

# Improving Business Practices: Research & Lessons

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# Presentation Overview

- Purpose of Presentation
- Background of Hennepin County Court
  - All electronic Court as of summer 2015
  - How this process changed our court
  - What we did to respond to the changes
- How having a Research Division and Business Practice Unit helped us adjust to our new reality
- Practical lessons from these two divisions (or, How these divisions help meet court goals)



# Presentation Overview

- Although much of our presentation is geared toward Criminal Court examples, these lessons can be applied in all areas of the court.
- We hope for this to be an interactive session, so please feel free to ask questions or briefly share your own experiences as we go along
- We'll leave some time for questions/discussion at the end



# Purpose of Presentation

- Explain the roles, responsibilities, and benefits of having a Research Division and Business Practice Unit
- Demonstrate some specific ways in which these two divisions helped Hennepin County District Court
- How to build these divisions in your courts – what types of individuals to look for – what types of qualifications
- Draw out some of the lessons learned from these experiences regarding the ways in which these divisions can:
  - Ensure fairness and transparency
  - Improve the experiences of court users
  - Be fiscally responsible
  - Be flexible and nimble in the face of change



# A little about Hennepin District Court

- About one-quarter of the 5 million people of MN reside in Hennepin County
- Minneapolis and 46 surrounding suburbs
- Most diverse ethnically/racially/financially
- Unified Court with annual filings of over 500,000 cases
  
- We have a single information system for all divisions and throughout MN – MNCIS (Tyler product)
- Besides a multitude of internal reports available to managers/supervisors in MNCIS we have an analytical data mart, MNJAD which also has customized MN reports
- Additionally the data in MNJAD can be accessed by researchers or programmers for advanced research requests and customized extracts



# Research Division

- Question:
  - Does your court have individuals or a department that specializes in data analysis and policy recommendations?
    - Yes
    - No



# Research Division: How to find these people

- Have a strong policy/academic background
  - Experience presenting (and defending) research findings
- Provide strong methodological skills
  - Quantitative skills working with large data sets
  - Qualitative Skills – Survey Design and analysis
- Trained in pulling, aggregating, and analyzing data
  - Merging data from court sources and justice partner's data sources
  - Letting data and evidence guide conclusions
- Have a strong interest in Policy Research
  - Working in an applied setting is not for everyone
  - Listening skills are key
- Ability to provide findings in plain language
  - GOOD COMMUNICATORS



# Research Division

## Roles and Responsibilities

- Provide empirical data for Court Initiatives
  - Problem Solving Courts
  - Changes made by the Bench to Calendars/Case Processing
  - Analyze impact from moving to an Electronic Court
  - Provide on-going data on Court Performance
  - Conduct annual Judicial/Referee Development Assessments
- Provide data to Managers/Supervisors
  - To help with employee performance
  - To ensure data quality
  - Address system issues: getting interpreters efficiently
  - Work with finance to conduct Cost of Court analyses
- Liaison with the academic justice research related to courts





# Research Division

## Roles and Responsibilities

- Conduct Research Studies
  - That help to illuminate issues with regard to the Court
    - Develop Risk Assessment tools for Pretrial Release
    - Dispositional analyses – Adult and Juvenile
    - Impact of new legislation on Court Processing
    - Justice Partner and public perceptions of the court
  - Provide research support for County and Court Initiatives
    - JDAI – Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative
      - Annie E Casey: Deep End Initiative
    - ADI – Adult Detention Initiative
    - Crossover Youth (Dependency and Delinquency)
    - Support for Bench committees:
      - Equal Justice Committee, Domestic Violence Committee, etc.
    - Represent the court in state and county meetings related to data



# Research Division: What can this type of division do for your court?

- Address justice partner issues with informed data
- Setting up data quality reports
  - Proper use of codes in electronic system, review of data entry when issues emerge – work hand-in-hand with Business Practices Unit and divisions
- Workload standards project
  - Determining whether each department is adequately staffed
- Monitoring data entry efficiency
  - Working with court divisions to determine how court initiatives affect data entry
  - Review data reports to determine whether some individuals need additional training
- Consistent feedback to help divisions



