

COLUMN CASE MANAGEMENT

A Progression in Investigative Case Handling



For law enforcement and internal affairs organizations, tracking has become one of the most important methods to ensure accuracy, accountability and increase the effectiveness of investigations. Agencies must also ensure best practice internal processes throughout the lifecycle—from investigation through case closure and review. Investigations address unique and seeming less endless demands that require innovative tools, superior methods and cutting-edge technologies. Silo-based approaches that employ multiple databases and systems create significant issues with data quality, information accuracy and collaboration capabilities within the organization and with external agencies.

Case management paves the way for increasing investigative effectiveness and improved case solvability. In defining the importance of case management, Gartner, Inc., says, **“At the most elemental level, case management is the electronic equivalent of what has supported business over several centuries: the cabinets, drawers, folders, forms and collaborative workflow processes supporting important human decisions. Case management captures the backward-and-forward nature of human interaction to reach a specific outcome.”**

The Case Management Process Model

Agencies involved in investigation processes have to deal with vast amount of information, both in physical and digital formats. A Case management process model must exist and be able to easily interact with the physical investigation. It is also critical to have a proper mechanism to gather, share and access information. For detectives and case workers, this is a challenge that can directly affect the integrity and resolution of the case.

There are two primary process model requirements that any investigative case management solution must meet:

- The solution must be specific enough that general technology requirements for each phase can be developed (such as forms to eliminate manual processes, role-based security, notification controls, and reporting capabilities to meet compliance and audits).
- The foundation of the solution must apply to any investigative process (the workflow must be built in the system to address multiple facets of business process management, capable of withstanding minor customizations yet maintaining best practices).

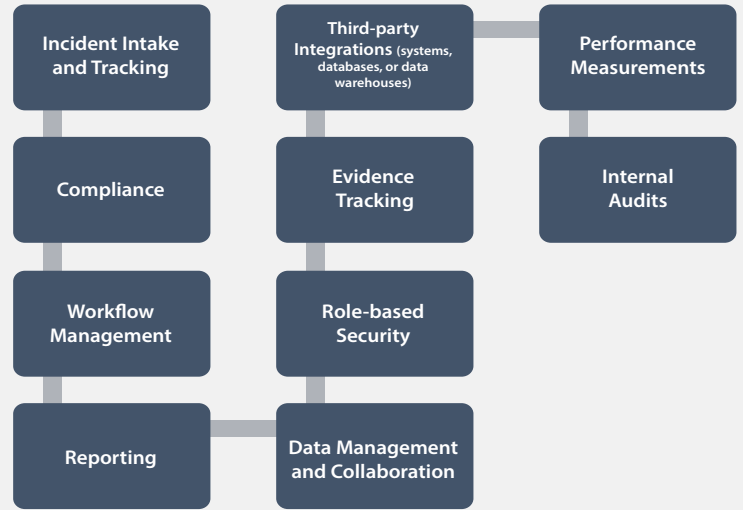
Compliance is a key issue in almost every vertical market. Whether satisfying legislative requirements covering anti-corruption, identifying fraud, ensuring accounting standards, or preventing money laundering, process management technologies have earned their incitement to ensure compliance. Built-in workflow requirements such as preventing users from proceeding to the next stage of an investigation and maintenance of user access and data changes in a case ensure an auditable trail. Process management has proven its worth in recording all stages of an investigation to guarantee activities such as audits, compliance, evidence tracking, and data monitoring. A proven process model must be built into case management solutions to ensure compliance.

Technology as a Critical Component of Case Management Processes

Over the last five years, there has been a noticeable increase in organizations looking to technology for automation, while maintaining agility with routine investigative activities. Law enforcement agencies are challenged to must close cases quickly and accurately, which is pressuring the adaptation of new tools and methods to increase productivity and effectiveness and lower costs. The most recent debates of case management versus business process management have been discussed in many online and analyst platforms, but the fact is that the two are not independent of one another. Automation plays a vital role in process management, and technological solutions establish a culture for continuous process improvement within an organization. An effective case management solution allows for process design and simulation, workflow control, integration tools, and business rules.

