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Success story

County of Los Angeles Department of Human Resources

Industry
• Government

Solution
• OpenText™ Documentum™ xCP

Partner support
• Nexlogica

Results

Improved security, transparency and collaboration for contributors

Increased resolution speed

Reduced appeal escalation

Boosted employee morale and growth

Los Angeles County
DEPARTMENT OF
Human Resources

County of Los Angeles automates appeals process with OpenText

Most populous county in the US resolves applicant, employee protests quickly, accurately with eAppeals system powered by OpenText

"The system's ease of use and the level of automation means the county will expend less human capital on the mundane process of the appeal and more human capital on the actual analysis and customer service of the appeal."

Murtaza Masood
Information Technology
County of Los Angeles Department of Human Resources

Every organization runs on people. As such, hiring qualified applicants and supporting human capital is essential. By automating a vital human resources function with OpenText technology, the County of Los Angeles Department of Human Resources enhanced its ability to build and support its workforce.

Problematic appeals processing

For organizations in the public sector, federal, state and county guidelines require fair treatment of employees and applicants seeking opportunities for employment. Hiring is based on merit factors. Personnel actions are guided by policies and procedures.

As the most populous county in the United States, the County of Los Angeles manages human resources for more than 250,000 applicants and over 110,000 employees across all departments. Its Appeals Program provides independent review of protests involving exam related issues, as well as protests involving discipline or personnel actions.

The County receives close to 5,500 appeals every year. HR professionals in the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Appeals Unit review every submission, determining its merits in accordance with county and departmental policies, Civil Service Rules and other standards. Previously, manual processing was slow and frustrating—to appellants and reviewers alike.

It started with paper forms, filled out then mailed, faxed or hand-delivered to the county building. DHR Appeals Unit staff members then commenced a laborious process of reading the appeal, searching for necessary documentation, requesting the material from scattered sources and finally manually entering the information into its appeals system.

"The process was time consuming and contributed to a waste in human capital," related Murtaza Masood, with the County of Los Angeles Department of Human Resources. Staff members could spend weeks tracking down relevant material through multiple calls and emails. Boxes of files took up office space and time to move, making room for more appeals. The situation engendered a focus on routine paperwork rather than discerning analysis; it created a tremendous concern for staff morale. Furthermore, the process was not transparent for appellants and it left the customer experience wanting.

Though DHR Appeals staff members worked as quickly as possible using former methods, any appeal exceeding a 60-day threshold may go to the Civil Service Commission (CSC), an administrative jurisdictional hearing body. The escalation demanded more people, oversight and expense. *"We recognized these issues created a challenge in sharing information, created serious security issues and came at a great cost to the county,"* Masood recalled.

Online appeals collaboration

DHR searched for a solution to replace manual methods and outdated technology. The county's previous system lacked the ability to track progress or to produce an audit trail; appellants could only check the status of an appeal by contacting DHR professionals directly, which resulted in customer service complaints. The system also had limited security controls and did not integrate with other county applications.

Instead, LA county wanted to offer online appeals submission with an automated interface to support county employees in the 60-day turnaround. Working with trusted solutions provider Nexlogica, the county released eAppeals, an online appeals management system powered by OpenText™ Documentum™ xCP, in the summer of 2016.

> *"eAppeals allows departments and DHR to increase productivity, streamline business processes and improve HR services through automation of workflows and integration of our enterprise HR systems."*
>
> **Lisa M. Garrett**
> Director of Human Resources
> County of Los Angeles

The county selected OpenText for its experience, strategy and methodology, according to Marisa Lopez, senior Human Resources manager, Appeals Unit for the County of Los Angeles. Built on the Documentum xCP platform for automating complex processes, eAppeals provides integrated capabilities that speed and ease HR functions, including:

- Online appeal forms and dashboard, https://eappeals.lacounty.gov.
- Automated workflow based on business rules.
- eNotifications to appellants, departments and appeals staff.
- Integrated data validation with county personnel systems.