# Research Division: What can this type of division do for your court?

- To provide appropriate empirical data to media and public
  - To help eliminate misunderstanding of court data/decisions
- To address disparity in different parts of the system and examine differences based on changes to the processing
- When to involve research in new projects/initiatives
  - Have research staff at the table during earliest stages
    - Can help identify project goals and ways to measure these goals using extant court data
    - Can propose research questions, data elements and measures of success before the project begins.
    - Can identify the source of the data needed for a project
    - Can determine the best methodology to use
  - Especially important for external grant reporting or working with external consultants.



# Research Division

- The upshot
  - This group becomes the expert on court data – after fully immersing themselves with court operations so that their understanding of the court process is complete
  - Helps the court plan for changes by reviewing current data and setting research goals when changes are expected
  - Help promote transparency by disseminating research findings publicly – all reports on public website
  - Brings the court the latest academic research that might affect them
  - Help ensure fairness for defendants through locally-normed, validated scales and monitoring court outcomes for potential bias



# Business Practice Unit

- Question
  - Does your court have a department dedicated to training staff on data entry, court procedures and business-related software/information systems?
- Yes
- No



# Impetus to create a Business Practices Unit

- Single Information System across Court Divisions
- Be able to train clerks so that they can transition to a new area easily and seamlessly
- To better control data quality
  - Proper document classification
- To set in place the ongoing analysis of policies/procedures
  - Reduce the 'silos' and provide a 'system'
- This became increasingly important as we became electronic since as soon as public documents are imaged they are available to the public online.



# Business Practice Unit, Overview

- Unit composed of high-performing individuals pulled from each line of business – operational knowledge is key
- Experts in the front and back ends of court information system
- Formally trained in Business Analysis and Process Re-engineering
- Liaisons with State Court Business unit
- They also work closely with Research Unit
- **Main purpose to have this unit for Court Administration is to identify and reduce risk**



# Business Practice Unit: How to find these people

- Level of Court Employee: At least 'lead worker' knowledge
- Combination of analytical mind with in-depth knowledge of line of business
- Specialize in analyzing processes, identifying gaps, and developing solutions
- Self starters, intellectually curious, independent workers who also work well in a group – Listening skills are key
- Adept at training
  - One-on-one training as well as groups
  - Administrative Staff
  - Judicial Staff (law clerks)
  - Judges/Referees/Magistrates/Hearing Officers
  - Justice Partners
- **GOOD COMMUNICATORS**





# Business Practice Unit, Roles and Responsibilities

- Training
  - Train front end users (administrative and judicial staff) in most efficient manner, i.e., fewest number of clicks
    - New employee
    - Refresher training
  - Train back end users (Judges and Partners) in all the court business-related software
    - SessionWorks, BenchWorks, E-file and Serve, eCharging, eCitation, ePetition
  - Create training materials to ensure consistency
- Testing new versions of the software applications to ensure that they work for our county
- Help to define our justice partner access needs so that online applications work for them
  - – MN Government Access, MN Public Access, My Cases



# Business Practice Unit, Roles and Responsibilities

- Data Quality
  - Independent assessment of data quality
  - Monitor county compliance for document security
  - Assist in data error correction
- Support
  - Facilitate user group or best practices groups
  - Site visit observations – provide tips/training
  - Resolution of ‘service desk tickets’ on application software
  - Work hand-in-hand with IT on technology issues
- Process Re-Engineering
  - Facilitated the new electronic process using most efficient method and newest technology
  - On-going business analysis



# Business Practice Unit, Roles and Responsibilities

- Access and Rights
  - Monitor and audit employee MNCIS rights for compliance with policies and best practices
  - Develop system wide 'access rules' and monitor for compliance
- Projects
  - BPU is the interagency contact or resource for DVS, BCA to answer data questions, process questions, provide training or resolve and/or identify data problems
  - Serve on statewide committees regarding new software
  - Help to develop the rules for electronic consumption of older documents that previously were stored in warehouses.
  - Help to develop contingency plans for emergency situations



