



Sonoma County

A NIGHT AND DAY DIFFERENCE...
After Adopting EvidenceOnQ Software.

Achieved goals and more...

- Effortless Evidence Entry/
Capture
- Powerful & Easy to Use Search
Tools
- Ability to Purge in Seconds
- Reliable and Secure Chain of
Custody
- Access to Unlimited Report
Options Instantly
- Endless Customization Options
- Powerful Retention Review Tools
and Reports
- Significant Benefits for Officers
and more...

AFTER YEARS OF BATTLING WITH MANUAL EVIDENCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, the Sonoma County (CA) Sheriff's Office realized that the program was inefficient and labor intensive. Evidence technician Helga Ritter, a 25-year veteran in the sheriff's office property room, has experienced first-hand how difficult manually managing evidence has been. "Evidence reports were difficult to file," Ritter said. "The biggest problem was losing these files if they were improperly filed. Everything about a

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piece of evidence was written on a property sheet. If we didn't have that sheet, it became difficult finding the evidence, and that meant we had no chain of custody," Ritter added.

The other problem with a manual system was that developing statistics was nearly impossible. "When someone came to me and asked how many guns we had, I didn't know this," Ritter said. Complicating this problem was that evidence was constantly moving around as it was checked out to use in court cases, or to be sent to a lab, so oftentimes the whereabouts of that evidence was hard to pinpoint without combing through pages of chain of custody entries.

By 2008, Sonoma County Sheriff's Office had completed an exhaustive search of at least eight different evidence management software programs (including one that came with the agency's records management system), ultimately selecting the EvidenceOnQ software from FileOnQ of Seattle, Washington. Before adopting EvidenceOnQ, Ritter mandated some very specific requirements the software had to meet: secure

chain of custody; ability to inventory all evidence; barcoding to check incoming evidence and track it; total security of evidence once entered into the software; and a reliable audit trail.

EvidenceOnQ was chosen because it had a majority of the qualities Ritter and other sheriff's office personnel were seeking. Above and beyond these requirements, an automated solution had to work efficiently and easily not just for evidence room personnel, but particularly for Sonoma County's 250 sheriff's deputies who would need to enter evidence into it.

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Immediate Benefits

Since EvidenceOnQ installation in 2008, Ritter describes the conversion from a manual to automated evidence management system as “the difference between day and night.” For example, “The main information we needed is all on the home page (in EvidenceOnQ),” Ritter said. “You don't have to drill down in the software to get this information. “ Although Ritter confesses that the home page at first can be daunting for sheriff's deputies, this is only because it contains so much information all on one page. “And the data is easy to enter,” Ritter said.

Chain of custody is handled more reliably in the software. EvidenceOnQ tracks chain of custody for each evidence item. “The software makes it clear for anyone who uses EvidenceOnQ how this works for any piece of evidence,” Ritter said. “We now have a better understanding of what we have in our property room, and how much evidence we have.”



Key Reports for Any Category Quickly Generated

With the prior manual evidence management system, anyone in the sheriff's office needing a report on a particular piece of evidence would wait hours, maybe a day to get it. Not so with EvidenceOnQ. For instance, Ritter said, “The sheriff can come to me and ask how many guns we have right now. I can give him a report on this in 15 minutes. I can break it down in to what kinds of guns we have.”

Retention Status Allows Planning For Added Evidence Storage

Ascertaining the retention status of any evidence also is quick and easy in EvidenceOnQ. The sheriff's office is linked with PropertyRoom.com where it can send auction property items and maintain a manifest. Through this method, evidence room personnel can create reports on disposition of property such as gun or drug disposals, an on inventory and queries. “Also, we may look at our gun shelf and realize we're running out of space,” Ritter said. “We can pull up the locations of all guns and concentrate on that one category for purging so that we can make room for more guns.”

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The Retention Review Report feature in EvidenceOnQ enables a quick review of all evidence items. “When we take in an evidence item, we figure out

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what the approximate retention period would be for that item (tied to a particular case) and we put it into the report,” Ritter said. “Then, we can easily pull up the report and see what items have passed their retention date and determine if they can be purged. This makes us more proactive with retention and purging,” Ritter said.

Monumental Time Savings

The best way to describe how much time EvidenceOnQ is saving Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office with its evidence management overall is “monumental.” It now takes only about a quarter of the time to process evidence using EvidenceOnQ compared with the original manual system. This kind of time savings is important when you consider that between 1,500 and 2,500 evidence items flow into the evidence room each month. Furthermore, Ritter said she likes the fact

that if a big case comes along with lots of evidence, it’s now easier to process. “We can take in up to about 300 items of evidence on a homicide, from 100 to 150 items on a child molestation case, and 70 to 80 evidence items from one drug case that may involve methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, and marijuana,” Ritter said. “These cases used to be a nightmare because, under our manual system, every item would have to be labeled by hand. We’d have to label the location, write everything down on a piece of paper, and file it,” Ritter explained. “Now, when a case comes in it’s already in the computer, the deputy enters the evidence information into EvidenceOnQ. All we do is change the locations, print up the barcode number, decide where we’re going to put the evidence, put a barcode label on it, and put it away,” Ritter added. “The evidence is much easier to track.”



About FileOnQ Inc. (Developers of EvidenceOnQ)

Formed in May 1996 as Integrated Software Solutions, we have specialized—from the beginning—in the development of products focused on lifecycle records management for the corporate, departmental, and workgroup user. For the past nine years, we have dedicated ourselves to powerful and customizable solutions for Law Enforcement to track and manage their property and evidence from the crime scene to the court room. Police and sheriff departments, district attorneys, and prosecutors value the ability to access, view, manage, and track evidence and associated documents, media instantly using a web browser. Allowing them to communicate and work together on cases and evidence like never before.

Agencies at the local, state, and federal level have successfully implemented our system to not only [manage evidence](#) but also [officer equipment](#), [assets](#), [critical incident scenes](#), [fleet vehicles](#), [case management](#), and more. Agencies have discovered that what we offer is much more than a software system. It is a powerful platform with the tools needed to increase efficiencies throughout their entire jurisdiction.

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