

# Knowledge Management Refinement and Enlightenment



April 2007

A Publication of ILTA

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**Statement of Purpose:** ILTA is the premier peer networking organization, providing information to members to maximize the value of technology in the support of the legal profession.

## ABOUT ILTA'S KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PEER GROUP

ILTA's KM Peer Group includes KM practitioners in law firms, corporate and government law departments, and other law-related organizations. The goal of the group is to provide an efficient way to meet peers, exchange ideas and generally further KM development among the group. Membership benefits include professional development and networking via participation in a KM-focused listserv, periodic webinars, white papers and ILTA's annual conference.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Our last white paper on knowledge management (June 2006) focused on finding the knowledge available in firms and law departments. This time around, the undercurrent seems to have shifted toward the softer side of KM — categorization, vetting and taxonomy — allowing the technology to work more efficiently for us. The shift only leads us to believe that a majority of organizations have some flavor of KM in place, and they are now in the fine-tuning phase.

We gratefully thank our authors for sharing their knowledge through tips, techniques and technologies to help us manage ours.

Ken Hansen, Editor

## ABOUT ILTA

Providing technology solutions to law firms and legal departments gets more complex every day. Connecting with your peers to exchange ideas with those who have “been there done that” has never been more valuable.

For nearly three decades, the International Legal Technology Association has led the way in sharing knowledge and experience for those faced with challenges in their firms and legal departments. ILTA members come from firms of all sizes and all areas of practice, all sharing a common need to have access to the latest information about products and support services that impact the legal profession.



by Oz Benamram of Morrison & Foerster LLP

## :: Finding Actionable Information

At Morrison & Foerster LLP

Just a decade ago, the most significant information problem facing Morrison & Foerster's lawyers was an access problem. Simply finding information was difficult. Uncovering data about a specific matter or locating an individual document — even those known to exist within the firm — often involved a variety of information systems, each of which included limited information.

Several years later, our lawyers are faced with the opposite challenge: we are overloaded with access to too much information. Today we need more than just information, we need answers to questions: relevant information, in context, for making decisions. This challenge motivated our recently achieved quest for a usable, unified, and context-sensitive search solution that we have named "AnswerBase."

### Defining the Problem

With more than a 1,000 lawyers in 18 offices around the world, Morrison & Foerster offers clients comprehensive legal services in business and litigation. The firm is distinguished by its expertise in finance, life sciences, technology, litigation skills and an unrivaled reach across the Pacific Rim, particularly in Japan and China. Our global practice required our information to reside in numerous systems located throughout the firm:

Client histories are stored in accounting and CRM systems.

Documents reside in our document management system.

Biographies of members of the firm that describe their specific knowledge and skills are posted on both internal and public Web portals.

Communications, among ourselves and with our clients and others, are contained within our Exchange-based e-mail servers.

Files also live on centrally-stored and individually-accessible file servers.

In the past, users needed to know of, navigate to and query each of these discrete systems, both packaged and proprietary, to find information on specific matters. In addition, the traditional document

repositories, designed to be good filing cabinets, are not, in themselves, good systems for knowledge exchange, with little support for filtering and weighting the results. Thus, even when the data had been retrieved, users were further required to sift and manually synthesize the essential results.

For example, an associate who needed to find a member of the firm with expertise on a specialized topic had no direct means to do so other than sending an internal e-mail message. Instead, he or she had to serially find documents on matters related to the topic, figure out who had written or been associated with the documents, research the backgrounds of those lawyers and finally contact the prospective experts.

This situation, obviously, presented a serious obstacle to the real goal of finding actionable, timely information in context. Our first step in formulating a solution was to conduct a study of the needs of firm members and their experience with the existing system. We interviewed lawyers and other staff members throughout the firm about the kinds and frequency of the questions they sought to answer, the artifacts they sought as answers, and procedures they actually used to search for them. We also conducted a statistical analysis of internal communications to reveal how members used e-mail, rather than explicit searches, to answer questions (e.g., the frequency and kind of questions directed to mailing lists versus individuals, the sources and quality of responses to those questions).

The study's conclusions were unambiguous. As we anticipated, users primarily looked for:

Documents and e-mail messages

People — internal expertise and external contacts

Information about matters that we handled for our clients

But, most users found the existing search process to be:

Time-consuming and distracting — when dealing with multiple systems

Unfocused — yielding too many results that could not be meaningfully narrowed

**Incomplete** — as full-text searching did not work across geographically distributed offices

**Unreliable** — as results did not provide the contextual information they needed to understand and judge their value

We frequently heard “why can’t our internal searches be as simple and fast as Google?”

The problems clarified, we now faced the question “what available search solutions can meet our requirements?” The answer, to our surprise, was not immediately obvious.

## Designing the Solution

Over the succeeding months, we developed a set of detailed requirements for our ideal search solution that addressed all of the issues unearthed in the study, packaged them into a request for proposals, and sent out the RFP to potential vendor suppliers. In abbreviated form the criteria were stated as follows:

**Enterprise Search** — the solution has to provide one, easily usable point of access to the multiple information sources housed in a variety of platforms throughout the firm. Search results should be clustered into logical groups:

“what” – documents and e-mail messages

“who” – people and companies

“why” – clients and matters information

“when” – events

**Contextual Search** — a strong relevancy weighting to rank search results by cross-referencing related information. The search algorithm should take into account the author and the matter that each result is associated with to determine its relevancy. For example, documents that are weighted more heavily in the results should be those drafted by a person who has the search term in his biography, a document drafted by a senior partner, a recent document or other specific parameters.

**Expertise Locator** — the solution must link related information to identify experienced lawyers: inferring the profiles of people from the content of the documents they edited and matters they worked on.

**Refining Results** — it must allow users to refine their search results in a logical way, similar to the way we think. For example, in the search results list, clicking on Source = “e-mail,” “portal,” or “DocsOpen” will narrow results based on their sources. Additional clicking on “author,” “date range,” “department,” etc., will narrow the results even further.

**Single Click Search** — the solution must be highly accessible. Search results should be available from any desktop application and from BlackBerry devices. Right-clicking on a word in the message body should initiate a search on that word and display the search results window. Sending a message to a designated e-mail address will initiate a search and return a limited number of results via e-mail.

**Learn and Save Results** — the solution should be able to track search activity to identify information needs by user type and to reuse a search to bring up more recent results.

**Security** — the new solution would have to respect private information and retain existing security policies for existing systems. It would also have to support role-based access and other user privileges.

We soon discovered from the many responses to the RFP that no traditional search vendor had a solution that met our full requirements, even those with highly configurable products.

Consequently, we decided to try a different tack: We successively asked vendors in several relevant software categories if they would, in close association with us, be interested in developing or extending their existing solutions to meet our needs.

