

1. DAVID MOON, HOW TO CREATE A PAPERLESS OFFICE

>TechnoLawyer member Steven Basche asks: "I have decided to
>try to go paperless, or at least less paper, for my office.
>We are a 7 lawyer firm, but for now, I am the only Guinea
>pig. I am looking for articles or books on how accomplish
>this. Can you recommend some sources? Thanks."

Steven,

This seems to be a hot issue now. At least once a week, I am discussing this with someone.

There is an article on our Web site which I will post here and provide a link. If you go to the link, there will be some images which I cannot put in this posting. The images are screen shots of one software I have used at sites to aid in scanning. The main thing to keep in mind is ease/speed to scan, store and organize with the intention of finding the documents at some future date. A simple concept, but one which can be missed by making the wrong choice on hardware and/or software.

While the article discusses documents related to a client file, the software discussed can be used to scan and organize non-client related files just as easy. This is also important.

Hope this helps ... <http://www.lan-tech.com/articledetail.cfm?aid=5>

Almost every law firm is looking for the ability to scan. Why? There are a number of reasons, but the primary reason I have found is to better manage cumbersome paper files.

At the heart of every law firm is a file room. The amount of paper a firm generates or receives on a daily basis is significant, and there is a lot of room for human error. Every firm has experienced a lost document or lost file. A document placed in the wrong folder among thousands of documents in hundreds to thousands of folders becomes the proverbial 'needle in a haystack'. The result is a mass search wasting many man hours, not to mention billable hours.

If a firm was to calculate the number of hours each year spent searching for a case file or misfiled document, the hours would be staggering. Multiply this by the labor cost or lost billable time and the dollars will easily reach in the thousands (larger firms will be tens of thousands).

So what does scanning offer? If the process is done right with the proper software, the lost revenue or cost to the firm will virtually vanish. If the process of scanning is too difficult or frustrating, more often than not the users will not accept the scanning process and scanning will be eventually abandoned, and this becomes a waste of money for the firm.=20

Examine the objectives and layout a plan.

Law firms will have two objectives for scanning documents.

One is to have an eFile, and the other deals with litigation management. This article will discuss the eFile aspect only, as litigation management is very different and has different processes.

The eFile is the electronic copy of the paper file. It needs to be accessible for the duration of the case and beyond.

The general objectives for scanning are as follows:

1. Scan documents as they arrive.
2. Each responsible person can view the documents which arrive that day.
3. Every person at the firm can see the scanned documents for the case.
4. Scanned documents can be full text searched.
5. The process must be efficient requiring little staff resources.
6. To manage all other docs provided through word processing, etc.

Many firms have a staff or group of staff members which are responsible for filing documents in the paper file. It is logical for this group to do the scanning. Currently, part of their time is spent re-filing case folders and documents.

Once the eFile system is put in place, that task will no longer exist and they can do the scanning instead. =20

What is needed?

For successful scanning of an eFile, a few things are needed. This is where a law firm should not skimp. Doing so is sure to result in failure.

1. Fast scanner with a sheet feeder.
2. Ability to scan directly to a drive.
3. One button scan.
4. Ability to 'profile' the scanned document.
5. To auto OCR the scanned document if desired

The scanner is the first critical piece to the puzzle. Speed is one of the key factors. Speed should not only be measured in the number of scan pages per minute but the total time to scan the entire document from putting the document on the scanner to having the finished electronic file stored on the network and identified with the current client matter.

Throughout the years, I have seen and worked with many different equipment and processes. A very bad scenario is to have a high speed scanner combined with poor software -- this results in a waste of

valuable time. If it takes 1 minute for the user to navigate through the software to set the settings requirements for each document and there are a total of sixty different documents, then one hour is wasted just in the software.

Ideally, the user should load the document onto the scanner and press one button. That single button should be capable of doing the scan and save the file on to the network for the user with no additional input by the user. Saving one hour a day even on \$10 per hour wage earner can save the firm \$2500 a year.