# Business Practice Unit, Roles and Responsibilities

- Monthly meetings (or more often) in each line of business
  - BPU staff hold regular meetings with the managers and supervisors of each line of business to review and discuss:
    - New CAPs – Court Administrative Processes
    - New court rules imposed by the state court
    - New legislation and statutes that impact court business
    - Review (and potentially revise) local court policies
    - Review division's Data Quality
    - Serve as Liaison to State Court on business issues
  - Minutes from these meetings kept on SharePoint
    - This allows for easy access to resolutions, issues, decisions
    - Allows for us to keep track of issues not yet resolved
    - Becomes the 'institutional knowledge' of what has happened or been tried before in a searchable format



# Business Practice Unit

- The upshot
    - Consistent Training which ....
    - Increases Data Quality which....
    - Reduces risk to the Court of inaccurate case data
  
  - Consistent Support for the court divisions in...
  - Resolving information system issues which...
  - Allows staff to work more efficiently and ....
  - Helps the Court to meet their performance expectations.
- 
- The cleaner the data goes into the system, the better it is when the research staff extracts it, providing the higher quality research products.



# Tying it all together

- Lessons learned
  - Having a BPU provides for better data quality from better trained staff
  - It also allows us to review our processes for continued efficiency
  - The research division allows us to review our changes for the desired outcomes
- The Research Division and Business Practice Unit enhance court operation outcomes in two key areas:
  - Interactions with justice partners
  - Moving towards a totally electronic court



# Enhancing court outcomes

- Work with justice partners
  - Many Hennepin County District Court initiatives require working with other entities within the criminal justice system
  - Many meetings composed of high-level level representatives from various justice partners
- Key is strong judicial leadership at these meetings
  - Not just a CJCC
  - A CJTF Criminal Justice Task Force – they are the fire-fighters
  - Decisions that affect more than one partner – brought to these meetings for digetion.



# Enhancing court outcomes

- Work with justice partners, continued...
  - Role of Research
    - Presentation of court filing statistics and other research endeavors at regular inter-departmental meetings
    - Soliciting input before, during, and after the development of validated tools
    - Problem Solving Court database (and research support for problem solving courts more generally)
  - Role of Business Practice Unit
    - Business Practice Unit trains justice partners on new initiatives/court tools
    - Assists with technology integrations involving data sharing of different information systems





# Enhancing court outcomes

- Work with justice partners, continued....
  - The upshot of Research and Business Practice Unit involvement with justice system partners:
    - Provide data for our partners
    - Present partner's needs to the State Court as new technology is being developed
    - Helps to create a justice system that is flexible in the face of constant change and unexpected bumps/hurdles/roadblocks
    - Helps to minimize the learning curve when new inter-departmental technologies or policies are implemented
    - Facilitate an open dialogue, which allows for easier resolution of disagreements/policy differences when they arise



