



Noble County Courts Improve Security and Save Taxpayer Money with Video Arraignment Systems

Client: Noble County Government

Location: Albion, IN

Client Need: Indiana Court Administrative Rule #14 gives Indiana courts the ability to conduct hearings and proceedings via teleconferencing under certain circumstances. While this law first came into effect in 1996 it is only recently that courts have shown a serious interest in taking full advantage of the law. As court systems have become busier, law enforcement officers have also spent more and more time transporting prisoners to and from court hearings – sometimes at the expense of hours away from their other duties. The increase in traffic by offenders has also affected the security of the public and law enforcement officers – more offenders moving to and from secure facilities naturally introduces more risk. Video arraignment systems and associated technologies not only fulfill the qualifications of Indiana Court Administrative Rules but greatly enhance the security and efficiency of our law enforcement system. Case in point? Noble County, Indiana.

Noble County Circuit Court justice, David Laur recognized the issues at hand and the improvements strong technology could bring to their court system. While at a conference Judge Laur saw a presentation about a “model courtroom project” and the technology impressed him, “It was fascinating. The technology in this model courtroom let you do anything you could envision and then some.” Facing an upcoming renovation of an historic courthouse, Laur felt it was the perfect opportunity to update their technology. Considering the age of their courthouse, it was built in 1888, it was also vital that the technology be both state-of-the-art and nearly invisible. ESCO was able to step up to the challenge:

It was one of the luckiest days of my career when I found ESCO. You can't see the technology until I push the buttons. It is seamless, nonintrusive, wireless, and state of the art. The lawyers love it... the sheriff loves it... and the county commissioner and council truly appreciate the saved money and added security this technology has brought to Noble County. ~Judge David Laur



ESCO Solution:

ESCO's staff met with Judge Laur to discuss the technology needs of Noble County's courts. Together they developed a plan to bring in video arraignment systems and supporting presentation technology – all with the unique needs of Noble County's historic courthouse in mind. “Being a full system integrator made a big difference to Noble County,” states ESCO Account Manager John Nonemaker. “They needed the video arraignment systems but also wanted an IT system to enhance the daily activities unique to each courtroom. And of course it all needed to be integrated seamlessly into a very old building. ESCO has the combination of services required for this job.”

ESCO came into Noble County and installed a turnkey solution that included:

- **Video Arraignment Technology:** A videoconferencing system that gives the law enforcement system the capabilities for Remote court arraignment; Remote parole and bail Hearings; Attorney-Inmate meetings; Remote depositions and testimony; Inmate and officer testimony and more. This component has increased security and productivity, reduced expenses and improved overall productivity.
- A **sound system** which integrates into 4-channel digital recording and archiving. All court proceedings whether in-house or remote are recorded with the same high quality.

- A **master control unit** with touch-screen technology so the judges can get the most out of their courtroom technology quickly and easily.
- A **document camera** most often used to highlight evidence, eliminating the need to pass it through the jury – saving time and giving a consistent presentation of a case's evidence.
- An **annotation system** that gives case lawyers and witnesses the ability to highlight specific areas of a document as it is presented to the court. These annotations are both recorded and saved as part of the court record.
- **Digital and video presentation systems** for prosecutors and defenders. Where before the lawyers would use presentation boards or pictures they now are able to put together digital presentations, such as PowerPoint, and easily present them to the court.
- Multiple **audio/video connections in concealed floor boxes** for council to interface laptop and VCR/DVD sources into the presentation system.

Noble County IT Director, Dave Baum, notes, "ESCO has been a very good vendor to us. They listen to our needs and are prompt in helping us resolve any issues. Unlike some companies, they have no problem explaining the details of our equipment and our options when we're considering enhancements. We've been able to integrate some other multimedia capabilities into the courtrooms along with videoconferencing, and the overall effect is pretty impressive."

Noble County's Judges and Department of Corrections are using ESCO's technology every day. States Laur, "It speeds up the entire process. Everyone sees evidence at same time. Officer and public safety is greatly enhanced. Multiple arraignments happen at the same time. It puts everyone 'in the room' at the same time and records everything as if they were in the room."

The video arraignment system was the biggest portion of this project and so far all of Noble County's judges agree it has brought the biggest benefits:

- Frees courtroom space and reduces congestion in holding cells at the courthouse.
- Minimizes transport of prisoners from remote locations – saving hours of the officers' time. Before ESCO the officers could literally spend 8 hours round trip driving an inmate to and from a 15 minute proceeding.
- Reduces the time required to arraign, since the court no longer has to wait for prisoner movement from holding cell to court.
- Increases public and staff security.
- Saves tax payer money.

The Sheriff of Noble County, Gary Leatherman, also finds the video arraignment system a great asset, "We have the technology installed in two locations in the jail, one room has capability of handling initial arraignments for up to 10 individuals and the other room is primarily used for one-on-one meetings with judges or attorneys. It has really cut down on the number of trips to and from the courthouse and since we can hook up with other Indiana DOC facilities, it saves the time and expenses of traveling statewide. We'll see even more savings as more facilities come online."

The technology has additional benefits. It can connect with any IP-based teleconferencing facility giving staff the opportunity for cost-effective professional training, inmates the opportunity for continuing education, and lawyers the tools to confer with peers. The system has proven so useful that the Prosecutor's and Public Defender's office have also purchased the video technology components.

Noble County has been using ESCO's custom designed technology since 2003 and Laur notes, "How was installation? Perfect. And they have been very responsive whenever we have a question or want to upgrade. No problems in service. And having one resource for billing has been convenient as well."

Testimonial:

"ESCO came in with all the technology we needed and then combined it into a custom designed system. They even installed a video projector into our tin ceiling and I challenge anyone to try to find it when the projector is put away! This complete system has improved our security and saved both time and money. Not a day goes by where we don't use ESCO's technology."

~ Judge David Laur, Noble County Circuit Court, Noble County