

CASE STUDY

Caribbean Court of Justice



ForTheRecord
a Melbourne IT company

OVERVIEW

Industry:
Court

Organization Info:
Caribbean Court of Justice,
Port of Spain,
Republic of Trinidad & Tobago

Established in 2001

Regional judicial tribunal for the
CARICOM

Goals:
Quick and easy access to court
recordings across geographically
dispersed locations

Intuitive and user-friendly -
minimal learning curve

Stable & reliable solution, with a
good support system

Organizational Overview

The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) is the regional judicial tribunal for CARICOM, a community of 15 million people* spread across 14 Caribbean nations. Thirty-five years after the CCJ was proposed by the Jamaican Delegation, the court was established in 2001 by an agreement signed by the states of the CARICOM as a substitute for the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and as a court hearing matters between member states.

The CCJ is vested with an original jurisdiction in respect of the interpretation and application of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. It is also the court of last resort for member states of the Caribbean Community which have acceded to this jurisdiction (namely, Guyana, Barbados and Belize). In effect, the CCJ is designed to exercise both an appellate and an original jurisdiction. The court considers and determines appeals in civil and criminal matters from the courts of Guyana, Barbados and Belize. All CARICOM countries subscribe to the original jurisdiction of the CCJ and the court is the sole and exclusive arbiter of these matters.

The Need For Recording

When the court was inaugurated six years ago, CCJ Information Systems Manager, Carlene Cross and Systems Administrator, Ayinde Burgess, set out to ensure that the court would provide people with a convenient method for retrieving and accessing courtroom proceedings.

"As our region is so geographically dispersed, we needed a way for our court hearings to reach our customers quickly and in a simple manner," says Cross.

After some consideration, the CCJ installed the ForTheRecord® (FTR) **Reporter™**, **FTR Log Notes®** and **The Record Player™** – all of which are part of the flagship **FTR Gold®** product suite. Both Cross and Burgess had used these products before and were very happy with the simplicity, ease-of-use and minimal user training that they required.

"A team assessed several packages and selected FTR," says Cross. "It provides us with a number of benefits and most importantly, is a stable and reliable solution."

FTR in the Courtroom

The FTR Gold suite of products offers clients an end-to-end solution for facilitating the capture, playback, replication, storage, retrieval and overall management of courtroom proceedings.

Currently, the CCJ has installed FTR solutions in two (2) of its courtrooms. All courtroom proceedings are recorded and relevant notes are taken using the **FTR Reporter** software. A CD or DVD of the recordings and linked notes is created at the end of the day and provided to the Judges. Since the CD/DVD contains time-stamped, linked notes, Judges can access specific proceedings quickly by just clicking on a link.

According to Cross, "this aspect not only provides accuracy but it also frees up the Judge's time during hearings and allows them to focus and to manage their recordings for easier and more relevant access."

*Figures as of 2008, Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CARICOM#Membership>

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“...[we] were very happy with the simplicity, ease of use and minimal user training that [FTR] products required.”

- Carlene Cross & Ayinde Burgess

“Such benefits equate to a tangible return on our investment.”

- Carlene Cross

Judges’ secretaries, who routinely transcribe the audio/video recordings, have also benefited from the FTR solution. They now use the time-stamped, electronic notes to access specific proceedings for transcription. “This process saves them a lot of time and the resulting transcript is also more accurate due to the high quality recording,” says Cross.

Thanks to the digital recording technology and the tools provided by FTR, the CCJ is also able to upload these recordings directly to their website for any member of the public to access.

In addition to the courtrooms, the CCJ also has a “portable” solution comprised of the FTR recording and note taking software on a laptop computer. This flexibility in deployment is an asset to them as it enables their staff to be mobile and cater to specific needs as they arise. “It also offers us possible integration with the national courts as some of them also use the FTR suite and speaks to ability to incorporate so as to be the cornerstone of a full record which captures, text, video, graphics, etc.” says Cross.

An Ideal Choice

The CCJ has been using FTR products since 2005 and have found them to be particularly user-friendly. Cross says that although adapting to the suite proved a little challenging at the beginning, once training was provided the solution was very well-received by all staff. Members of the public have easier access to courtroom proceedings, which was one of the goals of employing a digital recording solution. Internally, the FTR Log Notes product has helped staff immensely by enabling them to take linked, time-stamped notes against live or existing digital court recordings.

“Since deploying the FTR solution, we are able to accurately capture and preserve courtroom proceedings as well as accurately generate transcripts,” says Cross. Another aspect enjoyed is the security of knowing that courtroom proceedings are being successfully recorded and safely archived to a central location, which is important to the CCJ.

“Such benefits equate to a tangible return on our investment in FTR solutions,” says Cross. “Many courts in the region, have expressed interest in the system.”

Going forward, the CCJ is looking to find easier and more effective ways of managing the FTR content that has been generated over the years. They will continue working with FTR on new products and solutions being introduced, with the goal of further increasing productivity and process efficiencies across the organization.

