"Crossing The Digital Divide—or Why We Went Paperless"

Most lawyers cannot imagine a law office without paper. The problem with paper is that it keeps growing. A typical law office is crammed to overflowing with paper files, paneling their walls and creating an obstacle course between the door and the lawyer's desk; taking up valuable office space at premium rental. Trying to locate a document in that ever growing mountain of paper can take up most of your time.

Digitization offers huge benefits over paper - not least of all portability and accessibility.

Mark Goh who operates a solo practice took up the paper-less challenge in early 2009. For him, the impetus was not only to reduce warehousing cost but to facilitate collaboration between parties in more complex cross-border litigation.

"There is no way I would have been able to project manage a litigation case that involved this many overseas parties if we did not have all the documents in digital form and uploaded to a collaboration platform on the internet for instant access by all" says Mark Goh.

Crossing the digital divide has also resulted in other tangible benefits for the Practice's bottom line. "**Like every small firm practitioner, I do not have the luxury of time and support resources; so whatever saves time, saves money. My support staff love that I now search and retrieve documents myself instead of interrupting their work to ask for the paper file**".

Additionally, by implementing a workflow for document preparation that is fully digitized, "Our document turnaround time from draft to final delivery is halved. Nothing is left in the in-tray for filing or for "processing"; and no-one needs to leave their desk to get work done!" says Mark.

To overcome a psychological resistance to reading from a display monitor instead of print, Mark offers a novel and somewhat surprising tip - Get a second monitor! The second monitor facilitates document cross referencing; and approximates the two-page "open book" orientation that we enjoy when reading a document in print.

As for scanning incoming correspondence that arrive in paper form, make it easy for your support staff to do it at the very moment the mail comes in - scanned, ocr-ed (this can be automated), profiled and stored in the correct virtual folder in a matter of seconds, without leaving her desk. Better yet, contemporaneous scanning and saving into a digital folder means you do not have to track down the paper file before you get the full picture; you can have it there right on your desktop - and you could be working from home!!

Automating Your Litigation Practice
Thurs 18 Nov 2-4.30pm Lawnet Training Centre

A Hands-On Workshop by Bizibody & SAL
To reserve, email bryan_ng@sal.org.sg

THE BIZILAW NEWSLETTER

One of the most rewarding benefits of digitization is how quickly you are able to locate and retrieve documents through full-text keyword searches. While the "Search" function in Microsoft Explorer may be adequate for a desktop search, we would recommend a full-featured document management system ("DMS") for better management of your digitized documents.

Dominic Aw, the managing partner of Mazlan & Associates, a boutique corporate law firm in Kuala Lumpur, was one of the early adopters of Worldox (Document Management Software) in 2006.

In Mazlan, all documents, originating or incoming, including email are stored into Worldox using a compulsory profiling action. This facilitates document search and retrieval so that users can find ANY document and have it displayed on their desktop in 3-5 seconds. Working teams have access to complete case files, from home or anywhere else they happen to be working from.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GO PAPER-LESS

- ◆ **A powerful desktop scanner** – we recommend Fujitsu Scan-Snap S1500 - $700 (includes free copy of Acrobat Standard)
- ◆ **Google Desktop Search**—Free; OR **WORLDOX** document management software $395 /user
- ◆ **LEAP Office** Practice Management software $240 per month for 2 users
- ◆ **Imaging & OCR software**—e-Copy is $250 per license or buy Adobe Acrobat (Standard) for $450
- ◆ Attend Bizibody & SAL Workshop on **"Transforming Your Law Office: From Paper to Digital"** for a 2hr hands-on covering best practices and workflows for digitization. Upcoming Workshop Date: Wed 1 Dec 2010

Dominic's verdict - "Worldox is the one of the most valuable IT investments I have made for my practice. It has enabled us to capture our work output and turn it into a valuable 'knowledge base'. **These are assets that remain with the practice even as lawyers come and go**."

Worldox®

More than 3,500 law firms and legal departments of every size and specialty use Worldox for enforcing discipline into their document organisation and management—

· Find Documents Instantly with Powerful Search Tools
· Manage Files Centrally—Worldox activates automatically as you save, open and work with files
· Matter/Client-centric organisation of documents mirrors your physical case files
· Easy Email Management by integrating document handling with e-mail
· Facilitates Sharing of Documents with working teams, clients and collaborators
· Control: Create a Firm-Wide Structure for Document Organisation and Control
· Ensure Compliance with Firm's Knowledge Capture policies with complete document histories and instant access to archived case files and precedents
· Scanning: Worldox integrates seamlessly with all major scanning solutions

To find out more, contact Serena at +65 6236 2846 or slim@bizibody.biz

Other Things You Can Do With Paper:

GOVERNMENT TAX CREDIT SCHEME—AN UPDATE

The IRAS has now released the details of the **Productivity & Innovation Credit Scheme ("PIC")** which was announced in the 2010 Budget.
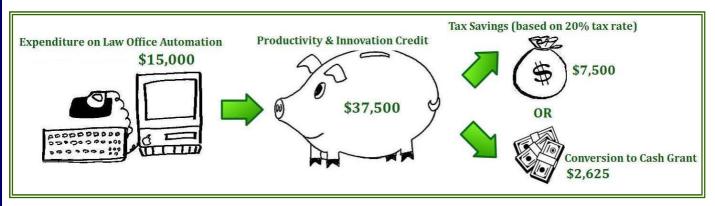
Whether you are a solo, partnership, LLP or LLC, the PIC Scheme provides an incentive for technology investments (purchase of equipment or software and training) over the next 5 yrs (from YA 2011 to YA 2015).