The role of technology in investigations will continue to grow to meet the explosion of digital content, social media, and cyber culture. Electronic evidence and information gathering have become critical components in an increased number of crimes and conflicts. From criminal cases, civil disputes, medical malpractice, and employee misconduct to acts of terrorism, if there is a computer, media device or digital file involved, the chances are very good that investigators will need to recover valuable evidence for analysis. Technology paves the way for investigation agencies to keep track of information and evidence. This transformation has also created a need for case management web based solutions-liking information to one or many cases and helping uncover complex relationships among matter (people, places and things).

The primary drivers of a technology solution to improve efficiencies and maintain best practices for investigation handling and case management include:



The Benefits Associated with Case Management Software

The most significant value to organizations using case management software is the consolidation of activities and information around a single platform and process. All case details are stored in a central location and can be jointly viewed. In 2011, the Federal Bureau of Investigations "Reported saving up to two years in document review time compared to the manual case process." These benefits improve incident response time and aid in managing higher case volumes.

A web-based case management system with built-in workflow provides the following benefits:

- Shortens processing time for case investigations
- Ensures compliance with state and federal regulations
- Detects emerging trends and manages risk
- Analyzes investigations and improve processes workflow
- Simplifies and automates complex processes
- Enhances collaboration, work flexibility and productivity
- Improves resource management
- Increases visibility through an Internet browser access
- Expands information availability through data integration
- Improves data security and addresses privacy policies
- Maintains consistent audit procedures
- Increases data quality by eliminating recurring errors and repetitive data entry
- Increases efficiency with electronic forms and customizable workflows
- Enhances record, document, and evidence management tracking
- Reduces time for report publishing
- Increases data usability through relationship dependency mapping

Selecting a Case Management Solution

An effective case management solution should include these six key capabilities to help an organization process more cases at a lower cost.



Information Capture: Look for a solution that can eliminate mundane and error-prone human data entries and create and use high-fidelity e-forms to reduce the costs, bottlenecks, and risks associated with paper-based processing.



Data Extraction: Most Software that can perform data extraction require predefined forms. Case management software should be able to accept and manage changing content and retrieve relevant information.



Business Process Management (BPM): BPM is a discipline and a set of technologies that can help automate, optimize, and effectively monitor and measure business processes. Case Management is not independent of BPM; the two must be aligned.



Content and Record Management: Move beyond basic search and data access with true content and record management that provides a broad, real-time view of the information and documentation related to a particular case. In addition, the case management solution must be able to handle sensitive content and expose it only to authorized users.



Compliance and Record Retention: An automated solution with an auditable electronic trail that documents any changes made to records, evidence, and internal communications. This is crucial when dealing with compliance requirements.



Collaboration and Communication Management: The solution must encourage on-the-fly collaboration, both internally and externally. Communication management includes correspondence, e-mails, and notifications.

The success of utilizing case management technologies for investigations is highly dependent on the vendor you choose. When it comes to selecting a vendor to implement a case management solution, do your homework. Interview multiple vendors and take the time to develop a relationship and learn the organizations' methodology for implementation, customizations, and support. Look for a vendor who has a proven track record and can provide relevant references in your industry. Any vendor too eager to "make the sale" and not take the time to develop a relationship and future partnership, should be immediately removed from your vendor viability list. A vendor should be willing to take the time to understand your organization and your processes before offering any type of out of the box solution.

Column Case Management is web-based case management software platform designed to enhance business processes and increase case effectiveness and solvability. For additional information, please visit: www.columncase.com

Corporate Headquarters

10 E 22nd St., Suite 207, Lombard, IL 60148
Phone Number: +1-331-462-0916
Email: info@columncase.com | www.columncase.com

About Column Case Management

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