We first approached traditional legal vendors. We then went to online search vendors, but their priorities with their Internet-facing business didn’t allow them to support our quest, which they perceived as too specialized. Although social networking vendors did have useful technology for identifying expertise within the firm, they left us with no solution for searching documents and matters. In addition, these vendors’ systems required our users to work in their environments, rather than work in concert with our existing environments, in order for the solution to work, which was a nonstarter.

## Asking the Right Questions

At this point, we decided to investigate solutions that effectively managed problems of information overload, those offered by e-commerce vendors. These vendors understood our issue and helped us frame our approach in a new way: Instead of putting all of our information into a system in the hope that when someone looks for it, he/she will find it, we began to think like knowledge brokers — deliver the information that people need right now to make decisions.

We reviewed over a dozen vendor responses to our RFP, using a weighted analysis. We chose two vendors to test, an established e-commerce search provider and legal search up-and-comer. Each developed a prototype of “AnswerBase,” our codename for the solution we sought.

With two basic working systems in place, we invited 17 focus groups from different offices, practices, and positions throughout the firm to use both systems and tell us which one they liked better and why. Our Technology Services group was also asked to evaluate the two systems from a technology and implementation perspective.

Our selected vendor’s product directly addressed the multi-faceted search needs of law firms and developed a comprehensive matters and expertise product to quickly and easily find knowledgeable colleagues and relevant matters. We knew that we were heading in the right direction when we asked each of the 17 focus groups, “Who in the firm would benefit the most from using AnswerBase.” Regardless of their role, seniority or location, every one of the groups replied “Us!” We signed a formal purchase agreement, making our vendor’s product the engine underlying Morrison & Foerster’s AnswerBase.

## Finding the Right Answers

To address the needs of our lawyers, we designed AnswerBase with three distinct, interrelated search tabs: Documents, People and Matters. To provide complete information access to users from across the firm, our vendor indexed the following Morrison & Foerster systems:

Millions of documents in our document management system and our knowledge exchange of best practice forms

People information in our lawyer resumes and HR database

Client and matter information in our time recording system and marketing CRM

By linking our time recording systems and client information, along with related documents and people information, AnswerBase provides context to search results and, therefore, a much more comprehensive view for the user.

Our system provides three views into its extensive database, allowing the lawyer to quickly access the information most relevant to their query:

The system opens by default with the Document tab, consistent with the most common use case. However, finding a document is often not enough or not the most direct path to an answer.

By selecting People from the top tabs, the lawyer receives a list of the people most knowledgeable about the search terms and a profile showing the information that identifies them as an expert. There is no additional effort required on the part of the lawyers as their work product automatically determines the level of their experience, without the need to manually fill in profiles or update biographies.

Selecting the Matter tab returns firm matters associated with the search terms, including complete documents, people and description of the services provided by our lawyers for that matter. Each tab has the same features as document search, providing a high level of relevancy and the ability to quickly refine searches using smart filtering.

## Using the System

In order to ensure rapid adoption of the system, AnswerBase was designed for intuitive, iterative search with little training required. The system allows users to search in a way similar to how they think rather than by forcing them to become experts in a new technology product. For example, if a lawyer were assigned to a new matter on the subject of “XYZ,” with AnswerBase, the lawyer would take the following steps:

Launch AnswerBase in the browser window, and type the term “XYZ” in the search box to initiate a document search across all firm data sources. The initial results could include tens of thousands of documents, since the system has captured everything within the firm’s resources.

Results are ranked by relevancy by default and may be reordered by author, date or other criteria. The relevancy ranking is calculated by using a combination of factors: the content of each document, concepts identified within the document, profile of the document’s author, and the profile of the matter associated with it.

By clicking on smart filters, the lawyer instantly receives all written materials based on a specific category or topic. For example, clicking on Client Industry and selecting the same industry as his current client will narrow the results to only display documents related to the specific industry. Clicking the source portal will narrow the results to the “Best Practice” documents posted on the portal. Clicking on “Author Group” will further refine the search to

include only those documents authored by partners, associates, or staff. Clicking on “Author Office Brussels” will yield only those documents generated in the Brussels office. Each filter reduces the results from tens of thousands to possibly single digits, as multiple filters can be layered on top of the data set.

By selecting one of the search results, the lawyer sees a Web page that displays the text of the results, additional context of the results and available options. Context is provided next to the document text through a summary that includes detailed information on the document (type, editors), the client (name, industry) and the matter (type of legal services, amount billed, responsible lawyer). Clicking on the author’s name will show that individual’s profile, which will allow the user to contact that person by e-mail or phone. Clicking on the matter associated with the document will display information providing the context in which it was drafted. Clicking on “More Like This” will display similar results.

## Evaluating Results

We invited Bruce MacEwen, a legal technology and economics consultant, to evaluate the use of AnswerBase. Tests were conducted using our summer associates to eliminate the bias of previous exposure to the firm’s older generation of information resources.

The associates were assigned projects that required them to conduct research using the firm’s traditional resources, and subsequently interviewed by the consultant. Three of their experiences are characteristic of the rest:

### Associate A

*Assignment:* Research shareholder derivative suits under Delaware law.

*Week 1 without AnswerBase:* Research consumed several hours; associate “not at all sure” that she had found the right material.

*Week 2 with AnswerBase:* Reported an immediate home run: “It took me two minutes to find the key document,” she exclaimed.

*Comments:* “I love it; it’s really helpful.”

### Associate B

*Assignment:* Report on the application of a series of new amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedures.

*Week 1 without AnswerBase:* Incomplete research after two days of effort; associate could only report that “I feel I’m going in the right direction.”

*Week 2 with AnswerBase:* Found 182 documents in her first search, immediately reduced to a manageable 36 by filtering by “Matter Type of Law” and “Office.”

*Comments:* “This is absolutely everything I need.”

### Associate C

*Assignment:* Research to support an appeal to a ruling granting class action certification regarding piercing the corporate veil.

*Week 1 without AnswerBase:* After pursuing the matter for a few days, he still felt that he had little to show for his efforts.

*Week 2 with AnswerBase:* Found 27 targeted documents within 90 seconds. Slightly reformulated his question and then narrowed the search results by filtering for “Department” and “Office.”

*Comments:* “Collection of highly relevant documents now in hand.”

To include more experienced lawyers, we extended the scope of our analysis to include a wider audience within the firm. AnswerBase worked well for everyone.

Lawyers' research time was consistently slashed with greater confidence in the relevancy and completeness of the results. And across the firm, user satisfaction with their ability to find answers soared. Almost anyone who has used AnswerBase once reports satisfaction and continues to use it.

### **The Bottom Line: Providing Better Client Service**

AnswerBase is now deployed worldwide to more than 2,500 users. The system currently includes all documents, people and matters within the firm. We plan to add external contacts, archived e-mail, docket information and portal documents in the near future.

