

MANAGING YOUR DOCUMENTS WITH A DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Document management systems (DMS) are hardware/software systems that automate the document management process. A DMS provides an organization with the tools to create, manage, control, and distribute electronic documents. It is the ultimate electronic filing system which will allow you to easily create complete parallel electronic files. You can find anything at any time and get everyone in your office on the same page. If something like this is financially out of reach now, keep it in mind as your firm grows. DMS is one of the few technologies that change everything and positively impact your efficiency. There is simply no better way to manage client files.

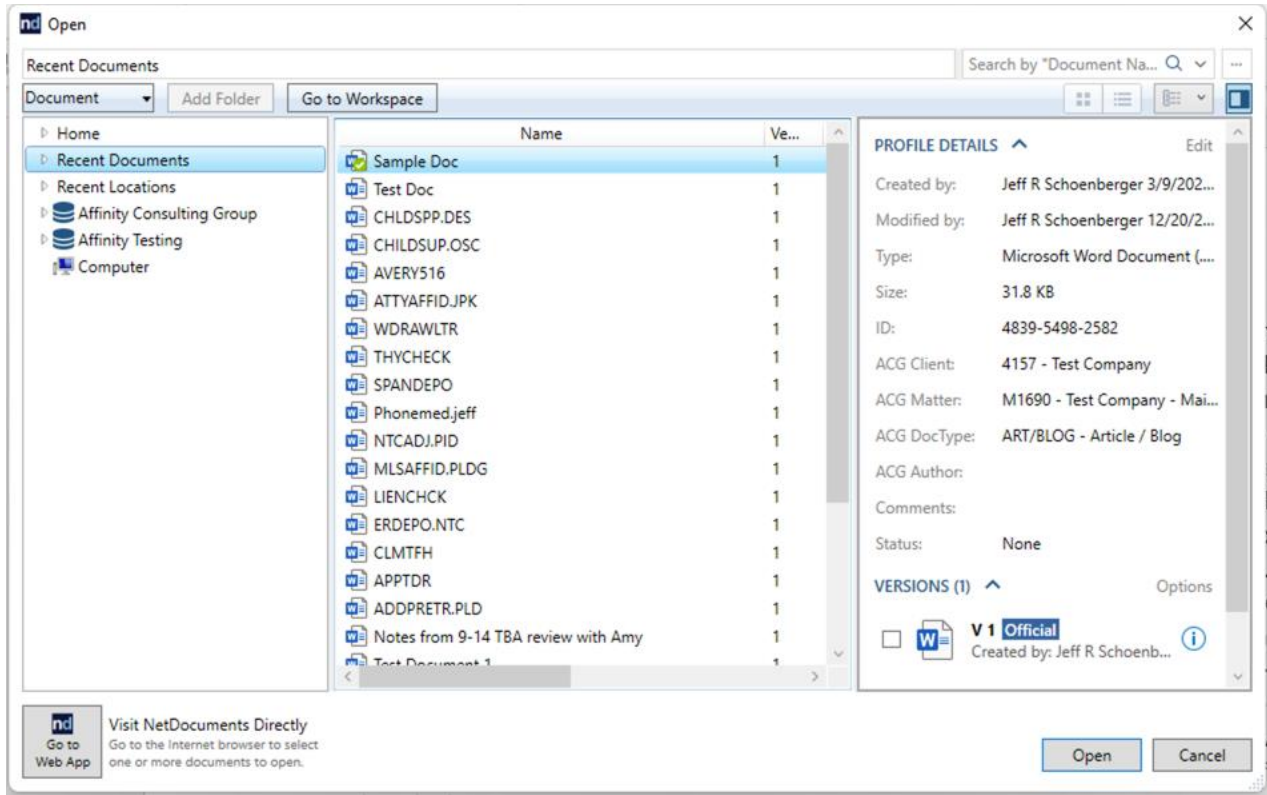
A DMS does much more than a plain search program. For example:

1. FULL TEXT INDEXING/RETRIEVAL

A DMS provides several avenues for users to find documents. One option is to search for words contained inside the file. This is the only function offered by search programs such as X1 Search, Copernic, HoudahSpot, or the search utilities built into Windows and macOS. As you will read below, a DMS does a lot more than that.

