

Case Study:

Rubber Check Rodeo: Tracking Down the Authors of Bad Checks in Texas



Overview

Located in the northeast region of the state, Smith County is the 25th most populous county in Texas. In addition to Sheriff and local police departments, the county is policed by five constables and their subordinates. In June 2006, John Smith was appointed as Smith County Constable serving the fourth precinct. Upon taking office, he encountered a challenging workload, including thousands of outstanding warrants for the arrest of writers of bad checks.

“Without Accurint®, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for us to contact [the authors of the bad checks].”

– John Smith
Constable
Smith County, TX

The Challenge

According to the National Retail Federation’s most recent survey, U.S. retail losses amounted to \$41.6 billion in 2006, or 1.61% of total sales. A large percentage includes losses stemming from consumers passing bad checks. In Smith County’s fourth precinct, the problem was especially acute. Smith County is home to a large number of universities and a highly transient population, with thousands of individuals moving in and out every year. As a result, tracking down the authors of bad checks can be an almost impossible challenge. “When I took office, there were boxes of bad checks dating as far back as the early eighties,” said Constable Smith. “Tracking down each individual, while important, would require more man hours than we could provide and would have diverted us from other more pressing responsibilities.” After spending several months trying to come up with a solution, Constable Smith came across the answer at a state-mandated continuing education course for constables. The instructor was outlining technical solutions designed to support the needs of law enforcement. One product, LexisNexis® Accurint® for Law Enforcement, stood out.

The Solution

Using Accurint, Constable Smith and his staff began opening the archive of bad checks. For most cases they were able to use driver’s license information captured at the time the check was written as the basis for the Accurint search. Ninety-five percent of the time these searches were successful in identifying and locating the check writer—even if the check had been written decades earlier and the author had relocated to another state. For the remaining searches, especially those without driver’s license information, Smith was able to locate check writers by searching under last name and first initial. Each Accurint search took seconds, shortening the entire process of locating an individual to minutes instead of hours or days.

The Results

Since employing Accurant, Constable Smith and the fourth precinct office have been able to collect more than \$140,000 from the authors of bad checks. The precinct office is currently pulling in as much as \$8,000 on a weekly basis. As a result, the Constable has been able to provide retailers victimized by bad checks with the money they were originally entitled to, while also collecting a significant amount in fines. Just as important, Smith has also been able to reduce the amount of staff time spent investigating bad checks and been able to redirect resources to other criminal investigations.

Furthermore, Accurant has proven to be financially beneficial in another way—it required minimal training time and had a short learning curve. “When we started using Accurant, we didn’t have to take a class—it’s designed so that a ten year old could use it successfully,” said Constable Smith. “Accurant is easy to use and we’ve had little trouble finding any of the individuals we were looking for—it even tells us if one of the transgressors is deceased, so we can dismiss the warrant.”

For more information:

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Using Accurant,
Constable Smith has
recovered over \$140,000
in revenue, averaging
about \$8,000 per week.