

# Laserfiche ECM Blogs

## Data Govern-uances

Written by Laserfiche Staff



The Town of Florence, AZ, is a modest town of just over 20,000 located between Phoenix and Tucson. Even with its small size, Florence has always had big ideas for how to use Laserfiche to do more with less, growing its system from a simple archiving tool to a town-wide enterprise content management (ECM) and business process management (BPM) solution.

“Our approach to technology has always been to be proactive, not reactive,” says Town Clerk Lisa Garcia.

### Organization Profile

- The town of Florence is located between Tucson and Phoenix in Arizona’s Pinal County.

### Situation

- Risk management issues in other Arizona municipalities inspired Florence staff to re-evaluate their e-mail records management plan.

### Solution

- After almost a decade as a digital file cabinet in the Town Clerk’s office, Laserfiche agile ECM now ensures data governance for records, including Outlook e-mails, in all ten town departments.

### Benefits

- The Town Clerk’s Office provides more services without hiring additional staff.
- The Planning Department has eliminated a five-day turnaround time for contract retrieval.
- Town staff already use Laserfiche to run reports to discover when contracts are up for renewal. Now Workflow will provide automatic e-mail notification to department managers when a contract is available.

## Processes

- Automated E-mail Archival
- Business Continuity Planning
- Business Process Management
- Content Management
- Contract Management
- Records Management
- Risk Management and Mitigation

### Adopting Records Management

A decade ago, however, the Clerk's Office just needed a better way to respond to records requests. "It was a very political time and we had more public records requests than we were used to," Garcia remembers. "Our office would sometimes spend weeks going through ten years of minutes and resolutions by hand, reading each page, just to fill a single public records request."

Garcia researched document management solutions and selected Laserfiche for its ability to organize scanned documents into a secure, easily searchable repository. The Clerk's Office was soon answering requests that used to take days—sometimes weeks—almost immediately. Laserfiche became the go-to application for backing up, storing and retrieving copies of the town's hard records.

In 2007, Garcia noticed an Arizona newspaper was investigating the municipal e-mail accounts of several counties and cities, exposing security and compliance breaches along the way. "**We started seeing cases across the state where old e-mails had become a liability,**" Garcia explains. She had reason to be concerned: All ten of Florence's departments kept their correspondence and records in Outlook as e-mails.

Garcia saw the value of adopting a formal records management policy for e-mail correspondence and spurred a town-wide "E-mail Project" to initiate the purchase of the Laserfiche Records Management module. Garcia and her team worked with Linda Russell and Susan Mosby from reseller Doc United to set up records management in the town's existing Laserfiche system, as well as create retention schedules to fit the town's needs.

### Data Governance: Making Information Useful

With data governance, data stewards like Garcia ensure that important data assets are formally managed throughout the enterprise. It doesn't just ensure that the enterprise

can become more efficient, but relates to an entirely new way of thinking about information. Technology can help in the process, but isn't the entirety of the process, as data governance consists of four components: people, process, technology and risk management. But what's clear, says Garcia, is that **"Laserfiche is the foundation of all of it."**

To get the process underway, Garcia and the Clerk's Office team began by setting up an E-mail Project Records Committee of stakeholders, including departmental managers, to ensure that the town's Laserfiche records management system met enterprise needs. "We knew that the information in Laserfiche had to be useful to everyone," she says, "so we made sure that everyone was involved from the beginning. That way we could make sure everyone's needs were met."

Ironically, that meant that Garcia herself had to look at what would make everyone as comfortable using Laserfiche as she was. "It took a lot of trial and error to craft a records management plan that was flexible," she admits. "As the Town Clerk, I knew the code pursuant to the state's record series and schedule. But Laurie Capek, our administrative assistant, actually pointed out that when she would look things up, she would go beyond the code and find a keyword," Garcia explains. Accordingly, the town came up with its own system—"PW" for Public Works, "FIN" for Finance, etc. —that everyone could recognize and use. In fact, notes Capek, **"This system sets up a level of transparency, even amongst ourselves."**

Under the town's new records management plan, e-mails would only be kept for 90 days. Town staff then makes a determination based on training by the Clerk's Office and the State Records Retention Manual if the document is required to be saved. Then, it's simply moved into Laserfiche, where state-mandated retention schedules are applied.