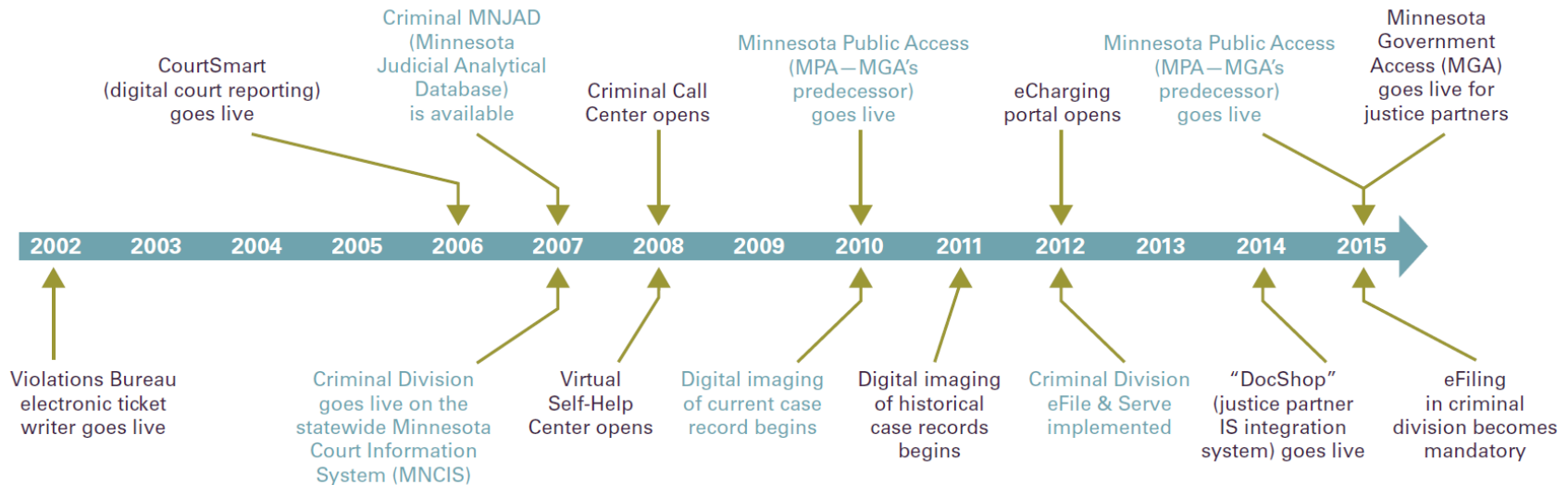
# Enhancing court outcomes

- Move to a totally electronic court
  - Question:
    - How many of you are currently using or planning some form of electronic filing of court documents?
      - A) already using eFiling
      - B) moving towards eFiling in the near term (1-2 years)
      - C) planning to move towards eFiling in the long term (3+ years)
      - D) no plans to begin eFiling
    - What percentage of your court documents are filed electronically?
      - A) 0%
      - B) less than 25%
      - C) 25-50%
      - D) 50-75%
      - E) Almost All



# Enhancing court outcomes

- Move to a totally electronic court
  - Roadmap to an electronic court
    - Gradual progression



# Enhancing court outcomes

- Move to a totally electronic court
  - Roadmap to an electronic court
    - Gradual progression
      - Not wanting to go all at once in order to allow other divisions to learn lessons from the difficulties others faced
      - Criminal, the division with the highest number of filings, went last
    - Hennepin as a pilot county for the rest of MN
      - State built framework around Hennepin's successes and challenges
  - ViBES to MNCIS as the last step
    - Stand alone violations bureau data was last stand alone system
    - January 2016 – converted 3 million records to MNCIS
    - Now about 450,000 additional records will be using MNCIS



# Enhancing court outcomes

- Move to a totally electronic court
  - Role of Research Department
    - Developed statewide survey for individuals in the pilot counties to determine the readiness of business partners ahead of the go-live date
    - Produce (and publish) monthly reports about the number of electronically-filed documents in each division
    - Help divisions measure their staff work: Quantity, Quality, Timing
  - Role of Business Practice Unit
    - Held different training sessions for the new electronic document filing system for:
      - Court Staff
      - Justice Partners
      - Law firms and individuals who planned to use the system
    - Digital imaging of older paper case files
      - Business Practice Unit was key player in setting the correct security level for these documents



# Enhancing court outcomes

- The upshot of Research and Business Practice Unit involvement with the move toward a completely electronic court:
  - Ensuring readiness for large-scale changes
    - For the court
    - For our partners
  - Improving experience for justice partners and law firms
  - Ensuring correctly classification of court data
    - Security
    - Reduce the risk
  - Helping facilitate projects with the goal of reducing resource utilization



# Recap: How a Research and Business Practice division can improve your court

- Matching policies to practices
- Helping to streamline court operations
  - Efficiency
  - Flexible and nimble response to change
- Ensuring that policies and decisions are made on the basis of evidence, and not anecdote
- Maximizing the utility of the resources available to the court – fiscal responsibility
- Ensure Fairness and Transparency
- Help to improve the experiences of court user and partners



# Questions/Discussion

The end. Thanks for your attendance and attention!!!

