



Douglas County Leverages Vote-by-Mail Automation to Overcome Space and Capacity Limitations

Presidential elections can challenge even the most efficient operation. Increases in voter interest can lead to higher turnout, more staff and more locations to support. Tensions are high and critical observers are ready to pounce... Douglas County officials were acutely aware of these factors and took a bold step to embrace automation as a necessary part of their solution for the 2012 elections. Even though their experience wasn't "flawless" the "throughput gains were substantial" and the elections staff was glad they made the commitment to move forward instead of being boxed in with old limitations.

Jack Arrowsmith, County Clerk and Recorder and his staff chose to embrace the migration toward automated mail processing in an incremental process. "This was critical because there were some processes where we wanted to do a 100% manual check of every single ballot. Having the ability to do this without manually handling every ballot was a huge gain."

Automation is the answer

Prior to using automation for inbound mail processing, Douglas County processed every piece by hand. With the addition of automated mail processing, they could still do a full manual comparison, but because the operator can compare signatures on-screen, the county could maintain 100% manual comparison without having to physically pick-up each ballot. This was a big win.

Flexibility was a life-saver

Sheri Davis, Elections Manager was very pragmatic in her assessment of the new automated process. "We're glad we made the decision to automate, but frankly there are portions of the inbound mail process that receive more scrutiny than others, and we wanted to have manual control."

Automated Vote-by-Mail Processing Eliminates Manual Processes AND makes human processes better

Automation allowed Douglas County to create a solution custom tailored to their needs. By combining mail handling automation with manual review and control of signature processes, the entire inbound solution improved. Total throughput on Election Day increased and the elections team was able to stair-step into automation, gain the experience they needed and maintain control over comparison processes where they were not quite ready to turn it over to a little piece of fancy software.

This incremental process was just right for Douglas County. While automation of inbound mail processing can bring big efficiency gains, within the State of Colorado it's not "fully baked" into statewide standards. This means counties need flexibility to benefit from automation and still maintain control over processes that may be challenged by critical observers. Automation offers this kind of flexibility and keeps decision making power in the hands of elections officials.

"Inbound mail processing is an obvious place for efficiency gains. At the same time, we must be sensitive to the feelings of our voters and the compliance standards of the Secretary of State. We've taken a major step forward into automation and kept the decision of whether a vote counts in the hands of the election official."

— Jack Arrowsmith, County Clerk and Recorder

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