With AnswerBase, Morrison & Foerster has dramatically changed the way we find answers to questions. More than simply saving time, AnswerBase helps to further enhance the firm's outstanding reputation for intellectual agility and client service. There's no question about it: Enabling our people to find answers — not just information — helps us better serve our clients.

*An earlier version of this article was published by Legal Technology Journal and is reprinted here with permission. For an online demo of AnswerBase, please visit [www.mofo.com/AnswerBase](http://www.mofo.com/AnswerBase).*

by Craig Carpenter of Recommind



## **::Categorization's Critical Role in KM**

It's 8:00 p.m. and two attorneys at different law firms — let's call them Arthur and Betty — need to draft lengthy motions in limine to exclude evidence that will have to be filed early the following morning. Each case involves prestigious clients with hundreds of millions of dollars at stake. Both attorneys have a good understanding of the issues and the law supporting their respective motions. However, neither has worked on these specific cases before or appeared in the jurisdictions in which the motions are set. Like most attorneys, the first thing Arthur and Betty do is search for similar pleadings others in their firms have done involving similar issues, substantive law and venues.

Both Arthur and Betty work for large, sophisticated law firms with established KM systems. Each entity is teeming with bright productive attorneys and support staff churning out highly valuable (and expensive) work product on an hourly basis. Both employ search functionality as part of their KM systems that is intended to make each firm's work product available for all to use, thereby maximizing efficiency and profitability.

Arthur and Betty each go to their firms' knowledge management (KM) systems and enter the search term "Motion in Limine to Exclude Evidence." Here's where their respective experiences take dramatically different paths.

Arthur's search returns hundreds of client documents from different jurisdictions covering many areas of law, cases, amounts at stake, judges, litigation teams, etc. He tries to sort through the results to find the closest examples to the motion he needs to prepare. After wading through miscategorized and often irrelevant documents for more than two hours, Arthur reluctantly decides to use a motion in limine based on relevant law but in a different jurisdiction. He spends eight hours writing and revising the motion (knowing he can only bill six hours at most), then heads home, unsure as to whether or not his motion is on point for this court.

Betty has a very different experience. Her original search returns results grouped by each of the different aspects of concern, including jurisdiction, presiding judge, substantive area of law, billing partner and associate, client, client industry, amount at stake, matter and opposition. As a result, Betty is able to quickly find the most relevant document to use as her template, making for a much faster and more accurate drafting process. She leaves the office after just four hours, confident her motion is written appropriately for the issues at hand and in accordance with what this particular judge will expect.

Given virtually the same set of circumstances, how could the experiences of Arthur and Betty differ so dramatically? The KM platform used by

Betty's firm incorporates automatic categorization functionality to leverage metadata and other contextual details about a document, whereas the KM platform used by Arthur's firm relies on attorneys and staff to manually populate fields describing a document. Extracting metadata and other details about a document automatically rather than manually can make all the difference in the world of knowledge management.

## The Role of Categorization in a KM System

KM systems have become increasingly important in the practice of law. While efficient utilization of attorney and staff time has always been a challenge, the sheer amount of data through which attorneys and staff must now sift to find the information they seek has made life even more difficult. To further exacerbate this situation, the very people who are best positioned to describe exactly what is in a document (the attorneys who created them) are the same people the firm does not want spending valuable time on this seemingly low-value, non-billable activity.

Even if firms encourage their attorneys to categorize every document for their KM system, odds are this would not be successful. There is simply too much data being created. Unfortunately, many firms don't always explore other ways in which information contained in documents could be properly categorized and "tagged" for later retrieval and use.

The most obvious type of information utilized by a KM system is metadata, often called "data about data." Viewed alone and without context, this baseline information is of minimal value. For example, knowing that user "jobermann" created a Word document on March 9, 2007 has little to no utility unless it is coupled with additional data points. However, when joined with other pieces of information about user "jobermann" and work he or she has done, the situation changes dramatically.

Instead, let's say the KM system links user ID "jobermann" with attorney Jason Obermann, fourth year associate in the Los Angeles office who works on the patent team led by equity partner Sophie Davis, and who billed 4.5 hours creating the document being viewed while working on the 2005 Innomedica litigation in U.S. District Court (Central District of California) relating to the client's patent defense in the Diövetra cases. Now one has a lot more context with which to work, and context is the key to making the right information available **and usable** quickly.

## Deriving Context from Categorization

The keys to building context are twofold. First, the KM system must link metadata to as many different (but ultimately related) additional sources of information as possible. Continuing with the above example, the KM system may use a common ID from Active Directory (*i.e.*, user "jobermann") to link information about who "jobermann" is: his office, experience, team and area of practice (perhaps from the firm's intranet and/or Active Directory itself); any matters "jobermann" has worked on (including individual clients), when and the amount of time spent (from the time and billing system; perhaps a client/matter and/or CRM system as well) and the relevant jurisdictions, judge, matter/amount at stake for which the document was created (from wording within the document itself and a client/matter system).

Second, the KM system must link all of the above data points automatically, without having to rely on "jobermann" (or his paralegal, secretary or summer clerk) to do so. While some KM systems are capable of associating data from disparate sources such as time and billing systems, client/matter systems, intranets and databases, very few are able to automatically and accurately identify key characteristics of and words within documents (*e.g.*, jurisdiction, type of document, substantive area of law, etc.). Another challenge is to relate them to the aforementioned data points in virtual real time. This allows the document to be assigned to the appropriate classification(s) within the KM or document management system while also making this now rich set of data points available for retrieval when an attorney later queries the KM system. This critical piece of functionality can make all the difference between a semi-useful KM system and one that dramatically improves attorney productivity.

## Maximizing Productivity via Automatic Categorization

The end goal of any KM professional is to make the right information available to the people who most need it as quickly and easily as possible. Typical KM systems are helpful in this regard in that they at least provide a mechanism through which vast quantities of data can be searched. But the ability to provide context without relying on any actions by the creator of content is often missing. When automatic categorization functionality is incorporated into a KM system, users are able to quickly hone in on what they are looking for, thereby greatly enhancing productivity.

If a KM system armed with automatic categorization functionality can save a single user an hour or two on one task, the potential cost and productivity gains to be experienced firmwide can be truly staggering. In the competitive world of law, most firms are looking for an edge over their peers. The benefits of automatic categorization represent a golden opportunity to gain such an edge.



**International Legal  
Technology Association**

*Peer Powered*

by V. Mary Abraham of Debevoise & Plimpton LLP



## ::Loading the Deck

### Why Vetted Content Matters

When I first began practicing law, we considered ourselves lucky if our secretaries had electric typewriters and an unlimited supply of carbon paper to make our longhand drafts legible. We saved what we thought might be useful in manila folders and created extensive personal form files. Since firms were much smaller then, we could share documents relatively easily. We knew who the experts were and what they were likely to have in their files.

