

## Making Front Page News

Producing a daily paper that includes not only breaking news but more than 30 different types of public information requires that both people and systems deliver day in and day out. While this may seem obvious, most people take the processes, information, and particularly the technology required to produce a publication with timely news and information for granted. Just like a good news story, building the technology to produce a daily paper requires that you take good information and organize it to create a system that is reliable and seamless.

### The “Who”

Privately owned and established in 1889, the Daily Court Review (DCR) is Houston’s authority for public notice and public records. With 13 employees, DCR was running 15 different software programs and an extensive array of hardware, pieced together over time, to publish a daily newspaper 5 days a week. Their constant deadlines rendered them defenseless against potential technological stagnation and often times left them scrambling to hit a deadline during the final hour when systems failed.

If they expected the paper to continue to grow and operate efficiently, while integrating additional valuable subscriber services via the Internet, the management team at DCR realized that technical, operational, and process improvements were an immediate requirement. Armed with a general knowledge of what was wrong and a determination to increase efficiency and reduce risk, the management team at DCR began the process of identifying a solution for their business needs. They turned to Epixx Technology Partners for the answers.

“The daily operation and production of the newspaper reached a point where each person at the paper required a more efficient method for production in order to complete their piece of the production puzzle. DCR management realized it was imperative that that processes be streamlined by taking advantage of the latest technologies,” said Sarah Morin, President, Daily Court Review.

DCR identified the following requirements for their business needs:

- A process to store, access and contain the continued acquisition of databases
- Reliability requirements
- Increasing demands for queried information
- The desire to expand business services to include e-commerce
- Need to digitally distribute the paper
- A way to increase subscriber base.
- Increasing database storage requirements

### The “Why”

Gathering the facts and investigating the story required Epixx to take stock of all the current technology in use and rate it’s effectiveness as well as its worth to the business as a whole. Epixx conducted a complete audit, including variables such as:

- **Environment** – Assessing DCR’s current production and IT status was the first vital step in creating a solution. Epixx reviewed the business, exposed DCR to new and exciting technical possibilities, and mutually created a set of realistic goals and objectives.

HARRIS COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD

## Daily Court Review

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### Out of state bank sets its eyes on Houston

New Orleans' oldest operating bank to build two new branches in addition to the corporate office.

By Nabeel Jaitupkar

A New Orleans-based bank is looking to make bigger strides in the community by expanding itself to this neck of the woods. Construction of two new branches of Whitney National Bank is expected to be completed by the end of this year and early 2004, with a third branch moving into an existing building. "We are committed to growth," said Senior Vice President Pam Magee, "and Houston seemed a good fit for this."

One branch will be located on 6348 Woodway at Ripple Creek, and the other on 12600 Memorial Drive. Additionally, the bank's corporate offices are scheduled to move from the downtown area to a facility on Sun Felipe, just inside Loop 610.

The two new branches will be full-service, offering a variety of personal and business products and services. Both branches will also provide private banking services as well as mortgage lending. The Woodway branch will offer two customer service drive-up lanes and one drive-up ATM lane. The Memorial branch will be equipped with four drive-up lanes and one drive-up ATM. Magee said inside the branches there will also be traditional teller windows, personal bankers and safe deposit boxes. "We are about relationship lending," she said, "and the freedom to provide careful customer attention."

Whitney Holding Corporation, through its banking subsidiary, Whitney National Bank, which was established in 1883 in New Orleans—oldest operating bank. It came to Texas in 2000, stretching the five-state gulf coast region from Texas to southern Louisiana. Additionally, the bank also has branches in the coastal regions of Mississippi, central and south Alabama and Florida.

"We came here to show how serious we are about banking in Houston," Magee said. Executive Vice President John Hope III, said his company is dedicated to Houston and the surrounding markets. "These two new branches are

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### Raising the Bar

Local attorney achieves statewide recognition from the Texas Bar Foundation.

By Nabeel Jaitupkar

Knox Nunnally couldn't be happier with the way things have turned out for him this year. "It's been a great ride," said the trial attorney. "I hope it only gets better."

Nunnally, a partner at Vinson and Elkins, LLP, is the latest recipient of the Texas Bar Foundation's Ronald D. Secret Outstanding Trial Lawyer Award that is given every year to active trial lawyers who demonstrate outstanding trial and advocacy skills. Additionally, they have high ethical and moral standards enhancing the image of the trial lawyer.

Nunnally said the award means a lot to him not just because of the recognition but because he worked with the person whom it is named after.

"I knew Mr. Secret really well," he said, "and his passing was a major loss in our world."

Secret was an active member of the both the Houston Bar Association and the State Bar of Texas, as well as the Texas and Houston Bar Foundations.

The award was created as a memorial to Secret, who died of a heart attack. The foundation is the largest one of its kind in the nation, and is renowned for its ongoing effort to aid the public through its charitable grant making. Since 1965, the foundation has given more than \$6 million in grants to benefit the people of Texas. The foundation also raises awareness by honoring members of the legal community.

Nunnally said the recognition from his peers is wonderful. "It only makes you want to work harder," he said.

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### Microsoft warns of new critical hole in software

Users urged to install a firewall to block out intruders and enable feature to update security.

By Eleanor Mills Abreu

SAN FRANCISCO - Microsoft Corporation officials warned its users Wednesday about a new critical security hole in its Windows operating system that could allow a person to gain control over a computer, delete data and install unwanted programs.

The vulnerability is similar to one that the company warned about in July, which experts called one of the worst to hit a software program in years because of the broad number of Windows systems affected.

