REDUCING TICKETING ERRORS BY 50 PERCENT WITH eCITATION

With the Motorola MC75A handheld computer equipped with eCitation software, the Fresno Police department is eliminating paper ticketing, saving time and reducing errors while enhancing officer efficiency.

SITUATION:

With officer and civilian manpower shrinking, the Fresno Police department saved time and costs by eliminating paper ticketing.

In 2010, the Fresno Traffic Bureau oversaw the issuing and processing of 58,000 tickets, mostly hand written and manually entered into the department's database. Of these, a significant percentage was rejected due to illegibility, human error, or data input discrepancies. Making citation corrections can take up substantial amounts of officers' time, affecting both efficiency and city revenues. In addition, with a steady loss of sworn officers due to attrition, and the loss of about half the department's civilian staff due to economics, the traffic citation program was also causing problems that were interfering with the city's commitment to traffic safety. To optimize the force and maximize both safety and financial efficiency, the Bureau needed to minimize error and reduce processing time. After a first attempt at an eCitation program failed due in large part to substandard equipment issues, the Department committed to deploy a more reliable electronic solution.

SOLUTION:

An eCitation solution based on Motorola's reliable, field-proven MC75A high-speed handheld computers.

The Fresno PD learned from the failure of a previous attempt at deploying an electronic ticketing system. That solution was unsuccessful at reducing human error and the number of rejected tickets, in large part because it used consumer-grade personal digital assistants (PDAs). These were found to be prone to breakage and unable to function well in extreme Central Valley elements forcing officers to manually issue tickets in adverse conditions such as rain and fog. Led by Captain Andy Hall, head of the Traffic Bureau, the city chose a solution that provided motor officers with ruggedized Motorola MC75A handheld computers using an innovative e-ticketing software solution teamed with a mobile printer.

RESULT:

Rugged Motorola handheld computers are helping the city capture data electronically, reducing the need for expensive, error-prone manual processes and increasing officer efficiency and community safety.

Beginning with a trial program in July of 2010, the department discovered that not only did the Motorola MC75A units perform up to and beyond expectations, they were also almost immediately embraced by motor officers. The department moved quickly, ordering and rolling out the program by January 1, 2011. Results have been excellent. Officers like the ease of being able to input and look up data instantly and effortlessly on their handhelds. As a result, error rates have decreased significantly, helping to reduce the number of costly ticket rejections due to paper-based manual and data entry.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Agency
- The City of Fresno, California, Police Traffic Support Bureau

Motorola solution
- Motorola MC75A handheld computers with mag stripe readers

Software Solution
- Crossroads eCitation software soluton

Solution features
- High-speed data input and access
- Rugged reliability for motor officers
- Fast smooth deployment

Benefits
- Significant reduction in costly manual data entry
- Decrease of error rates by up to 50 percent
- Exceptional ease of use and officer satisfaction
- Enhancing officer safety
- Fast ROI

PAPERLESS TRAFFIC STOPS INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE COST

The Fresno Police department takes traffic safety very seriously. Says Captain Andy Hall, head of the Fresno Traffic Bureau, "Even in areas with high crime rates, you're some 17 times more likely to be injured or killed in a traffic collision than be the victim of a violent crime. It's traffic that's really injuring our community."

Located in California's Central Valley, the City of Fresno has a diverse population of more than a half million residents. Largely an agricultural community, Fresno covers an area of more than 100 square miles. "We're very spread out," says Sgt. Richard Tucker of the Traffic Bureau. "We have four distinct policing districts, but traffic is centralized, so we handle the entire city." It's a big job, especially with paper-based ticketing.

CUTTING PAPER LOSSES

Paper ticketing is difficult, inefficient and frustrating. It's also expensive. It reduces officer effectiveness and increases rejected ticket rates, reducing Fresno's ability to hold citizens accountable for poor driving habits. All too often officer handwriting is hard to read and information is incomplete or incorrect. This forces civilian staff to decipher paper tickets before re-entering the information into the department database. This multiple input process is costly, time-consuming and vulnerable to human mistakes. The economy is not helping. The department has lost almost half of its civilian staff in cost-cutting measures. That means some officers had to be taken off the streets to do civilian jobs, such as data input. One proven solution to increase the effectiveness of traffic enforcement is to deploy an eCitation program.