With the advent of word processing and document management systems, it became considerably easier to complete the mechanical tasks of drafting and saving documents. However, along with these new systems has come a proliferation of documents which clog our document management systems, e-mail folders and hard-copy form files. Quite reasonably, many law firm knowledge managers have responded to this deluge by applying full-text search technology to document collections to make finding the needle in the haystack less painful. Some knowledge managers have gone beyond this, providing powerful enterprise search engines that can present neatly filtered search results from a variety of internal and external databases.

Is this all a knowledge manager need do? Unfortunately, no. In some ways, powerful search engines simply help us clear away the underbrush. With that task accomplished, we can take a proper look at the landscape including the daily costs of searching, lost efficiency, diminished quality and enhanced risk.

#### The Daily Costs of Searching

Each time a practitioner searches, he or she must reinvent a particular wheel that I'll call the "search cycle:" (1) Constructing an effective search query; (2) filtering the results; (3) assessing those results; and (4) choosing appropriate documents.

Assuming each lawyer in a 500-lawyer firm spends 10 minutes per day in the search cycle, this amounts to just over 83 billable hours. Now multiply those billable hours by the standard blended billing rate for your firm. For purposes of illustration, assume a blended rate of \$250

per hour. This results in an expenditure of \$20,833 per day. And that cost only increases if your lawyer population includes people who are less adept at searching.

In addition to hard dollar costs, what are the soft, less quantifiable costs of the search cycle? You have 500 lawyers repeatedly making individual assessments as to the relative merits of documents in search results lists. Most of the time, those lawyers are given little contextual information to help them make the assessment. If those lawyers are seasoned practitioners and familiar with the work of their colleagues, most of the time they will be able to make the assessment quickly and accurately. If those lawyers are more junior, their speed and accuracy are rarely as high. Further, they don't always have the experience necessary to deal with the consequences of choosing incorrect precedents, which leads to a decline in the quality of their work. So now the firm is facing the costs of lost efficiency, diminished quality and greater exposure to risk.

#### How Vetted Content Helps

Vetted content includes annotated model documents, legal training materials, practice guides, and sample documents from selected matters (preferably presented with useful background information regarding the matter generally or key issues addressed in the document). This content increases efficiency, improves quality and lowers risk exposure by providing a high-quality starting point for lawyers and by helping them steer clear of problems as they draft. As a result, lawyers work more efficiently to produce better work product. Obviously, capable lawyers can produce high quality documents without the assistance of vetted content, but all too often it will take them longer and cost the client a great deal more.

In the context of a typical search, you can quickly see the benefits of having vetted content. If the search results include relevant content that is clearly marked as vetted or recommended, the searcher can end the search cycle early, confident the vetted content is safe for use in his or her situation.

## Costs of Vetted Content

The costs of vetting content are not inconsequential. But measured against the risks of using unvetted content, these costs are easier to justify. What contributes to the cost? Vetting is best done by experts, and experts tend to be expensive. However, 10 hours of an expert's time spent vetting a document can save hundreds of hours on the part of a colleague.

Another significant cost is that while most firms have high-quality content that has been produced for clients, vetted content needs an additional review to ensure it is suitable for use in other contexts. In those instances where there is insufficient standardized work product available for this vetting, someone will have to create it. Since the bar for vetted content is set rather high (and this content rarely is completed by a deadline), creating vetted content tends to require more time and effort on the part of the drafter. All of this adds up to a significant expenditure.

## When Vetted Content Is Advisable Despite the Costs

Despite these costs, a wise firm will insist on creating vetted content in those areas where failure to do so exposes the firm to an unacceptable level of risk. Opinion practice is an obvious example of this. Vetted content is also considered a good investment when it improves the efficiency and efficacy of lawyers in high-volume practice areas.

For example, a firm with a busy mergers and acquisitions practice can realize substantial benefits from annotated model purchase agreements, practice guides for key tasks within the transaction such as due diligence or disclosure schedule review, and selected sample documents from notable prior deals. Because of the sheer volume of transactions within the practice, the cost of creating these materials is offset substantially by the number of times lawyers use these materials. Furthermore, vetted core content can be used repeatedly and successfully by less experienced lawyers, freeing senior lawyers for more challenging projects. Finally, using these materials improves the overall quality of lawyer work product and reduces risk for the firm and its clients.

## When Vetted Content Is Too Expensive

While vetted content is important for the successful law firm, it is not a panacea. Given its expense, it simply does not make sense to create vetted content blindly. Documents that represent unusual facts and circumstances shouldn't be the focus of vetting. Their greatest value lies in the mere fact that they exist in the experience of the firm and in the document management system. As long as the firm's search engine can find them, it is sufficient to leave them unvetted since they will rarely be used.

Similarly, the investment of a vetted content collection is seldom justified for a small practice group. Unless that group is extraordinarily busy, there will not be sufficient usage to justify the expenditure of firm resources. And in a small group, it is more likely that junior lawyers will have access to senior supervision, thus improving quality and reducing risk without the need for vetted content. Finally, given the length of time vetted content needs to be in service to justify the costs of its creation, it usually doesn't make sense to create vetted materials to address ephemeral issues.

## Reducing the Costs of Vetting Content

There are several strategies a firm can use to reduce the cost of vetting content. The first is to vet only the content that is likely to be used frequently. By doing so, the initial investment is spread out over so many instances of use that it becomes negligible.

A second strategy is to vet content that has enjoyed a high level of review in the course of a client engagement. In some cases, the lawyer in charge of vetting the content will have to do little more than remove client-specific information. In other cases, that lawyer may have to make some minor modifications to the document to allow it to be used in a larger variety of circumstances. If done properly, this should result in the same cost-sharing benefit derived from the first strategy.

A third strategy is to use materials prepared for continuing legal education purposes. It should always be a last resort to create vetted content from scratch.

## Challenges of Building a Vetted Content Collection

Once you make the decision to build a core collection of vetted content, you are faced with several hurdles, the first of which is who will create, vet and collect the content? Law firms around the world meet this challenge differently. Some firms rely on practitioners to contribute useful content. Others hire practice support lawyers to create or collect the content and to ensure it receives sufficient review.

Other firms use nonlawyer practice support personnel to identify potential content and then turn to practice group leaders to vet the content. There is no single right way to do this. However, firms have found that hiring practice support lawyers can make a meaningful difference in the scope and depth of the vetted content collection. The other two methods require a great deal more management and good luck.

Those fortunate firms that have a strong core collection of vetted content still face another hurdle: Who will ensure that the content remains current and complete? Again, the three methods outlined above can be used, and each has its own pros and cons.

