

# BUCKINGHAM COUNTY:



## SMALL CHANGE, BIG SAVINGS

2010 VACO ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

## **Small Change, Big Savings**

Like all counties across the state, Buckingham County was facing state funding reductions. The County was exploring all possible cost reductions to help offset the reduced funding from the state. Therefore, with concerns regarding the number of reports that must be run and printed every month, we tried to find a solution to reduce the amount of paper and ink that was used to complete these tasks. Additionally, storage space was beginning to become a major issue within each department. For these reason, we needed to find a solution.

In an effort to remedy the two problems of space and cost savings, our Information Technology Director figured a way that all reports could be digitized in “PDF” format using the Adobe PDF printer function. Consequently, the next step was to make sure that we could run any report on the Bright and Associates Inc. system and convert it to “PDF and if so, what else could we do with the document. We found that we could use extraction, combine, and search features to limit the amount of time required to manipulate data in large reports. With this technology in place, we knew a long awaited need was being addressed.

The cost and time to implement this project were minimal. We purchased a “NAS” device or a network area storage device for \$260 which allows all of our users to have adequate space to save all necessary files. Considering, the cost and volume of paper that we were going through, 20-30 boxes of computer paper a year at a price of \$75 per box, we found this to be a minimal cost. That savings is compounded by the fact that we do not have to buy ribbons for the printer or binders for all the hard copies that we were printing.

In summary, this small change in technology has not only made our departments more efficient, but we have reduced several reoccurring cost. With the addition of saving space, Buckingham County Administration has found this simple tool to be a great asset to daily functions.

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### **Background**

Like all counties across the state, Buckingham County was facing state funding reductions. The County was exploring all possible cost reductions to help offset the reduced funding from the state. Like most counties throughout the state, we had cut everything to the bare minimum in the previous fiscal year expecting a shortfall from the state.

### **Problem**

The Buckingham County Administration building is currently facing space limitations. All departments are suffering with space deficiencies not only for staff, but for storage as well. Each department has reports and documentation stacked up in storage, as well as stacked up in their office. The lack of space had come to a tipping point, and something had to be done.

### **Solution**

One day in an effort to digitize a report for our Commissioner of Revenue, our Information Technology Director figured out a way that the report could be digitized without exporting the data to Excel for printing. Instead of exporting data, our IT Director had printed the document to a digital “PDF” file. That was the first step in changing the way Buckingham County stored documents.

After discussing with the IT Director what had been performed, two questions were asked. The questions were, “could any report on the Bright and Associates Inc. system be converted to a “PDF” and, if so, “is the document searchable.” Once we received a “yes” to both questions, we knew a long awaited need was being addressed.

### **Implementation**

Thanks to our IT Director, the cost and time to implement this project were minimal. We knew once staff started to use the system to its potential, we would need additional data space on

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our server. Instead of clogging up our server with reports and data that is just there for storage, we invested in a “NAS” device or a network area storage device. This box gives all employees a place to store old reports, as well as future reports that need to be archived without affecting our network that we use for active files and data. The cost of the storage box, \$260, was money well spent, especially when we would normally buy 20-30 boxes of computer paper a year at a price of \$75 per box. That savings is compounded by the fact that we do not have to buy ribbons for the printer or binders for all the hard copies that we were printing.

All other cost and effort, such as installing the “PDF” printer and linking each employee’s computer to the network area storage box, was done in house by our IT Director. Once the storage box arrived, all employees were set up and trained on use of the system in less than two days time.

### **Summary**

This small change is benefiting the County in many ways, especially in terms of cost reduction and improvement of department efficiency. It started out as a way to print a large document without using a large amount of paper. Once we got the system operational, all the employees thought it was wonderful.

One issue we had with our version of the BAI system was the inefficiency of data presentation. Since the documents and reports never fit on one screen, all users find themselves having to “page right” and “page left”. After doing some very quick and painless margin adjustments, the viewing of the “PDF” files provided the opportunity to view data on a single screen and there was no need for any type of scrolling. The time it takes to print a 900 page year-to-date trial balance for the auditors has dropped from about sixty minutes to about two minutes. There is no huge pile of paper for the auditors to go through and since it is now stored

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electronically, it can be e-mailed to the auditors before they arrive. The auditors also like the fact they can type in “sales tax” and hit search and they will arrive on the sales tax page instead of having to flip through a 900 page report to find sales taxes.

The savings are felt throughout the administration building. From the accounts payable department, to the Treasurer’s office, we all have specific or month end reports that have to be run and retained for a certain period of time. When we made the change we were not thinking about storage space deficiencies. As we realized that not only could we digitize current and future reports, we could go back and start digitizing old reports. This has allowed us to go back and shred so many of the old binders that are just sitting on shelves or in boxes. Although our biggest savings is space, it is nice to cut reoccurring expenses to help offset state cuts.