



Getting started with digital evidence management

Your complete guide to saving time and money with a digital evidence management system

Genetec[™]

What is a digital evidence management system?

A digital evidence management system (DEMS) is a tool that helps you manage the storage and distribution of digital evidence from different systems, all in one place. It helps you achieve operational excellence throughout the lifecycle of an investigation, from collection to case closed.

How can a DEMS help?

By providing a comprehensive view of available evidence, a DEMS helps your team work smarter, freeing them up to focus on more important tasks. It also makes it easy to engage and share with different stakeholders and removes unnecessary costs and delays. With the right DEMS, you can clear more cases, boost efficiencies and cut costs.



Is it time to invest in a digital evidence management system?

Let's find out. This e-book will help you:

- Identify the signs your business needs a DEMS
- Determine how a DEMS can improve productivity
- Build your DEMS strategy
- Maximize your ROI

Coming up, the 7 signs your business needs a DEMS.

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Signs that you need a DEMS

Advances in technology and the growth of digital recording devices have led to an increase of digital evidence being created. Although this can provide a wealth of information to investigators, it also places a burden on administrative systems that were not designed to accommodate all this data. Today, a shared hard drive just won't do. Here are some signs that the current methods you're using to manage your digital evidence may be holding your department back from achieving its full potential.

1. There's no central location for digital evidence.

Digital evidence is stored in multiple locations. Be it independent applications, shared hard drives or discs in evidence lockers. This puts your team at a disadvantage. Not only is it a challenge to retrieve key information such as the date, location, and related evidence, but it's also harder to see the full picture.



“Today, a shared hard drive just won't do.”

2. Manual tasks are eating up your staff's time.

Managing workflows and ensuring the proper collection, control, and sharing of evidence take up a large share of your team's time and sometimes require dedicated staff. Activities like manual video conversion, redaction, and physical shipping are keeping your employees from focusing on bigger priorities.

3. Sharing evidence is expensive and painful.

File sharing is complicated. It often requires the use of network drives and DVDs and demands lots of time spent on burning data and waiting for downloads to complete. Using courier services to transport evidence across different locations is also costly and time-consuming and you may also have to take additional steps to maintain chain of custody.

4. Evidence sometimes gets lost.

Given the increase in digital evidence, we must account for a level of human error that is more common than we'd like to admit. Have you ever misplaced a DVD, accidentally deleted video or mailed evidence to the wrong address? Well, you're not alone.

5. You don't know if your data is secure.

Chain of custody is difficult to prove. You're not exactly sure who viewed, edited, shared, or deleted evidence and cases. You can't even track the time that any of these actions took place. How do you know your data is secure?

6. Investigations are taking longer than usual.

The increase in data, stored in siloed systems and then shared with multiple stakeholders, using insecure and inefficient means, is causing delays in solving your cases. Add to that, tedious manual processes and case backlogs start to become the norm.

7. There's no plan to scale.

Even with the above challenges, you may have figured out a way to get by. But what happens as your security system continues to grow? Will the increased load put a strain on your department? Will you be able to maintain current processes without slowing investigations? Will storage and distribution costs continue to rise? Can you afford to continue working at this pace?

Does your business need a DEMS?

Not sure if you're ready for a DEMS? If any of the below challenges sound familiar, then a DEMS can help your business operations.

1. There's no central location for your digital evidence.
2. Manual tasks are eating up your staff's time.
3. Sharing evidence is expensive and painful.
4. Evidence sometimes gets lost.
5. You don't know if your data is secure.
6. Investigations are taking longer than usual.
7. There's no plan to scale

Chapter 2

How a DEMS improves productivity

The growth of data generated by video surveillance, body cameras, cell phones and other devices is inevitable. However, we're not seeing an equivalent increase in resources, be it human or technical, to manage this growth. According to a study by the National Institute of Justice, stored data is estimated to double every 18 months. Acquiring and managing large amounts of digital evidence with existing tools can take hours of an administrator's time, resulting in reduced productivity and pending case backlogs of up to 6 months.

The more efficiently practitioners can use their time, the more evidence they can process. Businesses can thrive by minimizing the interruptions caused by incidents and moving on quickly after case information is transferred to the appropriate agency or legal advisor. That is where a DEMS comes in.

“Acquiring large amounts of digital evidence with existing tools can take hours of an administrator's time, resulting in reduced productivity and pending case backlogs of up to 6 months.”


