

Peoria County

Affectionately referred to as the Heart of Illinois, Peoria County encompasses 629 square miles and lies along the picturesque Illinois River, about half way between Chicago and St. Louis.

The county's 1,100 employees are responsible for providing a range of services to its almost 185,000 residents—from health, aging and family mediation services, to libraries, courts and clinics.

Business Operations Manager Tom Seckler has worked with the county in one capacity or another for over 20 years. In his current job, Seckler is responsible for helping county departments identify business practices and processes that can be improved through technology.

One area Seckler and his team identified as needing an update was the county's time and attendance technology, a mainframe-based system that had been in place for 15 years.

"I was here when we created the original system," said Seckler. "I knew that while it had served us well for many years, it was time to look to new technologies to make this particular business process more efficient."

Peoria County has 31 departments spread over 10 locations—nine of which are located offsite from the central IT department. Employees at these locations work a wide variety of jobs and shifts, use multiple pay calendars and have many scheduling needs. The county also has 17 different pay

groups defined in its system, each of which is calculated differently. All these variations meant the county required an enormous number of codes to track employees' time.

Seckler needed a system that could handle these needs, and that featured fully integrated modules, had flexible reporting capabilities, and included a robust support and maintenance package. It was also critical that the solution could interface with the county's existing payroll system, Sungard Pentamation.

The county evaluated several time and attendance options, and ultimately selected TimeForce from Qquest.

"In selecting TimeForce, it came down to a few basic, but very important issues," Seckler said. "TimeForce simply provided the most bang for our buck. Other vendors offered features we did not need, but would have been forced to pay for anyway. TimeForce fit our needs perfectly."

The implementation process was well-planned and systematic. The county installed 19 clocks in eight departments, five of which were in remote locations.

The IT team tested TimeForce over several pay periods before beginning roll-out to the various departments. Qquest wrote a custom protocol to export the time and attendance information to the county's payroll system.

The roll-out began in the less complex departments first so the county could work out any issues that arose in simpler environments before moving to more complicated situations. This good planning definitely paid off. "The TimeForce implementation was simple; we didn't end up having many issues at all," he said. "The Sungard exports worked great, and our unique pay rules were fully addressed."

Like all technology solutions, close collaboration was a key success factor in working through the process, and ensuring that, in the end, the customer was satisfied.

"Not all vendors are easy to work with, but Qquest's support and implementation teams were great," said Secker. "I can honestly say it was one of the easiest software implementations I've ever experienced, and I'm still impressed with the price-to-feature ratio. TimeForce is a fantastic system—exactly what we needed."