Within a month, the Blaster Internet worm surfaced, taking advantage of that security hole in Windows. Analysts estimate hundreds of thousands of machines to be affected by the worm.

Hackers apparently have not yet targeted the newly announced vulnerability, said Jeff Jones, senior director of Trustworthy Computing security at Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft.

"History has shown us there are malicious individuals out there that could create an attack of some sort against it," he said.

Blaster also dubbed MS03-028 and LoVecan, created many of the program in years because of the broad number of Windows

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### Deficits dim prospects for business tax reform

The European Union given green light to hit U.S. goods with \$4 billion in punitive tariffs if Washington fails to comply.

By Deana Smith

WASHINGTON - Record budget deficits and the need for more money for Iraq are dimming prospects for broad business tax reform just as U.S. lawmakers are pushing to comply with a global trade ruling against tax breaks for exporters.

American multinational companies are hoping that what they see as long overdue reform of U.S. international tax rules will be coupled with legislation repealing the tax subsidies the World Trade Organization said violate global trade rules.

The organization gave the European Union the green light to hit U.S. goods with \$4 billion in punitive tariffs if Washington fails to comply.

The issue is likely to be discussed this week during a meeting in Cancun, Mexico. Legislation offered by Bill Thomas, the House Ways and Means Committee's chair, would repeal the export tax subsidies while providing new tax breaks for small manufacturers and U.S. multinationals. But it carries a price tag to the U.S. Treasury of about \$130 billion over 10 years.

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### Top execs at Textron face job losses after review

Less than 20 percent of managers received poor test grades.

Reuters Business Report

BOSTON - Textron Chairman Lewis Campbell said Wednesday that nearly 20 percent of the conglomerate's top 150 executives could lose their jobs after a recent review of their skills and performance resulted in mediocre or unfavorable marks.

Campbell said the review classified the executives as green, yellow or red.

Green is the highest rating, but Campbell said less than 20 percent of the executives got yellow or red ratings.

"Red means they're out of here," Campbell said at a Morgan Stanley analysts conference that was Webcast from Scottsdale, Arizona.

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3915 Heritage Colony Drive    Missouri City, TX 77459    281.208.1989    www.epixx.com

- **Technical** – A thorough audit of the IT infrastructure and software applications revealed areas of weakness and risk. Epixx evaluated how DCR could re-purpose the best hardware, address and improve security, consolidate and revamp networks and communications, and enhance secure Internet, email, and VPN access.
- **Implementation** – To address future considerations, enterprise solutions needed to be implemented. Epixx determined that a database application hosting solution and new production software would greatly enhance processes surrounding production deadlines. Systems would be integrated into a mission-critical environment – a key success point.
- **Operations** – Like many small businesses, most of the institutional knowledge resided within the minds of few, exposing DCR to significant risks and limitations. Epixx recommended that DCR improve policies and procedures, review production flows, provide systems documentation of critical information, and address business continuity, fault tolerance, and disaster recovery issues to ensure long term success.

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***“I am confident ... we will save tens of thousands a year in production costs due to the technology implemented by Epixx”***

**— Sarah Morin**  
President of Daily Court Review

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## The “What”

With the investigative phase completed, Epixx set out to implement a structured plan and budget that DCR could manage. Immediate, mid and long-term goals were established, including dates set for re-determining the goals and objectives on a consistent basis for customer relationship management and satisfaction surveying.

Epixx then began restructuring the physical plant, implementing network and communication bandwidth solutions, revising production applications, and addressing data management and conversion. All of these changes were designed to facilitate growth, stability, security and troubleshooting.

Upgrades to DCR’s current software doubled efficiency of the staff in just one month. Improved backup procedures for all servers allows for instant support, maintenance, and upgrades

as well as safety and peace of mind the risk of downtime would be substantially minimized.

One of DCR’s greatest challenges was standardizing the format of data interchanged with outside entities, as well as the acquisition of the data and long-term archiving of the data. With an Epixx solution quickly in place, DCR realized that they were not just working with a technical integrator, but a provider of business solutions with a detailed scope of retaining business value with every decision and technology deployed.

## The “When”

Execution of the upgrades and integration of new technology was implemented around the production schedule of the paper with a common goal being zero downtime. This required Epixx to perform above and beyond the call of duty by utilizing available non-production hours, evenings, and weekends to integrate and instantly stabilize the IT environment. The return on investment was evident within the first month of stabilization.

“Epixx has already increased the efficiency of our entire business operations two-fold. Our employees have responded that they notice the proficient technical improvements in their day-to-day procedures and they are proud to work for a paper that is progressive and prepared for growth,” said Morin.

“I think the large amounts of return are yet to come as we are still in the development stages of getting our systems where we want them to be. I’d estimate DCR saved \$1,500 a month between August and December 2002. I am confident once we get the proper applications in place we will save tens of thousands a year in production costs due to the technology implemented by Epixx,” added Morin.

## The Delivery – Right on Time

With stable technology in place and a focus now on the future, DCR’s growth plans include:

- Providing subscribers with additional data search and retrieval options
- Building e-commerce into the website
- Creating a unified database
- Standardizing on industry-accepted data interchange formats like XML.

For over a century Daily Court Review has made numerous changes to meet each new generation of technology. Each technological milestone has required through research and substantial consideration. Partnered with Epixx, DCR is confident of the technology now in place and no longer is in fear of becoming yesterday’s news. Sounds like the makings of a great story. **XX**



Contact us to discover how a customized, on-site assessment, systems implementation or project management project can provide your organization with the guidance and expertise to streamline your operations and allow you and your team to focus on your core business objectives.