Since building a collection of vetted content requires firm resources that are in high demand, it makes sense to build the collection strategically. Begin by creating the collections of selected sample documents, annotated models and practice guides that address your firm's areas of greatest risk, focusing on processes or components of transactions in which there is little room for error. Then, turn to practice areas that have a high level of activity. Vetted materials created for those practices can improve efficiency and quality of life for the lawyers involved.

Even if your firm gets this far, don't be tempted to create a comprehensive vetted collection that covers every aspect of the firm's practice. An exhaustive collection is difficult to build and even harder to maintain. And without good maintenance, the value of the vetted collection can diminish rapidly. Therefore, it is better to have a small, well-maintained collection rather than a sprawling collection that has fallen out of date.

In addition, as you move further away from the core of the firm's practice or from its key areas of risk, you face the dilemma of diminishing returns. Given the cost of creating the vetted collection, it's hard to justify the expenditure with respect to areas that are not key to the firm's growth or to documents that will not be used heavily.

### Loading the Deck

The relationship between the vetted collection and a firm's search technology is critical. It does no good to spend the time and money to build a vetted collection and then leave it lying in obscurity. Therefore, a key step in creating a vetted collection is to ensure that practitioners can find vetted materials quickly. With well-designed search tools, searches for essential documents can be made more efficient by the

presence of vetted materials in the search results list. They should be clearly marked so the practitioner can bring the search cycle to an early end. In other words, a firm that can "load the deck" by seeding search results with vetted content should be able to reduce its costs of the search cycle.

The challenge is to integrate 20th century knowledge management efforts to create and manage collections of models, practice guides, samples, training materials, etc., with a 21st century knowledge management approach to enterprise-wide search. Law firms that achieve this integration can efficiently provide a high level of service to their clients and a high level of support to already overworked practitioners.

## Law Firm Taxonomy

by Don Oppenheimer, Independent Consultant

People who use a library appreciate the value of a good taxonomy or categorization scheme to help them find a specific book or allow them to browse through books on a certain topic. Without clear and easy-to-apply methodologies for categorization, it would become virtually impossible for individuals to find what they need among the stacks.

Likewise, attorneys understand the value of well-structured taxonomies when performing legal research. But is it as easy for an attorney to find work product and captured knowledge within the internal systems of their firm? Unfortunately, the answer is no, primarily because the same effort to develop and use a meaningful taxonomy for categorizing content has not been undertaken.

More recently, law firms have come to realize that successful implementation of an intranet, a document or records management system, a portal or a search engine is dependent on developing an effective taxonomy. The chosen taxonomy becomes a key list of words, phrases and terms that are used initially to classify and organize content, and it then becomes the structure and categorization scheme for which results are searched for and presented.

The challenges when defining a taxonomy are many, including:

Developing a taxonomy that is simple enough for attorneys to learn and use easily, yet detailed enough to provide meaningful and organized search results

Establishing a single taxonomy across the firm that can support multiple functions, including strategic planning, revenue analysis, practice management, marketing and knowledge management

Reconciling the need for individual practice groups to develop their own taxonomies while ensuring that different taxonomies across the firm can be related and integrated

Determining the appropriate flexibility to address the needs of the individual attorney in defining and creating new components to the taxonomy (*i.e.*, addressing the trade-offs between building the taxonomy organically and establishing a fixed taxonomy)

These challenges and others are best addressed by following a structured, comprehensive and enterprise-wide approach when defining and implementing a new taxonomy. Structured to ensure that you are getting the needed input from the right people; comprehensive in order to address all of the critical issues and implications; and enterprise-wide to ensure you don't develop a solution that might adversely impact another part of the firm.

In general, the steps that need to be performed when developing a taxonomy at a law firm include:

Identify and evaluate existing taxonomies used across the firm

Consider the attorneys' needs to search for various types of electronically stored content across the firm

Define objectives and requirements for the new taxonomy from a knowledge management perspective as well as those needed to support business planning, marketing, financial analysis and practice management

Work with each practice group to develop a meaningful way of categorizing the elements of their practice into types of clients, types of legal services, areas of law and legal topics

Combine various definitions and requirements into an integrated firmwide taxonomy

Develop an ongoing process for categorizing and profiling new content

Remap the existing taxonomy with the new one

Determine the requirements and processes for recoding previously categorized content

A structured approach like this may seem overwhelming. Some firms would rather live with multiple disparate taxonomies, hoping they can be replaced by a powerful full-text enterprise search engine. The vast majority, however, have realized that developing a single firmwide taxonomy is required for many reasons, not just for knowledge management and traditional search purposes. Best of all, experience has proven it does not have to be a major time-consuming activity to create a taxonomy, and the benefits to firm management and the individual attorney far outweigh the cost.



by Geoffrey Hyatt of Contact Networks

## :: Growing the Business

### Institutionalizing Relationships as a Knowledge Asset

As the practice of law becomes ever more sophisticated, so, too, does the business of law; and the leaders who run those businesses have been investing heavily to institutionalize the knowledge that exists within their firms. To become useful to the firm, the knowledge must be understood, collected, made available and used. Each of these steps is difficult. They require investment from the firm, participation from individuals and support from leadership. Attorneys have many reasons to benefit from the institutionalization of knowledge in their firm.

#### Relationships Are Knowledge

Relationships are a very special knowledge asset with their own set of challenges. Attorneys are paid, in part, to build relationships with their clients. They are also expected to develop relationships with potential clients. Many firms invest considerably in these activities by allowing attorneys to bill client development time and spend money on items ranging from personal lunch meetings to large corporate events. And laterals are hired, in large part, for the relationships they bring.

Given this significant investment in developing relationships, how does the firm put those relationships to work to recoup that investment? You can be certain the executive committee wants those relationships to be leveraged for the benefit of the firm. Yet that is notoriously tricky to do.

Knowledge is an intangible asset. As such, it is difficult to capture, share and use. Relationships are even more intangible than related forms of knowledge such as contacts (name, address, phone) or clients (name, matters, billings). Relationships have a very human component and are part personal, part professional. A law school classmate can be a future client. A current client can become a friend. Over time, relationships will become stronger or weaker. Some attorneys are very helpful in sharing relationships, and others are not. These are some of

the complexities that everyone must face when attempting to use the relationship assets of the firm.

#### Relationships Are the Number Two Asset of the Firm

The most important asset a law firm has is its collective legal expertise. It has been the focus of nearly all knowledge management efforts, and great progress has been made in sharing it. With document and matter management systems, firms have overcome cultural and technical hurdles. Today, a modern law firm would likely claim it could not function without these systems.

The second most important asset attorneys bring to a law firm is their relationships. They are used every day to help the firm acquire, service and keep clients. However, relationships among individual attorneys and their key client contacts are, for the most part, used only by the attorney who developed that relationship.

To leverage relationships as a firm asset, they must be recognized as valuable, and a process must be created to share them in a sensitive and respectful manner.

