staff members. Meet with staff members in other departments as well. Ask for their input and gather their feedback.



CALCULATE SAVINGS

Using hard numbers, calculate the amount of money your organization spends weekly, monthly, or yearly on printing costs. Take hours in staff labor into account as well.



OBTAIN APPROVAL

Once you have done all of this, it's time to take your proposal to the City Manager, City Council, or Mayor. Outline the ways in which the organization will save time and money.

Need help envisioning your goals or calculating potential cost savings? Reach out to our team at Granicus to set up a meeting at info@granicus.com



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