

HAVING TROUBLE FINDING VALUE? DMS IS BEST

The keys to DMS are ease of use and allowing users to work how they like.

BY JOHN GILBERT

Law firms around the globe are starting to embrace the value of digitizing paper documents and properly formatting and storing documents that come into the firm electronically. Electronic documents cost far less to store, are better from a disaster recovery perspective and with proper protections more secure than paper. The biggest benefits, however, come from productivity gains from being able to search, find and share documents and collaborate more effectively.

To achieve maximum possible productivity, best practices dictate that scanned documents, whenever possible, be routed automatically to a firm's document management system (DMS) rather than simply emailing a scan back to yourself or delivering to your desktop. Doing so is the best way to ensure these new electronic documents become part of the firms' regular information governance processes.

Direct delivery to a DMS ensures that any document can be accessed from anywhere by any stakeholder (depending, of course,



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on the firm's security policy). It improves productivity by avoiding "inbox overload" and facilitates dashboards and analytics to enable faster and better decisions. Everything is searchable and findable—law firms find a substantial ROI simply from reducing the amount of time spent searching for documents. Modern DMS

systems are also mobile, with mobile applications that make documents available from anywhere.

For many firms, their DMS is the basis of their information governance protocols. (Many firms even separate the DMS from the records management system. For the purpose of this article we will refer to both as a DMS). It is critical

that all documents find their way to a DMS without use of a manual process that can get in the way in order to facilitate access management and security.

Security can be set by firm, project or client and automatically enforced to ensure compliance with firm policies, client requirements or regulatory protocols. This is critical as firms are more concerned about security than ever before and more firms move from an “optimistic” security model, where documents can be restricted but are otherwise generally available firm-wide, to a “pessimistic” security model, where documents are only available to those who are specifically granted access to them.

Furthermore, content is automatically secured as it is added. Data that resides in a DMS is also automatically backed up and archived as part of the firm’s standard information governance protocols, and any up-to-date DMS creates an audit trail of all actions related to all documents, and includes secure, governed links to all content.

With so many advantages to digitizing documents and directing them to a DMS, let’s take a look at some best practices for locking in the value.

Making it easy for attorneys and assistants to scan paper and scan directly to the DMS is perhaps the most critical success factor. Legal professionals have proven over and over again that if a process is too complicated or comes with any kind of learning curve, they often will not bother. So the best process is for users to be able to walk up to any scanning device and deliver the scanned document intuitively with minimal clicks. It must be simple to connect the scanned document with the proper matter, location

and folder/workspace. Yet the system should be robust enough so the document inherits the security settings of that folder or workspace.

The following process is followed in many technologically advanced law firms who have taken a serious view of information governance and a less paper strategy.

- The user walks up to the scanning device and logs in, ideally with his or her prox card.
- A short list of that user’s “favorite” matters appears, and he or she selects one
- The user selects format and destination (e.g., scan to a PDF file and OCR it, then direct it to the appropriate folder/workspace in the DMS).
- Ideally, the above processes can itself be set as a favorite, requiring only a single click.

Perhaps most importantly, the “favorites” that are set up at the DMS should be able to mirror the “favorites” that have been set in the MFD if the firm chooses.

“Past is the day of manually entering client matter and other fields while standing at the MFD. Now, DMS favorites and bookmarked matters can be pushed out to third parties for selection in their software. This allows for quick, efficient filing and reduces the copier queue,” says Ray Zwiefelhofer, president of World Software Corp., developers of Worldox document management technology.

While it is important to making scanning easy for attorneys at a scanning device, that is not how they all prefer to work. Some prefer to create barcode cover sheets at their desks with format and destination information. This can be especially useful for a large job that can be handled by the firm’s facilities management team. And some have personal devices in their offices.

The key is supporting all three information “on ramps” to allow users to work however they like.

Attorneys also tend to be concerned about quality control. Asking them to scan and dispose of paper is often uncomfortable and comes with worry that they will not be able to access the document they need (and the information on it). So it is important to include a process that verifies that scanned documents are in the correct location and all pages have been scanned correctly.

Finally, consider disposition of the original paper document once the scan occurs. Users who did not originate the scan job need a clear understanding of what to do with that paper after completing the scan. Should they return it to the originator of the job, shred it, file it in the firm’s filing system or send it off-site? It is important to have a clearly defined process for dealing with paper once scanned. In fact, a clearly defined process that makes scanning, formatting and routing as easy as possible is the key to unlocking the full value of your document management system.

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Information Accountability