#### The Wrong Way to Share Relationships

Many firms do make an effort to share relationships. Unfortunately, what works for a 20-person firm does not work for a 200-person firm. Here are some familiar examples:

**Circulate e-mail around the firm.** “We just got an RFP from NewCo, and we would like to respond. Please, if you know anyone at NewCo, reply to this e-mail message immediately.” Because of the urgent nature of these requests and the e-mail overload everyone is already under, this all-points-bulletin method of begging for help doesn’t even work well with 20 attorneys. With a firm of 200, it is incomplete at best.

**Assume “everybody in the firm knows the same people.”** This might possibly be true for a firm of five attorneys, all of whom went to law school together and play tennis at the same club. It certainly isn’t true for a large firm.

**Wander the halls and ask people.** Try the practice group leader first. Maybe you will get lucky. Or maybe not.

**Maintain a spreadsheet of relationships.**

**Check the CRM system.** Some firms have had success in implementing CRM, but it requires a substantial commitment of staff and attorney time as well as rigorous discipline in maintaining the accuracy of the information. Most CRM systems only contain contacts and do not leverage relationships.

**Assume full compliance in the CRM.** Not all staff members participate in the CRM system, and those who do use the system may only enter a portion of their contacts. The time and manual data entry required to create and maintain a comprehensive CRM system is daunting and always underestimated.

When a key relationship isn’t identified in a timely manner, the firm loses an opportunity to grow its business. One matter can be worth millions of dollars. A firm has very little chance to bring in a new client if it has no preexisting relationship. And the worst feeling of all is sitting with a colleague three months after losing a potential client and the colleague says, “You should have asked me. I know them really well, and together, we could have gotten their business.”

## Transforming the Way Firms Leverage Relationship Assets

So how does a company transform individual relationships into a trusted firmwide resource? Relationships need to be transferred from the individual address books of attorneys and made available to others in an easily accessible system. Law firms, whose relationships are the backbone of business growth, have adopted Enterprise Relationship Management (ERM) applications to leverage their preexisting relationships. ERM captures those relationships in one system and makes them available to the firm. It allows users to search for relationships their attorney colleagues may have with specific people, companies and industries.

The ERM application automatically analyzes internal corporate data. It can be configured to analyze address books, CRM systems, HR and marketing databases, e-mail traffic patterns and other corporate data in order to produce comprehensive, accurate results. The technology identifies relationships and calculates the strength of each. This relationship strength is kept current by calculating and recalculating it each day based on the latest data. When a user searches for a relationship, the ERM system lists colleagues who may have a helpful relationship, sorted by the strength of those relationships.

Users of Google are familiar with this type of automated technology. Google built its database of websites with similar automated technology that discovers the data (without any manual input) and then sorts the search results by relevance for each query. In the same way, when you search for relationships, you need to have an accurate measure of relationship strength. If the CRM system or spreadsheet doesn’t have a way to report current relationship strength, it will not be as effective as a relationship tool.

## Requirements for Success

The requirements for a successful ERM implementation are similar to the success requirements for all knowledge systems. Here are four guidelines to consider:

**Automated Data Capture.** Professional services firms that bill their clients hourly are particularly reluctant to spend time on data entry tasks. An ERM system automatically catalogs, searches and analyzes information, eliminating the human effort and errors that may result from manually entering data into a system. At one large firm, their ERM system was installed on Friday and was in use on Monday, after analyzing the corporate data over the weekend. No attorney or staff data input was required.

**Automated, Real-Time Updating.** The strength of a relationship changes over time. On any given day, an attorney may meet a new person, have a meeting with a client from long ago or exchange e-mail as part of an active matter. All of these activities impact the strength of those relationships. An ERM system measures and updates the strength of relationships each day, based on the latest available data.

**Capture of All Relationships.** Over 80 percent of contacts are never entered into CRM systems. Some employees don’t feel comfortable providing all of their family members, former colleagues and classmates into such a public system, and others just can’t be bothered to do it. But if asked to help on a specific proposal or in a situation where they can be of help, almost all colleagues are willing to share information with their peers in order to assist the firm. ERM enables all relationships to be identified by analyzing all data sources.

**Respect for the Knowledge Owner.** As with any knowledge system, it is critical that the firm respect the knowledge owner. Individuals generally want to share, but they are naturally cautious about doing so. This is as true of sharing relationships as it is of sharing legal expertise. Attorneys may worry that their knowledge will be misunderstood, misused or that sharing it will somehow diminish their own value in the firm. The intent of an ERM system is, of course, exactly the opposite. By identifying the relationship owner, it increases that person’s value in the firm and enables them to broker introductions to their contacts at key moments. It prevents the common and awkward situation of one attorney unknowingly calling on the contacts of another. The ERM system does not allow someone to “steal” a colleague’s relationships. It helps find the proper colleagues to ask for assistance. The decision to share contact information or to make an introduction remains in the hands of the relationship owner.

## Time Well Spent

Managing partners have tried for years to institutionalize the relationships of the firm in order to enable growth and mitigate risk of losing clients when a partner leaves the firm. Understanding relationships as a knowledge asset helps the firm implement a system and process to use that asset. The firm will invest significant time and money to acquire and nurture relationships, and that investment cannot be properly realized without a system and culture to use those relationships.



by Ali Shahidi of Alschuler Grossman LLP

## :: The Human Element of KM

There is a direct correlation between the empirical success of KM initiatives and the extent of focus on the human element, and the most successful KM initiatives have a balance of both the human element and technology. British-based law firms focus more on the human element, Practice Support Lawyers (PSLs), than on technology. PSLs serve as the medium through which high-value content, whether it is attorney work product or competitive intelligence and practice development information, can be shared and disseminated.

U.S.-based law firms have been resistant to having dedicated PSLs due to both cost and cultural issues. In a recent survey of AmLaw 50 and AmLaw 100 firms, Lisa Keller of Hunton and Williams found that about 80 percent and 70 percent of those respective law firm groups have official KM initiatives. In its broadest terms, those firms had to have any one of the following: a Chief Knowledge Officer, a Director of KM (or similar) position, a KM department or people with KM in their title, a KM budget, or at least one attorney spending 50 percent of his/her time on KM activities. The average number of full-time PSLs for even the largest of U.S. law firms is roughly one.

British counterparts enjoy a much higher number of PSLs due to the historical reliance of the British practice system on PSLs when there was no technology. The effectiveness of the British system is measurably greater than that of its U.S. counterparts, however not necessarily its return on investment (ROI). To a great extent, the British law firm closely resembles an educational institution, as associates move up the ranks and enjoy a greater sense of satisfaction by making “learning” a significant part of the practice of law. Both the KM technology and the human element are major drivers in the process. Is this why there is less of a defection by attorneys to other professions in the U.K.? Is the client served as efficiently as with the U.S. system?