– National Institute of Justice

Operations

Managing the flow of people in a store, train station or on a school campus can be quite the challenge. It doesn't help if you have to dedicate extra time to handle different aspects of an investigation such as:

- Printing screenshots from surveillance video
- Converting video to then burn it to DVD
- Organizing evidence and case details from different sources into paper folders
- Physically delivering case files or completing evidence request forms by hand
- Redacting video frame by frame

A DEMS can help store evidence so it's ready to be shared at the click of a button. A single location for all your data can help eliminate repetitive tasks.



“A DEMS can help store evidence so it's ready to be shared at the click of a button.”

Intelligence

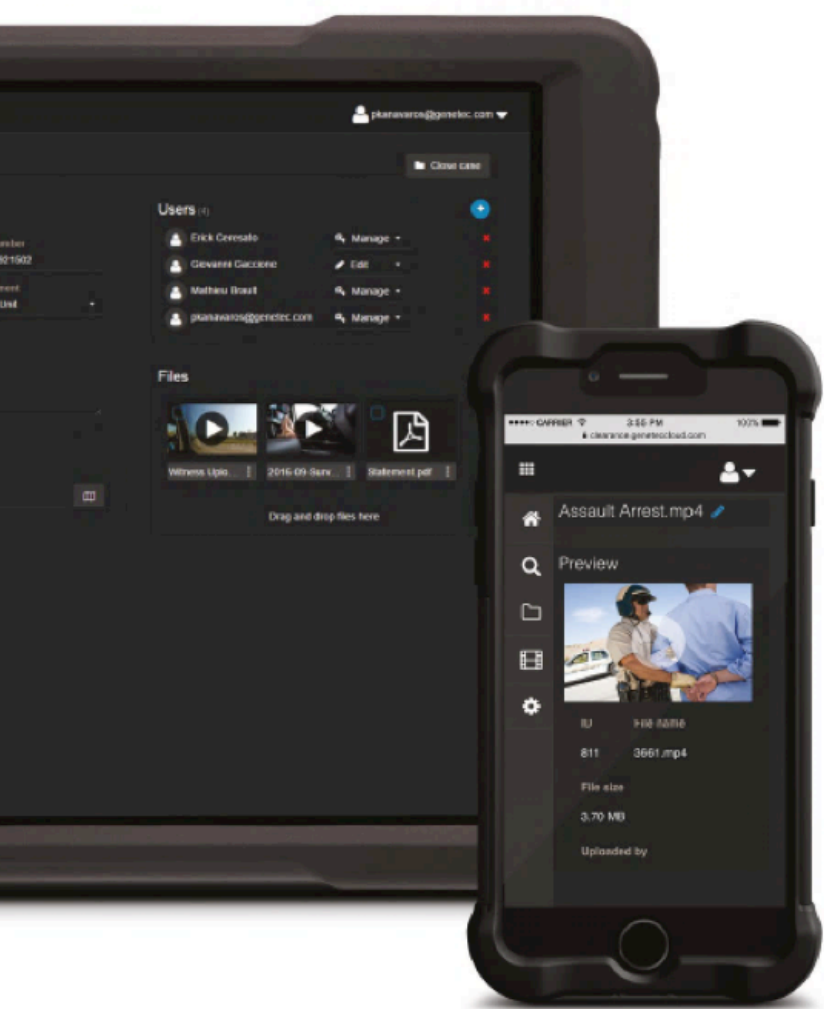
Solving a case involves gathering facts and validating their accuracy to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to an incident.

Retrieving all this information can take even more time when the tools you're using can't extract all relevant information automatically.

A DEMS helps solve this problem by gathering more data, such as:

- Recording start and end time
- Evidence geolocation
- Upload date
- Related cases
- CAD/RMS data
- Incident type

The right DEMS can help your team work smarter, and bring this key information at their fingertips so they don't waste time searching.



Reducing risk

Now that your team is working more efficiently, you'll want to make sure that you cover your bases from a legal perspective. Not being able to provide original evidence during legal proceedings may lead to large fines, striking of pleadings and even complete dismissal of a claim.

A DEMS that can manage transfers and automate policies based on the statutes of limitations can help mitigate your risk and reduce sanctions for lost or deleted evidence.

Security

Having easy access to the right information is not enough if you cannot validate it or keep it secure from potential threats. The right DEMS will help you control access, reduce human error and secure end-to-end communications by leveraging:

- Active directory
- User permissions
- Retention periods
- Data redundancy
- Audit trails
- Encryption

Now that you've seen the value that a DEMS can bring to your team, let's take a look at the steps you should take to prepare your DEMS strategy.

Chapter 3

How to craft a DEMS strategy

To ensure that you make the most of your DEMS, an implementation strategy that supports your department's overall goals is a must. You will need a solid plan to take you from launch to adoption to achieving your business outcomes. The five steps below can help you build the framework for your DEMS strategy.

