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The mobile, affordable
and easy-to-use
software for animal
control officers to
increase the efficiency
and the
standardization of
animal case
management.



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Empowering Communities and
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Fort Pierce, Florida Department of Code Compliance and Animal Control finds efficiency and effectiveness through use of Comcate's Animal Control Manager.

The Challenge

Fort Pierce, Florida had a unique set of animal control issues. In a Code Enforcement Department already handling a number of community reports regarding violations and the related follow up, finding a cohesive and efficient approach to handling more cases was imperative. In fact, when animal control was transferred to that department a number of years ago, the search immediately began for software to help manage the workload and follow up. At the time, there were no protocols for animal control reporting, following up, and progress or resolution tracking.

With a limited number of Code Officers in the busy department, the Code Compliance Manager, Peggy Arraiz, was tasked with searching for a partner to provide a software or web-based solution to help streamline processes and make tracking and progress easier and more productive.

A number of the software programs that worked for other organizations did not work for Fort Pierce. Because Fort Pierce doesn't coordinate any animal control from a common animal shelter and most software programs only worked in that capacity, nothing proved to be a good fit for the city's system and method of reporting such issues.

Fort Pierce needed a government security-compliant system that would work for officers who never come into the office and use their trucks as mini office systems. Once the city upgraded their computer systems and went to tablet use in these mini mobile offices (or the Code Enforcement Officer's trucks), they rekindled a search for a system that would be a better fit.

The Solution

Code Compliance Manager Peggy Arraiz, her top Code Officers, and the city's IT Department Head did an extensive online search, demoing a number of potential solutions to see if any would work with their systems. Realizing that web-based was the best way to go, they narrowed the selection down to three or four contenders, but Comcate really stood out for them.

Because Comcate is web-based and not a software solution, reporting from the field on a tablet was easy in terms of entering the issue to following up later from potentially another device in an efficient and streamlined manner. They also provided a product / solution specific to animal control that was not dependent on the use of shelter system. In Fort Pierce, for example, a big issue was enforcing a new rule that said dogs could not be tethered outside and would need to be fenced. In the beginning of this enforcement, there were numerous reports and subsequent educational warnings that were issued and needed some follow up - no shelter involved - only the officers in the field in Peggy Arraiz's department. According to Arraiz, "If we get a call on a Saturday night, I can jump on my computer and, with Comcate Animal Control Manager do what needs to be done to report, check progress, and update."

The Results

The Training

Fort Pierce began with a soft start of the Comcate solution. The department's Code Enforcement Officers, members of the IT Department, and, Peggy Arraiz, as Code Compliance Manager, with assistance from a Comcate Client Services Associate, jumped right in and started using the Comcate solution as part of their initial training. From the beginning, it was apparent that vouchers handed out for spaying and neutering, the distribution of pet licenses, and other related field work became so much easier to track and manage.

Through the use of project management system or Basecamp, hands on practice, and real time training using tasks that the department needed to complete anyway, the department officers, each with varying degrees of technical knowledge from no computer or tech experience to fully "computer literate", were up and running on the Comcate system. Arraiz was pleasantly surprised when, while in a training during which a complicated question came up, her least computer-savvy employee stood up and answered the tech-heavy question confidently and



Testimonial

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correctly. As she says, “We saw all this good stuff in our research for a solution - the easy to use dropdown menus and check boxes - and when we went in to use it all without much experience, we could do it. After this easy training, our LEAST computer literate person was able to answer a detailed question. It is that efficient and user-friendly! Other providers had been so complicated and inefficient.”

For the Ft. Pierce Code Compliance, Animal Control Division, the training presented itself the right way, and suddenly, all the issues that needed resolution were on their way to being solved. The communication with the Comcate staff was immediate and effortless in training and in implementation and execution. As Arraiz states, “It all worked perfectly.”

She cites Comcate’s professionalism and their ability to make a new technology easy to incorporate with their current workflows as paramount to the program’s success. At first, the department did not think they were asking the right questions or hearing the right answers; it seemed they were running into a semantics issue with everyone they spoke to from other companies. In a short time, however, once committing to Comcate, the staff was able to screen share, dialogue on the issues, and provide immediate solutions so that everyone involved felt that they were no longer speaking a different language regarding the need and could move to successful execution seamlessly.

The Results in Action

Says Arraiz, “We are very, very happy with this program - the Comcate solution.” She says further, “In the first week or so, we were 75% up and running, which was amazing. We saw improvements to our workflow and process right away.”

In Ft. Pierce, the Code Compliance Manager works for a City Manager who works for the City Commission. As is the case in any city government, they all listen to their constituents and have to handle some, at times, a wide array of questions and issues: How many chickens did you grab today? How many people got flyers on the aforementioned new dog tethering policy? How is the community education going?

Prior to use of the Comcate solution, handling recording, follow up, and resolution to all this was done on pen and paper because, even with the software-based system they used

previously, officers were confined to using the desktop computers in the office and rewriting most hand-recorded data. There was no immediacy in reporting calls for service and there was no accurate record-keeping; as a result, there was no actual productive reporting going on at all.

According to Arraiz, if she needed information for a critical government grant, she did not have the necessary numbers at her disposal. Now, with Comcate, she has that data and can mine it easily for a variety of needs - grant writing, presentations, generated reports with the power to move and improve things in the department.

Arraiz is encouraged by having a different and improved level of communication with her commission, using the Comcate solution. Previously, there was no way to report the number of dogs no longer tethered but fenced, for example, when that new policy was issued. Says Arraiz, “It was a big change - important to the commission and to the community - yet we couldn’t follow up on the flyers we gave to citizens nor could we show the commission the improvements we had made in reducing the tethered dogs. Now, we can definitively report that we now have ten dogs in newly fenced yards with only five for follow up, for example.”

Beyond no longer relying on pen and paper, officers no longer have to handle 29 or 30 calls in one day then go back to an office to fill out the necessary administrative details later; they can handle the issue as it arises with the mandatory entries - name, address, and nature of call - and go back later with clarity and pick up where they left off with updates and resolution simply by looking at the provided map or the provided follow up date and fanning out as needed. Everything from warnings and citations to where they are in the education process with new policies in the community can be tracked. With Comcate, all problems and reports are easily handled right away with easy follow up moving forward.

Also beyond making the community education with a new policy like the tethered dogs / fences rule easier, it is now easy for the department to document and show the commission how much work they do. With the Comcate solution, tracking all of this information is built in and can help with the inter-departmental dialogue to make improvements, continue to empower officers and other staff, and further streamline how they work.