2. FORCED USER COMPLIANCE

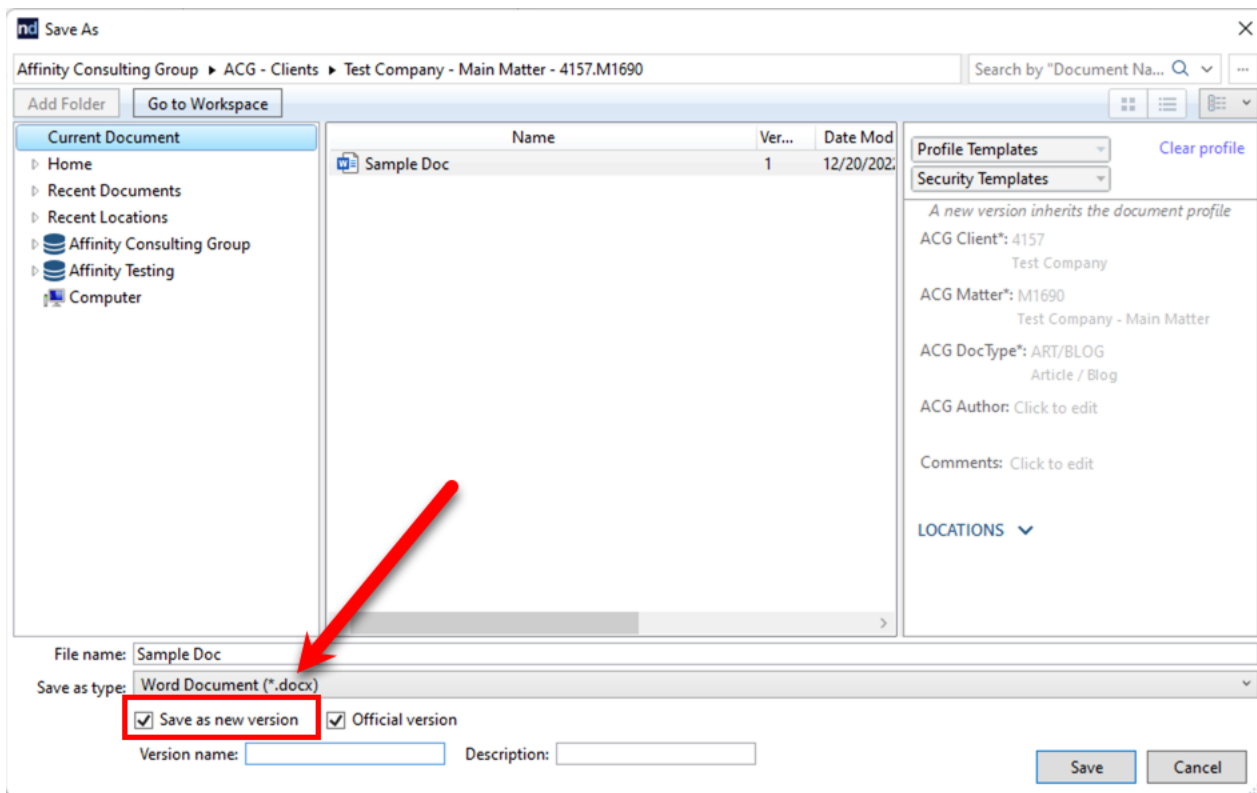
This is possibly the most important part of a DMS. It means that your DMS takes over all Open, Save and Save As commands in any application the user runs. This ensures that all documents will be saved within the DMS, and will be available for searching. This feature eliminates the possibility of users saving critical firm documents on their local hard drives, or saving them in a private directory where others cannot retrieve the document. By contrast, a plain search utility cannot force users to do anything a particular way.



3. DOCUMENT VERSIONING

A document version is draft of a document saved as a subsequent revision of a prior draft. By creating discrete versions of a document, it is possible to retrace its evolution. Document versions generally run linearly, such that version 2 follows version 1, version 3 follows version 2, and so on. Some document managers enable users to create branches, or sub-versions. When using sub-versions, version 1 (called a major version) may be followed by version 1.1 (a minor version), then by version 1.2, and at some point a new major version, version 2, is created. A DMS that supports version control must allow users to spawn new versions, within accepted guidelines, to return to prior versions, and to offer tools to work with versioned documents, such as redline comparisons.

When versioning is turned on, the user can be prompted to save the document as a new version, or it can be a mandatory setting. Here is an example of the dialog box.



4. DOCUMENT SECURITY

Document security places the DMS at the focal point of access and permission to the document repository. Document security involves documents, users, and groups of users. The DMS assigns rights and permissions to documents based on individual users, groups of users, and the roles users serve within the organization. For example, documents saved in the administrative profile group would likely not be available to all users. Those documents can be secured by user, user group, or role. You would also have the ability to secure an individual document that otherwise would be available to everyone.

Most DMSs will save a history of each and every document created, with administrative reports available to track a document from beginning to end. Those reports describe each action in the life of a document including who performed the action, its date and time, and the nature of the action itself.