The integration between Laserfiche and Outlook, where e-mails can be sent directly to the Laserfiche repository from Outlook and metadata can be auto-populated for imported Outlook e-mails, has been instrumental to the system's effectiveness as a data governance and risk management tool. **"My favorite thing about Laserfiche is its integration with Microsoft Outlook,"** says IT Technician David Blincoe. "The attributes are easy to setup on an enterprise basis and the e-mail template can be used to easily save the metadata from each e-mail."

Garcia says users like that this personalization means that they don't have to change the way they're used to working in Outlook. "The best thing about this is that, even from within Laserfiche, the document opens as an Outlook document; people can even send e-mails and they're automatically saved in Laserfiche," Garcia says. **"The e-mail is**

now filed and stored with all the accessibility, functionality and ease of use that Laserfiche provides.”

The system has also proven itself easy to use, for users and IT alike. When a user deletes a document, it goes to the Recycle Bin, where Blincoe and Garcia can review it before deleting it permanently. If there are any questions or missing documents, Blincoe uses Audit Trail to track them down.

Ultimately, Blincoe is impressed with how easy Laserfiche is to administer. “Lisa and her staff really haven’t needed too much technical assistance,” he says.

### The Laserfiche Avante Advantage

- Learn more about Laserfiche Avante and business process management at a “Document Management 101 for Local Government” Webinar! [Register here.](#)

This year, Florence is implementing a [Laserfiche Avante](#) ECM/BPM solution, which will eventually equip each user with their own Laserfiche account, just as they already have their own Outlook e-mail account.

Garcia says she is looking forward to deploying Workflow business process management—included in the town’s new Laserfiche Avante system—to further automate contract management. “We’re already using Laserfiche to run reports to tell us when a contract is up for renewal,” she explains. **“Now we’ll be able to have automatic e-mail notification when a contract is available.”**

But even now, the benefits of using Laserfiche are many: Town-wide adoption of Laserfiche for records management ensures both compliance and transparency while it saves the Clerk’s Office staff time and resources. Across departments, paperwork has been reduced while continuity of operations is ensured. But really, Garcia, says, the lasting impact of Laserfiche is that the town has found a new and better way to work. The Planning Department, for instance, has already moved its files to Laserfiche. This saves storage costs, but also gives staff the ability to do their own research. “It’s a big deal to be able to just click on a contract from your desktop to see it, as opposed to how it used to be – submitting an internal request to us and having a five-day turnaround time while you waited for the hard copy,” Garcia says.

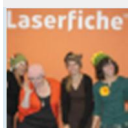
“Knowledge is power and we provide everyone with the same power. Better still, says Garcia, “We’re truly doing more with less. The Clerk’s Office has not had to hire more staff, and we’re providing tools so people can do their jobs better.”

Garcia says other smaller municipalities can learn from Florence’s example. “We would have loved to be the community that could go out and buy everything in one shot, but

we started slow and showed the users what benefits they would receive through using Laserfiche and built on that foundation. **Now both administration and elected officials feel confident investing in Laserfiche because our Clerk's Office has such a proven track record,**" she offers.

And Garcia and staff in Florence are always looking for new things to do with Laserfiche, even without a formal monitoring and evaluation plan. "We know what we've done so far, but we're always looking at what else we can do, especially now that we have Workflow and we can begin automating more and more business processes," Garcia says.

"Our motto is 'Love Laserfiche.' We want to make it so easy and convenient that people are so enthusiastic that they come to us with their ideas for how they can use it. **That's what our long term goal is—to have everyone as in love with Laserfiche as we are.**"



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