One setup which I like very well is the Ricoh copier, scanner and printer device. A user places the document on the Ricoh and selects their user name from a list on the panel and presses the scan button. At 60 to 100 pages per minute, even a long document is finished in no time. Default settings such as resolution, document type and the location to store the document are predefined and is based on the user name.

Now there is still the issue of organizing the documents so all users can have quick and immediate access. This is where many firms go wrong. Many vendors of the scanning equipment will offer a 'document management' system. I have found the user interface to be less than efficient from every perspective. Not to mention, many firms already have a document management system in place.

The term document management system should be clarified at this point. For some, document management is really part of litigation management, which is the process of managing all of the discovery. But true document management goes beyond that. It should manage all types of documents or electronic files from a number of sources including the word processing program, spreadsheet programs, emails, and scanned documents. One document management system I have found to be very powerful, flexible and affordable is WORLDDOX.

WORLDDOX allows the user who just scanned the document to profile the document. Profiling is the process of identifying the document with Client/Matter name or number, document type, and responsible attorney.

WORLDDOX can be setup so that the user will push one button in WORLDDOX to see all the recently scanned documents which are not profiled. The next step is to mark the document and select move. The profile screen opens and the user fills out the client/matter, document type, responsible attorney and description of the document. This completes the process of scanning, and is now ready for viewing by the responsible attorney.

WORLDDOX can make the process of finding all scanned documents for the attorney very easy. With one button click in WORLDDOX, they can see all the documents which were scanned that day for that attorney. At any point, the attorney can view the document on the screen, print a hard copy or email the document to another person such as the client or co-counsel. These one button searches can be customized to one day, one week, etc.

Now that the documents are placed into the eFile, what are the advantages? It is easier to say all the issues with just having a paper file is gone.

Suppose two attorneys and a paralegal need to perform work on the case on the same day. They each need the same document in the paper file. Previously, with the paper file only, the first person goes to the file room and takes the file back to their office. The second person goes to the file room to find the file checked out. Now the second person tracks down the first person and makes a copy of the documents. While the second person has the file, the third person goes to the file room, then to the first person's office and then to the copy room to also ask for another copy. That is time wasted. With the eFile, each person can immediately view the document on the screen or print the document. No wasted time.

What about the attorney which needs to work on the case away from the office? Perhaps the attorney will work at the client's office or a work/vacation. Should the original and only paper file leave the firm? Most will agree it should not but it still does in situations such as this. With the eFile, the attorney can copy the needed documents in seconds to a laptop or media such as a CD. With WORLDOX, it is easy to make a copy of the files to a laptop, floppy disk, or CD.

Because WORLDOX also manages documents created in-house through programs such as word processors, the entire client file can be retrieved quickly. Just enter the client/matter and leave out the scan option, and everything will appear.

The last aspect of scanning is Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for full text searching of the scanned document. OCR is the process of taking the image and converting it to text. If this is a desired process, it is best to have the scanned document in a PDF format. The reason for this is the text and images can be combined into a single, text searchable PDF. If a Tiff format or other format was used, the text must be placed in a separate file, such as Word, and then linked back to the image (tiff, jpg, etc). While this is possible in a document management such as WORLDOX, the increase in labor time and space on the server does not make this desirable.

Programs such as OmniPage or Adobe PaperCapture can automatically OCR the file and save it as a text searchable PDF. OmniPage can be used for firms on a low budget but should not be used for high volume. Adobe Paper Capture is more practical for high volume documents.

Once the OCR is complete, the document management system such as WORLDOX can search for a document by the text which is contained in the document. This is important because of human error.

During the process of profiling the document, the user enters the wrong client number, the document may be forever lost among the multitude of directories or documents. But by knowing words which would be found in the document, any user can find the scanned document quickly.

With today's technology and the right procedures, a law firm can now move to an eFile system that can make a positive impact with the work

flow of the firm. The eFile system, with its many advantages, is widely being adopted by law firms everywhere to improve efficiency. Now, what are you waiting for?