1. Define your vision

Having a vision to guide your team will help bring clarity and focus to everything they do. A vision can be anything from ensuring the safety of students on campus, to reducing theft and increasing collaboration in your city.

“You will need a solid plan to take you from launch to adoption to achieving your business outcomes.”





2. Outline your strategy

Your strategy is what will help you execute your vision. For instance, if you're looking at ensuring the safety of students on campus, there might be several ways to achieve this. You might want to increase security patrols, add more video surveillance or even connect to off-campus security systems.

3. Specify your objectives

Your objectives will outline the tasks that need to be carried out in order to achieve your vision with your DEMS. This would be a good time to review past processes and set new objectives to optimize productivity. An example of an objective could be to decrease the time it takes to respond to media requests. Another objective could be to prepare and share a case with external stakeholders in less time.

4. Set your rollout plan

Your rollout plan will define the step-by-step course of action that you need to take to see your project to fruition. Within this plan, you'll also want to prioritize deliverables. Some items that you might want to consider could include:

- When to store digital evidence in the DEMS
- The retention periods for different types of crimes or incidents
- Which users and departments require access to the DEMS
- At what stage of an investigation each user will access the DEMS
- Who needs to get training
- Who will manage the policies in the tool

5. Communicate with key stakeholders

When you have a clear vision and have completed your planning, it's crucial that all key stakeholders are on board. Getting buy-in from all teams involved can make or break your project.

Creating your DEMS strategy

Take the path to successfully implementing your DEMS and achieving your business goals. Get started with the following steps:

- 1 Define your vision
- 2 Outline your strategy
- 3 Specify your objectives
- 4 Set your rollout plan
- 5 Communicate with key stakeholders

Customer Spotlight

University of Texas at Arlington

With over 40,000 students and staff spread across a 420-acre campus, the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) puts a high priority on creating a safe space for the preparation of our next-generation of leaders. Sharing and collecting digital evidence is part of the regular operations of campus police. However, as the amount of digital evidence increased, it became more difficult to both manage and afford.

Now, with Genetec Clearance, UTA has streamlined evidence management, saving time, decreasing costs, and freeing campus police to focus on other tasks during investigations.

[Read the case study](#)

“Our team is saving 25% of time handling evidence, and that frees them up to do other tasks during investigations.”

— Max Kidd, Associate Director of Technology
for the UTA Police Department

Chapter 4

How to get the most out of your DEMS

Go with a cloud-based solution

Compared to on-premises solutions, a cloud-based DEMS can give you added flexibility to manage unforeseen increases in digital evidence. Not only can you save on the costs of purchasing and maintaining on-site hardware, such as servers and networking equipment, but you can also quickly expand your system to adjust for a sudden increase in cases around peak times – such as homecoming games or holiday shopping.

The beauty of going with the cloud is that your team will benefit from updates as they're released in the app, and your data will always be secure from hardware failure and tampering.



Integrate with existing systems

Get better visibility through a single application by integrating your DEMS to existing systems that contain potential evidence, like video surveillance. Integration can make your DEMS the central source to visualize incidents and analyze trends. This helps administrators search for evidence by matching existing incident data, from systems like Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) or Records Management Systems (RMS) to cases in your DEMS. It can also reduce the risk of entry error by auto-populating fields in your DEMS.

Stay independent from other solutions

Although you'll want to integrate with other systems, you don't want your DEMS to be dependent on other software or hardware, like a make of video cameras or body cameras. You want to work with an open platform that can take in video from surveillance systems, dash cameras, cell phones, interview rooms and other digital sources. It also helps if the video can be viewed by standard video players, making it easy to support and share.

Open access to multiple stakeholders

Make the solution accessible to all stakeholders involved in the investigation, while maintaining full control of users' permissions. By removing restrictions associated with adding new users, even if temporary, collaboration is enhanced and investigations can progress at a much faster pace. For example, you might want to share evidence with the district attorney's office or another department at your business. There shouldn't be anything holding you back.





Conclusion

Any successful organization should start with their customer in mind – students, shoppers, citizens, passengers, employees. As a company grows, answering the needs of your customer becomes more complex and can involve a growing number of stakeholders. This is where collaboration becomes more important than ever.

Whether you want to close cases faster, improve the process of managing investigations, or simply reduce manual work, a DEMS can help you focus on your objectives by allowing you to securely collect, manage, and share evidence from different sources.

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Learn more

Genetec Clearance™ is a digital evidence management system that can help speed up investigations by allowing the secure collection, management, and sharing of evidence from different sources.

Take advantage of a 45-day trial of Genetec Clearance.

Related resources

- Demo Video
- Tutorials
- 45-Day Trial

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