

Case study

Orange County Office of Elections

Florida county e-poll book improves accuracy, speeds voter check-in with HP ElitePad Tablets



Industry

Local Government

Objective

To maximize Orange County, Florida citizens' right to vote by automating the manual poll book sign-in process with e-poll solutions based on the HP ElitePad Tablet with HP Retail Jacket

Approach

Work with HP Reseller, Thomas Computer Corporation, to create and deploy an HP ElitePad e-poll book to streamline election sign-in.

IT matters

- HP ElitePad with HP Retail Jacket provides durability and reliability, saving IT time and money
- HP Self-Maintainer Program empowers HP-trained IT staff to deliver quick, economical service
- HP 5-year warranty and long product lifecycle support budget compliance

Business matters

- Streamlines voter sign-in time by 70%
- Increases voter confidence
- Reduces cost-of-ownership with HP ElitePads simplifies the job of poll workers and increases efficiency
- Provides real-time voter history compared with previous 2-3-week verification process
- Improves mobility with lightweight 8-pound HP ElitePad compared to 22 pounds of prior system
- Increases accuracy through automation



“We’re happy to maximize Orange County citizens’ right to vote by making voting easier, quicker and accurate by integrating mobile technology from HP. In almost every area of our process, the HP ElitePad e-poll book running OCVotes results in reduced labor, integrated and streamlined processes, and considerable savings in effort and cost. And voter lines move very fast.”

– Sue Elias, Senior Deputy Supervisor Information Systems, Supervisor of Elections Orange County, Florida



The Supervisor of Elections in Orange County, Florida, modernized its voter sign-in experience with the development of a state-of-the-art e-poll book. Utilizing the lightweight HP ElitePads, the e-poll books reduce voter sign-in time by 70 percent, shorten voting lines, increase poll worker efficiency and improve voter history reporting accuracy.

The mission of the Office of the Supervisor of Elections of Orange County, Florida is a simple directive: to ensure the integrity of the electoral process, enhance public confidence and encourage citizen participation. Accomplishing this mission, however, takes the best that modern technology has to offer. After considering its options, the Supervisor of Elections Office determined HP provided the ideal technology and based its game-changing e-poll book on the HP ElitePad Tablet with the HP Retail Jacket. The Retail Jacket includes a built-in 2D barcode scanner and magnetic stripe reader and Orange County also opted for a secondary battery.

“Orange County turned challenges into an opportunity to think out-of-the-box to automate and resolve the classic voting bottleneck—the check-in procedure,” explains Sue Elias, Senior Deputy Supervisor Information Systems, Supervisor of Elections, Orange County, Florida. “We chose the HP ElitePad Tablet for our second generation e-poll book and have reduced voter sign-in time by 70 percent, while reducing the footprint from 22 pounds to eight. We’re fielding a lot of calls from other election districts that want to learn how we did it.”

In 2014, the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA) recommended that election jurisdictions should transition to electronic poll books as a good way to improve voting efficiencies. The Office teamed up with Thomas Computer Corporation, a valued HP Reseller, to modernize its voter sign-in system. Now the old manual polling book—and long lines—are a thing of the past.

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About eight years ago, the first generation e-poll book that the Elections Office designed weighed more than 22 pounds, a monster by today’s standards, and consisted of a separate laptop, printer and scanner. The size of the system and space required to both set it up

and store it was enormous. Fast forward to today and the technology advances are remarkable.

“It was definitely a step in the right direction,” notes Luis Torres, technical service manager, Supervisor of Elections, Orange County, Florida, “but the new HP ElitePad-based e-poll book is a highly integrated, compact and all-in-one approach that we can count on with a product lifecycle that will take us all the way through the elections of 2020.”

Trusted delivery team

Doug Polkosky, vice-president at HP reseller Thomas Computer Corporation, has been offering value-add consulting to the Office of Elections for 20 years. He helped Elias and the IT staff understand the technology options best positioned to consolidate all the disparate and bulky components of the first generation e-poll book into a one-book-does-all model. After reviewing offerings from 12 different vendors, Polkosky arranged for the technical staff at the Elections Office to review a pre-release version of the HP ElitePad.

The HP ElitePad is a Windows tablet solution that integrates easily with custom software solutions. With Intel Inside®, the HP ElitePad delivers efficient performance in a mobile format. It was the only option that included all the functionality Orange County needed in one small tablet profile, and it quickly became the product of choice.

“Thomas Computer Corporation has a long-term relationship with the Orange County Supervisor of Elections Office built on integrity and innovation,” says Polkosky. “We team up with HP because it stands solidly behind its resellers and customers, just like we stand behind the Elections Office. For the ElitePad, HP is solidly committed,” he notes. “HP provided a written assurance to support the HP ElitePad with the industry’s only 5-year warranty. The closest competitor offered lifecycles lasting only three years.”

HP understands the importance of a long product lifecycle, especially in this County government application, Polkosky notes. HP listened to the customer’s needs and ensured a long ElitePad lifecycle with significant investment protection and savings, he explains. For example, the current model tablet is the ElitePad T1000 G2, which still operates with all of the original accessories first used when we began two years ago.

HP provides a 5-year warranty that will enable the ElitePad T1000 models to be covered beyond the 2020 Presidential Elections.

