

Weld County Case Study

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John Lefebvre
Treasurer
Weld County

Deploying Creditrion’s ItemAge delivered immediate operations benefits to Weld County.

With the economic slowdown continuing to put a strain on government budgets, it is imperative that county treasurer’s offices process tax payments as fast, cost-effectively and accurately as possible. The Weld County (Colorado) Treasurer’s Office was able to reduce labor costs, increase data quality, and accelerate funds availability by deploying an image-based remittance solution from Creditrion.

The Situation

Weld County is an agricultural empire of 2.5 million acres -- 75 percent of which is devoted to farming and raising livestock. Boasting 3,000 farms across its 3,999 square miles, Weld County is Colorado’s top producer of beef cattle, grain, sugar beets and dairy. The Weld County Treasurer’s Office distributes about 174,000 property tax bills a year-- representing \$385 million -- not including tax bills sent out by the County Clerk. The property tax statements sent to taxpayers include a scannable remittance coupon (or stub) and are typically due in full at the end of April, or in two equal installments due at the end of February and by June 15th. At the beginning of July, the County Treasurer’s Office mails delinquent tax notices for any payments not received on time. The Weld County Treasurer’s Office processes peak volumes of 3,000 tax payments per day.

The Challenge

When John Lefebvre became the county’s treasurer, it didn’t take him long to realize that something needed to be done to improve the way the county processed property tax payments, which was largely a manual process. “The staff was vastly overwhelmed during peak periods,” Lefebvre recalled. “The county was running a week or two behind in getting accounts credited and money in the bank. And the fastest input person frequently broke out in hives as a result of the stress imposed on her.”

Fortunately, Lefebvre had experience in automating tax processing from his time as treasurer of Adams County (Colorado). “My philosophy is: If you can reduce the amount of staff required to process tax payments during peak periods, then you can run with a leaner staff year-round, realizing greater labor savings.” By deploying an image-based remittance system at Adams County, Lefebvre was able to reduce his tax processing staff from 23 to 13 over a three-year period. What’s more, the county no longer ran several days behind in getting money into the bank -- a big deal when you consider that it receives tens of millions of dollars of tax payments a day during peak periods.

Accelerated funds availability.

Business Benefits

- Immediate operation benefits
- Complete control of the remittance process
- Reduced labor costs
- Increased data quality

The Solution

The remittance system Lefebvre deployed at Adams County was from Creditron so it's no surprise that Lefebvre would turn to Creditron again to streamline Weld County's tax processing. Soon after becoming Weld County Treasurer in 2007, Lefebvre issued an RFP for an image-based remittance system. Creditron submitted the only qualified bid. Based on Creditron's performance at the Adams County Treasurer's Office, Lefebvre was confident that the solution would meet the county's needs. In 2007, the Weld County Treasurer's Office deployed Creditron's ItemAge image-based remittance processing platform. The solution automates the processing of all property tax payment types, including full payments, partial payments, a single check with multiple remittance coupons (or stubs), and multiple checks with a single coupon. As remittances are processed, they are compared against a file of outstanding tax payments to identify any exceptions, such as overpayments. Once batches are completed, images of the checks and coupons are archived. At the end of each day, the county sends a file of check images to its depository institution for electronic deposit via Check 21. The county's system runs on an NCR scanner that processes 200 documents per minute.

The Results

Deploying Creditron's ItemAge delivered immediate operations benefits to Weld County. "Now, it takes longer to open and sort mail than it does to process payments and send them to the bank," he said, adding that even during peak volume periods, the county processes all of its payments within three hours. "As a result, every payment goes to the bank every day, and every account is fully credited for its payments every day. By having ItemAge hit our database during processing, operators are also able to make smart decisions on the fly, and we don't have to back out payments." Deploying ItemAge also has helped the county manage its increasing volume of delinquent tax payments, which has generated higher remittance volumes in July -- a previously off-peak month. Since deploying ItemAge, the county also was able to eliminate one full-time equivalent (FTE).

The Bottom Line

After deploying ItemAge twice, Lefebvre remains a strong proponent of Creditron. "Creditron is the best technology available for counties that want to process remittances themselves," Lefebvre said. "Their solution allows us to maintain full control of our process from beginning to end, and the ability to decision items on the fly allows for cleaner, better data and fewer exceptions. "Additionally, their technical support is among the best of the vendors I work with," Lefebvre said. "ItemAge also is easy-to-use. It only takes a few days of processing before an employee is fully trained on the system, and operators really like how the system allows for real-time decisioning." Lefebvre concluded: "I can't imagine going back to a manual or semi-automated remittance system."

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