

Hopkins & Carley

Hopkins & Carley is a well-established regional law firm based in San Jose, California in the heart of Silicon Valley, with satellite offices in Palo Alto and Burbank, CA. The firm originally came to Pitney Bowes Legal Solutions (PBLs) in the Spring of 2001 to maintain and operate their extensive Records Center.

In making its assessment, PBLs uncovered many challenges. Retrieving client files and other documents from the existing records center involved very long turnaround times. There was no process in place for tracking documents and files, and the database held only basic notes relating to each client matter. As a result, attorneys had little or no confidence in the records staff, so attorneys would manage their own records essentially on their own.

Start with the software

PBLs worked in partnership with Hopkins & Carley to improve the firm's ability to identify, manage and access its legal records. As part of the records management software system, PBLs advised the firm to invest in email integration, which enabled them to instantly save pertinent emails into their records database. PBLs then implemented various improvements to the folder tracking process, with the purchase of ColorBar for labeling and barcode scanners to scan, track and locate all physical files.

In addition to this effort, PBLs also drove Hopkins & Carley's transition from an alpha numeric to a numeric file system and introduced the firm to document imaging as a way to help provide better access to important client documents.

Finally, it was very important to develop and document policies and procedures for the benefit of incoming records staff. This also helped ensure that consistency would be maintained within the records practice.

As part of this initiative, the on-site PBLs staff developed training manuals for the internal staff and new firm hires.

Implementation challenges

The solution PBLs implemented had the potential to truly transform Hopkins & Carley's entire records operation. Attorneys and staff however, were very reluctant to relinquish control of their client files and documents simply because of their past experience with the records department. Equally challenging was the fact that the firm's staff was unfamiliar with the new records management software and needed to be trained.

The imaging work required was done in stages. PBLs began imaging, starting with only litigation court documents (pleadings and discovery.) About two years later, everything was being scanned except correspondence emails. PBLs achieved its goal of scanning a minimum of 50,000 documents per month in January 2008 – within just three and a half years.

Similarly, the complete onsite conversion of all alpha numeric files to the new numeric filing system took two years. PBLs approached the change-over on a project basis, enabling the work to be done after hours, and to maintain the production levels during the day that the attorneys had come to expected.

CASE STUDY



Challenges

- Long turn-around times to retrieve client files
- No process for tracking documents and files
- Database incomplete
- No confidence in law firms records staff

Solutions

- Investment in e-mail integration
- Improvements to folder tracking process
- Transition from alpha numeric to numeric file system
- Document imaging provides better access to important client documents
- Policies and procedures documented for incoming records staff
- Training manuals developed and implemented
- Utilize staff with expertise in RIM

Results

Overall, PBLs delivered a reliable, consistent and documented records management system that has earned the trust of attorneys and staff at Hopkins & Carley and built confidence in the records department. As evidence of this acceptance, fully 80 percent of the firm's staff uses the tracking software PBLs installed to request files or locate and view important client documents.

The 'customer first' approach was one for which the Hopkins & Carley staff was unaccustomed. Requests were almost instantly fulfilled. The turnaround time for file requests decreased and client files and documents became easily accessible. More importantly, the Records staff had earned the trust of the firm's employees through its integrity and perseverance of excellence.

After establishing an improved tracking process, records have become easier to identify, track and audit, and inventory time has been reduced by more than 50 percent.

The response time for hard copy file retrievals has been reduced from an average of two hours to twenty minutes. ASAP requests can be fulfilled in just ten minutes.

PBLs also implemented document imaging improvements throughout the firm and now scans over 50,000 documents per month. With this system, access to scanned records has been reduced from hours or even days to less than 5 minutes.

Finally, PBLs has helped the firm incorporate secure document destruction into their records management practices. Before its involvement with the firm, Hopkins & Carley was maintaining all documents indefinitely. By 2008 however, approximately 149,000 documents were securely destroyed, according to the firm's retention policy. This has reduced real estate needs, costs, and improved program efficiency.

Perhaps the ultimate measure of the impact this records management approach has had on Hopkins & Carley is the fact that PBLs continues to enjoy a long-term, successful relationship with the firm.

"My firm identified in its strategic plan that we needed the creation of a first class records management program. Outsourcing this function to PBLs has allowed us to meet this objective."

Arthur P. Bernstein, Executive Director, Hopkins & Carley

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