Will we see a mandate from U.S.-based managing partners and practice groups leaders to allow working attorneys to dedicate valuable billable hours to KM? Is this a problem that the right technology should be able to solve?

### Changes Afoot

KM leaders from several large U.S. firms who recently gathered at ARK Group’s KM for the Modern Law Firm Conference in Chicago reported in many cases that associate hours spent in support of KM initiatives are being counted toward typical hourly requirements. That is a welcome change, but it is not as “hands-on” and as “human-element” focused as the British model. At the same time, there have been recent discussions that the British system of PSLs is too costly and does not use technology efficiently. For example, Freshfields, one of the KM leaders among British law firms, is reducing its number of PSLs through automation with a long-term goal of combining knowledge management, business development and marketing initiatives.

One of the most successful systematic approaches toward solving the intellectual capital preservation and dissemination challenge (what I refer to as holistic KM or a U.S. response to the British model) is the basic “Teach Me How to Fish” model of Reed Smith University. Reed Smith University is a collaboration between Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Reed Smith, one of the largest U.S.-based firms. Now in its third year, the Reed Smith University has a semi-structured curriculum with a focus in five areas: law, leadership, practice development, professional support and technology. It is an example of the ingenuity of leading U.S. law firm managing partners, business leaders and the educational system, and it focuses on one thing: the human element and the desire for sharing knowledge. Instead of focusing on KM in a vacuum, Reed Smith approaches it in the context of an overall strategy for educating attorneys.

## Measuring KM ROI

KM initiatives are successful when they produce meaningful, measurable and visible ROI. Contrary to attempts to correlate realization rates and profitability to KM in order to justify the investment in KM, there are no standard metrics for measuring KM ROI. One could argue that ROI can be measured by analyzing the effectiveness of knowledge transfer from the expert to the knowledge seeker using such systems. In the case of law firms, knowledge transfer among attorneys as they go through the ranks is well-defined. There is typically a clear and well-defined partnership track, which includes practice development and mentorship programs. Many firms such as Wilson Sonsini, under the direction of Chris Boyd, have successfully rolled the KM initiatives into professional development initiatives and manage it under one umbrella. This may be as close as one can get to the British system or to Reed Smith University without significant investment in people and resources. In any case, KM defined in the context of attorney work-product is only a small portion of the KM mosaic. KM integrated into a holistic program to preserve and share knowledge and to develop all skill sets of attorneys may be a more effective approach. ROI can then be measured in the context of attorney satisfaction with such programs, and KM will receive the human attention it needs to succeed.

## Self-Propagating Knowledge

The structure of social networks such as YouTube could serve as an effective and interesting model to share intellectual capital and manage knowledge within a controlled law firm environment. The reason for the popularity of social networks is the human element and the human interaction. Imagine a room full of attorneys. While they may not be able to agree on a single issue, the collective amount of

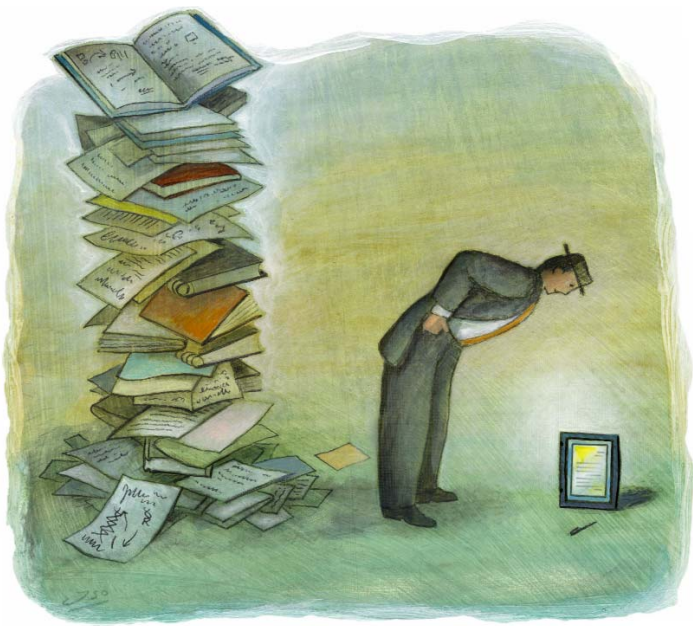
knowledge that can be shared and transferred is virtually unlimited. Although success of such initiatives will require wide participation by attorneys, it is feasible to achieve. Sheppard Mullin's CKO, Tom Baldwin, has had great success and exposure with his firm's law blogs to share and disseminate knowledge. The value of Baldwin's success story is not only realized internally by attorneys, it has further served as a great marketing tool to bring in potential clients. As knowledge preservation and sharing technologies improve, sophisticated applications will be transparent and invisible to attorneys. In an ideal world, successful technologies will balance the human element and the technology, but the technology will be hidden.

## Support from Above

Managing partners and practice group leaders play a critical role in support of their firm's intellectual capital preservation and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Whether it is through the use of technology, structured curriculum, social networking or just a simple discussion over lunch, it is even more important to preserve and expand on the collective intellectual capital of the firms. Though many aspects of the practice of law will become commoditized, the high value of intellectual capital will increase. It is just as important to concentrate on utilization ratios, billing realizations and profitability (which are short-term success measures), as it is to measure long-term success elements and strategic plans. Knowledge Management in its broadest definition and in the context of business and strategic planning will be a critical success factor among leading law firms.

*We have modified a version of this article which was originally published in the January/February 2007 issue of KM Legal magazine, Ark Group Ltd. and is reprinted with permission.*





by Garvin Fouts of I-nnovate

## Imaging

### An Integral Piece of the Knowledge Management Puzzle

Technology has brought a host of great solutions to law firms in recent years. Enterprise applications marshal a vast array of distributed electronic data providing serviceable information on demand to knowledge sourcing users when effectively structured. But while technology and the Internet have increased the availability of information exponentially, we remain anchored to a paper-based paradigm that has been in use since parchment was invented nearly 2,000 years ago.

Even while robust enterprise technologies impart an endless list of benefits that only digital information can provide, managing and, more importantly, “assimilating” the content that’s imprinted on volumes of venerable vellum into pervasively accessible information remains a challenge for firms regardless of size.

Enter the hypercritical need to transform diffused paper-based content into structured, digital information that can be electronically recalled, manipulated, preserved and regenerated perfectly at near instantaneous speeds. It’s a simple matter of turning ink into digital zeroes and ones. This is where imaging solutions integrally serve as both an on-ramp and bridge for augmenting any effective knowledge management strategy that includes closing the paper-to-digital chasm and structured information dissemination, while significantly reducing information storage costs.

#### Paper Is Still King (or Not)

Most work output is still centered on paper assets. This is especially true in a professional service organization such as a law firm. Every day, firms receive enormous volumes of paper (invoices, checks, letters, agreements, case documents, etc.) that need to be recorded, distributed, filed and/or approved.