SECOND TIME'S A CHARM

A few years ago, Fresno deployed its first electronic ticketing system, which soon became a major disappointment. The biggest problem was reliability; the consumer-grade PDAs that were deployed performed poorly in the strenuous weather and situational conditions encountered by motorcycle officers every hour of every day. "Eventually, we abandoned the system and went back to writing tickets by hand," says Tucker, "but that just put us back into a paper nightmare of lost time, effort and efficiency." But the department learned from its false start. Working with Motorola, reseller MSA and Crossroads, creator of an innovative, cost-effective software solution, the department deployed a pilot program in July of 2010.

SUCCESSFUL PILOT

"Motorola lent us two MC75A handheld computers," says Tucker. "The objective of the pilot was not only to test functionality, but to see how officers would react to the devices and software." Two senior officers, who were 50 years old and informal leaders, were given the handhelds instead of younger, more technically-inclined officers. Pilot results were excellent, including increased motor officer efficiency and fewer errors that led to reduced ticket rejection rates. They were also a little surprising. "We quickly discovered that not only did the officers love the devices," continues Tucker, "they didn't want to give them back to Motorola." Adds Hall, "We ordered 80 MC75A units and the guys were excited, anticipating getting their own devices."

"We quickly discovered that not only did the officers love the devices, they didn't want to give them back to return to Motorola."

Sgt. Richard Tucker, Traffic Support Bureau
Fresno, California

SMOOTH DEPLOYMENT

The handheld units were received well before the expected delivery date, two weeks before Christmas. "We thought, wouldn't it be awesome if we could have all of our motor officers writing e-tickets starting January 1, 2011," says Tucker. After the units were received, the officers in the pilot program helped train 70 other officers. Continues Hall, "It took only four hours to take somebody who'd never seen that device to writing e-tickets that afternoon. It was the smoothest deployment we've ever had." The system was operational by January 1.

MC75A

INCREASING SAFETY, REDUCING REJECTS

Results have been exceptional. Motor officers not only find it easier to write tickets, but they can also access data that enhances traffic safety. The system has the capability of checking for license suspension, criminal records, outstanding warrants and more immediately from the field. Accuracy is also improved. "Our error rates have gone down significantly," notes Hall, "We now have up to 50 percent fewer errors." That also translates to reductions in the time it takes to process a ticket. Adds Tucker, "The courts also love it. They get the tickets and can actually read them." There are fewer errors, fewer incomplete forms and substantially fewer rejected tickets, which helps reduce traffic accidents, injuries and fatalities. Bottom line, Fresno streets became safer.

TRACKING AND TRENDING

In addition to more efficient ticketing, the solution is enabling more effective capture and tracking of demographics, such as race and sex to help in defending against lawsuits. The system also helps the Bureau examine traffic statistics and trends. "We can overlay data on Google maps that shows us where collisions are occurring and tickets are being given, which enables more targeted enforcement," says Hall. "We can look at those areas and make traffic engineering adjustments or increase ticketing activities to help reduce collisions."

> **"We can overlay data on Google maps that shows us where collisions are occurring and tickets are being given, which enables more targeted enforcement. We can look at those areas and make traffic engineering adjustments or increase ticketing activities to help reduce collisions."**
>
> Captain Andy Hall, Head of the Traffic Bureau,
> Fresno Police Department, The City of Fresno, California

THE FUTURE

The Bureau anticipates adding additional functionalities in the future. "We've gotten very positive feedback from both our officers and the community itself," concludes Tucker. "We've already upgraded by replacing magnetic stripe readers with 2-D barcode scanners for more accurate data entry and for syncing with our collision writing system. In-unit cameras are also planned."

For the motor officers of the Fresno Traffic Bureau, the paper ticket era has finally come to an end. And with it come the paperless benefits of more efficient officer deployment, the ability to accomplish more with fewer employees, increased traffic safety and enhanced efficiency. On average, eCitation systems similar to Fresno's have also proven to provide a fast return on investment, often in less than 18 months.

Learn how you can benefit from MC75A
http://www.motorola.com/MC75A
1-800-367-2346

 MOTOROLA