"The interface now is automated, which is a huge benefit," Lopez noted. Morteza Mostafavi, principal analyst, Human Resources, concurred: **"The system is doing the job for us. It's a workhorse."** He described the new process: A person submits an appeal online and Documentum xCP delivers the appeal to the HR team, sending direct communication to the county department. Skipping the previous email and phone chase, departments then upload necessary documentation directly to the eAppeals system. *"For efficiency, it works much better,"* Mostafavi noted.

eAppeals consistently communicates with departments across the county. The online system is also available to the CSC to view cases, though fewer are appealed since timely resolution is influenced by Documentum xCP capabilities.

Tracking supports accountability

Documentum xCP allows HR managers to track tasks, workload and case cycle times to ensure action is prompt and in compliance with the 60-day deadline. Users note a heightened sense of teamwork involving the appellant, department and analyst on the case—all contributors work for a rapid response to avoid the time and cost of escalation to the CSC.

Audit trail enhances security

Unlike the previous appeals system, eAppeals provides an audit trail: records show recipients, actions and more with time stamps. Furthermore, the system provides effective controls to manage user access and passwords for confidential cases.

Comprehensive reporting drives results

Generating case summaries and aggregate reports for the entire county or an individual department is fast and easy with Documentum xCP. **"We've got the ability now to identify by data elements any kind of report for executive management. It's really quite sophisticated,"** Lopez noted. The statistics are used to inform objectives and drive results.

Faster resolution, valuable insights

LA county's eAppeals system handles more than 98 percent of all appeals; only a small number of applicants prefer paper-based submission.

eAppeals transformed LA County's appeals system, now centered on automation and intuitive collaboration. **"The system's ease of use and the level of automation means the county will expend less human capital on the mundane process of the appeal and more human capital on the actual analysis and customer service for the appeal,"** said Masood.

Efficiencies were gained while ensuring continued compliance with standards for fairness. **"The result is an easy-to-use system that facilitates a timelier, more accurate and more thorough vital county function. It is a native digital process end-to-end."**

"The system is doing the job for us. It's a workhorse."

