

Court of Appeals of Georgia

The court was planning to move from a paper to an electronic court filing system, but wanted to ensure modernisation didn't come at the cost of security. The court chose NetIQ® Access Manager™ and gained centralised, granular control over who can view or upload files to its e-filing system.

Overview

The Court of Appeals of Georgia was established in Atlanta, Georgia in 1906 as the intermediate appellate court. It has statewide appellate jurisdiction for almost all legal cases.

Challenge

The Court of Appeals of Georgia is one of the busiest appellate state courts in the United States, handling 3,500 cases a year.

The court process requires attorneys to request and file multiple documents. In the past, this meant attorneys had to constantly visit the courthouse to pick up a file or securely send documents via mail or courier—an approach that was time-consuming and costly. To address this inefficiency, the court planned to move to an electronic filing system, but faced challenges around access.

“Access Manager gives us granular control over authentication, so we can manage a complex hierarchy of access rights for attorneys.”

JOHN RUGGERI

Director of Technical Services
Court of Appeals of Georgia

John Ruggeri, director of technical services at the Court of Appeals of Georgia, said, “Court proceedings are often time-sensitive, so any way we can help attorneys work more efficiently is an advantage. But we could not do so at the expense of security. It was vital that only authorised users could access sensitive court documents—not just attorneys, but only those in good standing with the Georgia State Bar and our court.”

Solution

The Court of Appeals of Georgia teamed up with NetIQ partners Trivir, LLC and the East Cobb Group for help in building a roles-based access solution for its new e-filing system: a solution built upon Access Manager and NetIQ eDirectory™. Now, attorneys can register for and gain online access to the system, which automatically cross-checks the information they provide with external systems to validate their identity.

“Trivir, LLC, developed our custom e-filing application and installed Access Manager to protect it,” said Ruggeri. “Then the East Cobb Group clustered our Access Manager implementation to increase availability so that we always know exactly who is accessing the court's services. We were impressed by the flexibility of Access Manager—there is no right or wrong way to set it up and it is extremely easy to use.”



At a Glance

■ Industry

Government—STLG

■ Location

Atlanta, Georgia

■ Challenge

The court needed secure but efficient access to its electronic filing system.

■ Solution

Use Access Manager for secure role-based access with a single-sign on capability.

■ Results

- + Unlocked greater efficiency
- + Gained multiple layers of security to prevent unauthorised access

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All the court’s internal and external websites now run through Access Manager, enabling it to offer every user a single sign-on (SSO) for all services. Ruggeri said, “With Access Manager as a single point of control, we only have to make a change once and it is replicated across all our sites automatically.”

Attorneys can log into the e-filing system from anywhere and at any time. By setting up the solution for context-based authentication, the court offers a differentiated view based on a user’s identity and level of authorisation.

Ruggeri said, “Users only have visibility of what they are permitted to see, making it easier for them and giving us peace of mind. Judge’s chambers can also use the solution to track their cases and see at once when the attorneys involved file any supporting documents.”

Results

Prior to the solution, viewing key documents was only possible during the court’s open hours. Today, the e-filing system at the Court of Appeals of Georgia is unlocking greater efficiency for attorneys, who can view or file documents whenever they need to.

“Instead of traveling to and from the courthouse and sending paper files around, attorneys can just log into the system remotely, which is significantly more efficient in terms of time and cost,” said Ruggeri. “Unless we could guarantee ultra-secure access with Access Manager, we simply would not be able to offer this service.”

But Access Manager does offer the court the peace of mind that multiple layers of security are in place to prevent unauthorised access to its e-filing system—without the need for complex administration. Ruggeri said, “Access Manager gives us exceptionally granular control over authentication, so that we can easily manage a complex hierarchy of access rights for attorneys.”

The Court of Appeals of Georgia’s new, ultra-secure e-filing system has proved such a success the court has decided to incorporate the solution into its standard process.

“We have had nothing but positive feedback for our e-filing system and it makes sense to adopt it across the board,” said Ruggeri. “In the long-term, we even have plans to integrate the solution with other courts in Georgia, enabling a single login and federated identities. Access Manager is so scalable, we know that this—and more—is possible.”



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