It has been estimated that 86 percent of invoices are still provided on paper even with the advent and growth of electronic invoicing. Many professionals still prefer to work with a paper document rather than work in the secured digital world, even if the document originally arrived in electronic format. Along with preferences for paper, there are still hold-outs in every firm trying to avoid the digital revolution, and some are reluctant to utilize technology to reduce costs. They are part of the “old school” that holds on to the notion that tangible assets are safer and less prone to error or problems than their digital counterparts. But is this really the case?

#### The Paper Route

Some amount of paper is prone to get misplaced, misfiled or lost altogether regardless of the level of attentiveness by its handlers. Just a basic inbound life cycle of the paper asset is fraught with many process steps. It must be received, reviewed and routed; pertinent information must be captured and filed in physical storage . . . not to mention the numerous additional copies that must be made throughout the paper cycle increasing people, paper and printer costs.

This inbound life cycle alone provides ample opportunity for paper assets to vanish. It has been estimated that astounding 7.5 percent of all documents get lost while an additional three percent are inadvertently misfiled. Lost document replacement isn’t only embarrassing, it can expose the firm to liability in certain instances. Estimates show that recreating a lost document can cost an average of \$260 per document, and that’s a costly proposition based on volume.

Finding misplaced or improperly filed paper assets can be extremely costly as well. Handling or, in this case, mishandling paper assets can place a significant drag on employee productivity.

## Distribute and Manage the Knowledge

Another major component of a knowledge management strategy is getting the information distributed to those who need it to make informed decisions. The staff collectively manage the firm's raw data and add context to provide serviceable information. This information is then synthesized and transformed into decisions and executed in the business environment.

With either success or failure, people gain knowledge that drives the business. Every firm has its designated resources that are considered "knowledge centers." These people know how to skillfully work around data issues and knowledge obstacles. They know where information is stored in various systems, they know how the process works, and they even know how to find information that may not readily be available to others.

Conversely, new employees spend an inordinate amount of time searching for information by trial and error. This manual approach is very costly in the number of hours it takes to obtain valuable information to get their job completed. Paper assets are one of the most difficult sources of information to retrieve from storage or by searching through the manual "knowledge" system. The process normally consists of document requests, document searches, box/folder check-out, handling, review, return trip, check-in and return to the file location which introduces a number of points in the process that are ripe for errors.

Some firms are adopting business process automation where all requests are in an electronic format that searches enterprise knowledge and/or records management systems to locate the referenced material transformed from physical files. This approach can save hundreds of staff hours per employee per year.

A recent study found that knowledge workers spend 50 percent of their time searching for information and 50 percent actually using it. How can we expedite the search for information and provide quicker access for knowledge workers?

## Imaging Solutions — Enterprise Paper to Digital

For all of the challenges associated with paper documents and their life cycles, imaging solutions bring impressive efficiency gains as part of a comprehensive knowledge management strategy. Imaging solutions provide a broad range of benefits for bringing paper information content into the digital realm efficiently and effectively including:

Transformation and processing ease

Space and storage savings

Increased document security

Optical character recognition (OCR) allowing for searchable text

Flexible access and integration points

Custom metadata for easy and fast retrievals

Customizable electronic filing cabinets by image type

Integration with business process management systems

The organization that leverages an imaging solution as part of a knowledge management strategy brings a whole new dimension of data to its digital world.

## Image Intake for the Masses

Imaging solutions can be implemented to augment knowledge management strategies with little change to paper flow processes and minimal user training. It is as easy as adding the identifier, barcode sticker or cover sheet to the paper document to be scanned and clicking the scan button on any networked copier or multifunctional printer.

Not only is the flexibility available for single and batch document intake, but also the capability for a standalone intake process. This is where transactions may be entered into the appropriate system by a different group or at a different time from when the scanning of the document occurs. Digital files are linked automatically to the transaction and require little or no additional intervention to be completely filed, stored and retrievable across the entire enterprise, provided the user has the appropriate security access privileges.

## Space, the Final Frontier

An imaging solution can help cut costs by reducing the space required for physical files. Here are a few interesting figures:

Estimates show that the cumulative hard and soft operating costs required to fill up a four-drawer filing cabinet with paper documents averages nearly \$28,000. Other estimates show that one million documents will fill up 80, five-drawer filing cabinets in an office. Further, if a typical five-drawer cabinet takes up 2.5 square feet (width x depth) of floor space, we would be displacing 200 square feet of usable office space with filing cabinets in this example, or roughly enough space for three standard 8' x 8' staff cubicles. Conversely, it is estimated that same content can be digitally imaged and electronically stored on one 80GB hard drive.

While firms have legal requirements to keep physical records, imaging solutions give you the opportunity to store aged physical records off-site in a managed long-term facility where the cost of keeping those historical documents is typically far less than the cumulative rates for prime office square footage. With the affordable cost/GB price for digital media storage, scalable image libraries can be cost-effective to deploy firmwide.

## Search and Retrieval, Easy and Fast

Leading imaging solutions also have OCR capability. This is a powerful tool for distributing information contained in paper assets and bringing them into searchable content for more efficient discovery. Searches that used to take days to complete can now be accomplished in seconds. If a firm has a significant amount of paper assets, just imagine how much more information can be made available. Not only does an imaging solution make more information available, it also allows much more flexible access to that data.

In the physical file storage model, file retrieval typically can take as much as 10 minutes for a knowledge worker to locate a specific document. This remains a significant drag on productivity. But by digitizing the paper assets and providing a more accessible storage

facility through an imaging system, retrieval of a document is reduced to an average of only four seconds, 150 times more quickly than the average paper file retrieval.

Digital information is also available 24 hours a day and can be securely accessed remotely and when traveling. Most imaging solutions can be integrated into other systems such as portals, Web applications or directly from the desktop and provide even more opportunities to build aggregate systems that can present this data to authorized users from almost anywhere and in any useful context. Knowledge workers can be looking at a client record and see associated documents from a document management system, invoices from the billing system, signed contracts, purchase orders and correspondence from the imaging system all in one place. Another massive building block to the comprehensive knowledge management strategy!

Even with tomorrow's continuing technological gains, secure online data access and the explosion of the digital revolution, venerable old paper is here to stay. However, we can leverage the best of both worlds with an imaging solution as an integral part of an effective knowledge management strategy.

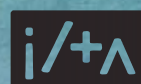
#### **ABOUT ILTA'S KM PEER GROUP**

ILTA's KM Peer Group includes KM practitioners in law firms, corporate and government law departments, and other law-related organizations. The goal of the group is to provide an efficient way to meet peers, exchange ideas and generally further KM development among the group. Membership benefits include professional development and networking via participation in a KM-focused listserv, periodic webinars, white papers and ILTA's annual conference.

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