“A long and consistent ElitePad product cycle really helps meet our tight election budget requirements,” affirms Elias. “Product continuity across all generations saves us considerable money, future update work, and simplifies everybody’s life on the IT staff. Add the unique HP 5-year warranty, which brings the warranty cost down to only 12% of the product, and it’s a very ‘election friendly’ solution.”

Thomas Computer helped design and provide a key custom e-poll book stand. The stand is specifically designed to enable the elections worker and the voter to access the e-poll book and confirm information accuracy with their signature from opposite sides of the desk or table. Polkosky also modified a “charging” cart, customizing it to provide storage and charging for up to 48 HP ElitePads with HP Retail Jackets, making them fully charged and ready for use.

Tedious, manual processes automated

The HP ElitePad e-poll book utilizes the HP ElitePad Retail Jacket, which simply snaps on. The Retail Jacket provides the ability to scan and read 2D and 1D barcodes, and read three-track magnetic stripes directly from a driver’s license or other ID card.

Previously, at the end of the 12-hour voting day, poll workers had to manually account for and record the distribution of more than 90 various ballot styles. Poll workers now conduct their end-of-day ballot accounting using an intuitive program directly on the HP Tablets. This significantly reduces the time and complexity of this important task. Under the old system, the precinct register books were copied and reconciled manually, which took a team of five people up to two weeks to record a complete voter history. Quicker validation of voting history is a significant improvement in the process.

“Our HP ElitePad e-poll book allows poll workers to simply scan or swipe ID information, which is then automatically reconciled and counted,” explains Torres. Poll workers receive real-time notifications directly on the HP Tablets to assist them with their processes. “Voter history statistics are immediately available real-time and at the end of the day, versus several weeks with previous methods. As a result, we can now provide

hourly voter turnout to the media and the election can be certified in a much shorter time.”

The Elections Office IT Staff integrated three separate software applications into one, called OCVotes, to support the new HP ElitePad e-poll book, and did the application design and programming themselves. “Part of our responsibility as a government service, is to take good care of the taxpayers’ dollars,” adds Elias. “We realized if we combine the low cost of the HP ElitePads with writing our own in-house OCVotes application, the cost was only one-third of the off-the-shelf e-poll books.”

Data security and redundancy

In 2012, jurisdictions across Florida experience significant wait times due to heavy turnout and lengthy ballots. This can be an especially difficult problem, particularly if a voter is trying to vote quickly during a busy work day. The HP-based e-poll book not only shortens the check-in time significantly, but helps confirm election accuracy through automation. These things combined provide a faster, smoother process for the voter.

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– Luis Torres, Technical Service Manager, Supervisor of Elections Orange County, Florida

Orange County selected the additional battery option for the HP Retail Jacket. There is now enough power available to keep processes going, even in the event of an unexpected power outage. “Orange County is experiencing battery run times of up to 13 hours in actual use with the OCVotes application,” Torres notes. “From this experience, we can actually run more than a full 8-hour day on batteries alone.”

Customer at a glance

Application

E-poll books based on HP ElitePad Tablets deployed to shorten voter sign-in process, increase accuracy and provide real-time voter history reporting

Hardware

- HP ElitePad Tablet
- HP ElitePad Retail Jacket
- Custom-designed stand from Thomas Computer Corporation

Operating system

- Microsoft Windows

Support

- HP 5-year warranty
- HP Self-Maintainer Program

HP Authorized Reseller

- Thomas Computer Corporation

“The HP ElitePad Tablet with the Retail Jacket is ideally suited to our e-poll book application,” confirms Torres. “The tablets are very durable and election workers just don’t seem to break them. They are light, so election workers can easily lift them. They support both scanning and magnetic swiping. And the HP Self-Maintainer Program will save us money and ensure a quick fix if needed.”

The HP Self-Maintainer Program is unique in the industry and will train and certify the Elections Office IT staff to service and repair its own HP ElitePads. The durability and simple solid-state construction makes it easy to trouble shoot. With Self-Maintainer certification, the trained IT staff can dig in to deliver extremely fast service turnaround, which is key during Election Day when time is crucial.

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The internal staff support process also removes any concerns for data security because the tablets never leave the premises. Torres, thinking over the many ideal features inherent in the HP ElitePad with the HP Retail

Jacket, stresses that its redundant systems make it perfect for an election, where 100% reliability is the goal.

“The HP ElitePad with the HP Retail Jacket has both scanning and magnetic swiping input options, two batteries and an extra HP ElitePad SD Card Reader for redundant removable storage. That’s a lot of extra security and prepares us for the worst case scenarios we can imagine.”

The voting future

The Orange County Supervisor of Elections Office believes their choice of the HP ElitePad will allow them to adapt easily to changes in the voting process. Centralized voting centers may add voting efficiency and give voters greater accessibility. Additions may also include more self-service capabilities similar to ticketing kiosks at an airport, and customized ballots based on a voter’s ID swipe.

“For the time being,” concludes Elias, “we’re happy that the new HP ElitePad e-poll book maximizes Orange County citizens’ right to vote by making voting an easier, quicker process. In almost every area of our process, the HP ElitePad e-poll book running OCVotes, results in integrated and streamlined processes, reduced labor-intensive practices, and decreased cost. More importantly, the lines to vote move very fast, which we hope encourages citizens to vote.”

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