Morteza Mostafavi
Principal analyst, Human Resources
County of Los Angeles Department of
Human Resources
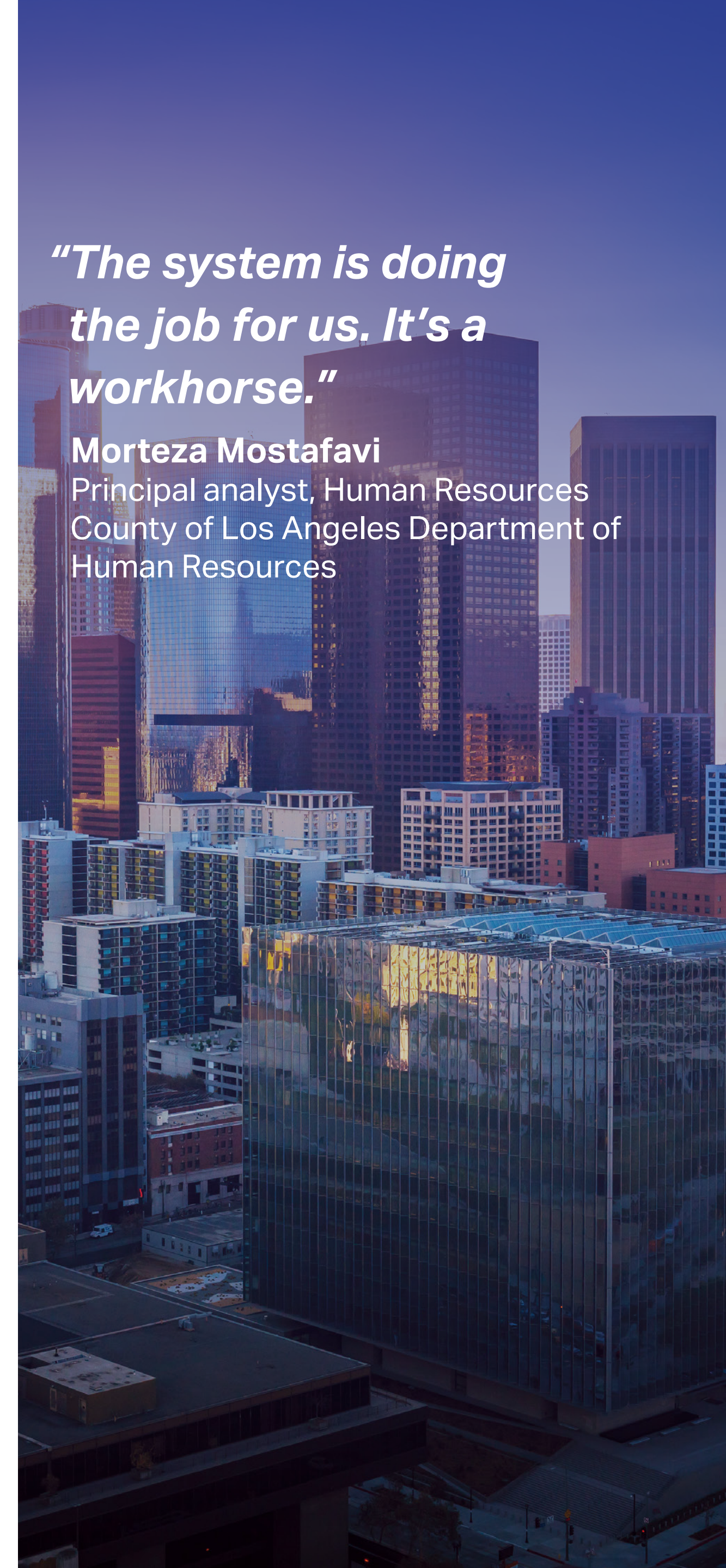
The system built on Documentum xCP received an enthusiastic response from all stakeholders. In an online-savvy world, appellants love tracking status through a dashboard, reducing calls to the DHR staff. Effective tools and increased productivity boosts morale among the Appeals Unit and department collaborators. Even professionals with the CSC expressed excitement upon receiving training on the new application.

"eAppeals allows departments and DHR to increase productivity, streamline business processes and improve HR services through automation of workflows and integration of our enterprise HR systems," said Lisa Garrett, director of Human Resources at the County of Los Angeles.

Freedom for career growth

Automated appeals management frees county professionals to focus on more meaningful work. *"We communicated that improving the system with automation was not going to threaten anyone's job. We re-purposed our positions, shifting our staffing so we can actually provide them with a different career path,"* explained Lopez.

Insights for best practices

Data now available through eAppeals offers insights for refining county services. For instance, the Appeals Unit found close to 60 percent of appeals are based on rejected applications. *"We're sharing that information with departments so when job postings are produced they are mindful of the kinds of questions appellants have difficulties with,"* Lopez related. Over time, the application of data insight may reduce the ratio of appeals to applications.

Reliability for long-term innovation

Within its first year of Documentum xCP implementation, LA county received industry accolades, including a 2017 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACO) in the category of Personnel Management, Employment and Training; and a 2016 Excellence in Technology for Outstanding IT Project award at the Los Angeles Digital Government Summit. The county plans to continue refining the eAppeals system, combining the information with other digitized personnel records and adding retention policies for automated information governance. Managers express confidence that the Documentum xCP automated, collaborative platform will help the county support its people, its customers and its policies well into the future.

"We continue to enhance our digital employee engagement, automated recruitment platforms and HR analytics to enable us to provide effective and user-focused services across the county," Masood concluded.

About Nexlogica

From issues of digitization in the modern workplace to unlocking data in core enterprise solutions, Nexlogica integrates solutions that optimize existing hardware and software services and products, tailored to the business. For more information, visit: www.nexlogica.com.