What You Enjoy -

You receive 250% allowance (tax credit) for S$300,000 of expenditure incurred on qualifying investments pa and 100% allowance for balance expenditure.

Alternatively, you may opt to receive a cash grant instead of the tax credit by converting your entitlement (up to $300,000 of the qualifying expenditure) at a rate of 7% each year. This cash payout is available only for the 1st three years (ie YA 2011 to YA 2013) AND you must have 3 or more employees who are Singaporean or Singapore PR, excluding sole-proprietors / partners and shareholders who are directors of the company.

How It Works—An Illustration: If you spend $15,000 on purchase of office equipment and software, you can enjoy tax saving of as much as $7,500 or a cash grant of $2,625

Expenditure on Law Office Automation $15,000 → **Productivity & Innovation Credit** $37,500 → **Tax Savings (based on 20% tax rate)** $7,500 OR **Conversion to Cash Grant** $2,625

Qualifying Expenditure for Law Practices includes -

a.   Office Automation Software including MSOffice and Adobe Acrobat
b.   Practice Management Software such as LEAP Office and Softlog
c.   Document Assembly Software such as Lawdocs
d.   Document Management Software such as Worldox
e.   Litigation Management Software such as Casemap
f.   Office Equipment such as Computers, Multi-function Photocopiers, Scanners etc.

How We Can Help

Call us to discuss the implementation of a smart law office technology upgrade plan which takes into account not only your technology needs but also optimizes your tax position.
Working with SME Tax Specialist, AscentiaTax, we offer

> #1.   Tax calculation to determine if it is more beneficial for you to claim the tax allowance or convert the allowance to a cash grant.
> #2.   Roll out of your technology plan over the next 3-5 years that optimizes your tax position
> #3.   Assistance in the submission of PIC application forms for cash payout.

Call Serena Lim at 6236 2848 or email slim@bizibody.biz

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS—What Do They Offer?

With the vast number of digital documents generated or received by your office computer systems today, you will need some form of organization. Typically, we use Windows Explorer to create "Mattter" folders that mirror the paper case files in our filing cabinets. Some have progressed to law office document management systems ("dms") such as LeapDocs, Interwoven and Worldox.

What specifically does a law office dms do? And what benefits do they offer small law firms?

In a nutshell - the dms enforces discipline in the organization and storage of digital information; and offers advanced search capabilities to help you locate and retrieve specific documents instantly.

Here are some reasons why you will find a dms useful -

1.   Client/Matter-Centric Approach

Currently, digital information is stored in disparate places according to file formats or the programme required to "read" the file - eg, emails are stored in Outlook and documents in a Windows folder. Using a dms, doing a search by matter will give you access to the Word documents, emails, spreadsheets, scanned correspondence, faxes, photos, saved web pages, research etc in fact, all documents relevant to that matter regardless of file formats.

How does a dms do this? When you save any document into the dms, it presents you with a profile sheet where you input key data about the document such as author, client/matter detail, document type and other customizable fields. The profile enables you to sort and filter according to the parameters specified.

2.   Speed of Document Search & Retrieval

Without a dms, you will need to know how the document is named and which folder it is stored in order to locate it. Reliance on staff and colleagues to comply with pre-determined folder structures and naming conventions is bound to fail. Even discounting rogue individuals who "can't be bothered" or "haven't got the time" to save documents in the right place you will still encounter human error (dragging and dropping into wrong folders), poor spelling, illogical naming, and sheer absent-mindedness. In a typical law practice, the amount of time lawyers and their staff spend trying to locate documents that have been "mis-filed" or valiantly trying to instill order to the chaos is considerable.

A dms will index the full text of the document (including scanned documents if OCR-ed) and the profiles describing them so that searches will return results in an instant.

3.   Email Integration

With email being the dominant form of business communication today, integration with email is crucial. To be effective, searches on specific keywords should also produce emails containing the relevant search terms, not just word documents. With the new rules on e-Discovery, email integration may well be the most useful feature in your law office dms.

4.   Control over Document Access

A dms gives you much better control over document security and access. Confidential documents can be made available only to those who need to see them (eg, practice financials are given access only to the practice owners). Security provisions include an audit trail showing who last accessed a document, who made changes, printed it, checked it out, etc.

5.   Remote Access & Mobile Lawyer-ing

Most dms today offer secure web access to your documents store and document check-in / check-out features thereby facilitating flexible work arrangements (working from home) and remote access from off-site locations.

6.   Turn Your Documents into a Knowledge Base

The work output of your lawyers is the most valuable 'tangible' asset in your law practice. Your dms performs a centralising and organising function. When all users are obliged to save their work output in the dms, you can be sure that your knowledge assets are being saved, organised and protected for posterity.

Transforming Your Law Office: From Paper to Digital
Wed 1 December, 2-4.30pm Lawnet Training Centre, Supreme Court