Sample Doc ©				
FILTERS	LATEST ACTIVITIES			
	Date and time ↓	Action	User	Version
	Today at 2:50 PM	Downloaded document	Schoenberger, Jeff R	1
	Today at 2:50 PM	Downloaded document	Schoenberger, Jeff R	1
	Today at 2:50 PM	Checked Out Document	Schoenberger, Jeff R	All
	Today at 2:49 PM	Check in: Status reset to Checked In	Schoenberger, Jeff R	All
	Today at 2:45 PM	Edited Document	Schoenberger, Jeff R	1
	Today at 2:45 PM	Downloaded document	Schoenberger, Jeff R	1

5. REMOTE WEB ACCESS/OFFLINE ACCESS/MOBILE PHONE

Your DMS should have the ability to mirror documents locally, in the event of a network failure. When the connection to the network is restored, any changes should be seamlessly re-synchronized to their network counterparts.

Most DMSs also have an internet component which allows internal users the ability to access any documents in the DMS from a remote location, with the same security in place as if they were accessing the documents locally. Additionally, security can be set so the DMS can act as a portal for a law firm's clients to access documents specifically related to their case.

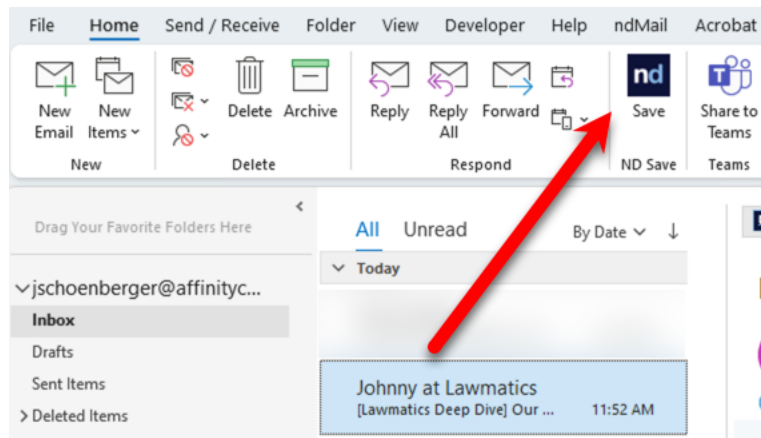
6. IOS/ANDROID INTEGRATION

For the times when you are on the road with no access to a PC, you can also access your documents via your mobile phone or tablet.

7. EMAIL INTEGRATION

The ability to share your client related emails with others in the firm is on the to-do list of many firms. With a DMS, all client related emails can be easily saved along with the other client related documents. They are also text searchable for easy retrieval.

The ability to save email is extremely important in light of the number of client-related emails we receive in our inbox on a daily basis. With a DMS, a new toolbar is typically added to Outlook which makes email very easy to save into the system. Here is an example of how this looks in a DMS:



You can also drag and drop email on to shortcut folders that will automatically save the email:

8. ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT FEATURES OF A DMS

DOCUMENT VIEWERS

An enterprise-level document management system is called upon to manage more than one type of file. In a typical installation, the DMS is managing word processing files (often generated by more than one word processing program) spreadsheets, data tables, image files of various formats, project files, HTML files, and so on. As these files, or objects, are under the control of the DMS, it must provide a means to view these files. The file viewers are integrated into the program such that text "hits" found during searches are highlighted in the viewers. It is certainly easier than opening each item until you find the one you want.

ARCHIVING

Archiving is a means to move dated or unused files off the main storage medium to secondary storage. The DMS must ensure that users can still search for information in the archived files and, if desired information is contained in an archive, that there is a ready means to restore it. Many document managers will allow site administrators to set "triggers" in the document profiles that enable automated archiving. For example, it may be desirable to set internal memos to be archived automatically after say, 90 days.

QUICK RETRIEVAL METHODS

Being able to save common searches, and easily access your recent searches is very helpful. Most systems will allow you to quickly access your last searches as well as the last documents you have created/edited.

EASY ADMINISTRATIVE TOOLS

A DMS administrator should be able to easily make changes to large groups of documents, as well as easy access to common tasks such as adding new users, setting up security and refining profile group tables.

ACCESS CONTROL

With the rise of collaborative authoring and editing of documents, a document management system must provide some way for multiple authors to coordinate activities across one or more documents. One of the primary means for doing so is to implement a document check-in/check-out regimen. When a user checks out a document, he or she has the option of "locking" it so that other users can view the document, but cannot make any changes to it. This prevents problems that may arise when several workers attempt to edit the same document simultaneously. With check-out, only one worker may edit a file. When finished, the worker checks the document back in through the DMS, making it available to other users once again.

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT MAIN PLAYERS

Below are the main players in the legal market, but there are other options for specialized needs.

- A. **NETDOCUMENTS:** See www.netdocuments.com. This is strictly a cloud-based option.
- B. **WORLDOX:** See www.worldox.com. Note: In October 2022, NetDocuments acquired Worldox.
- C. **IMANAGE WORK:** See <https://imanager.com>. This options tends to dominate in larger firms.
- D. **DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT BUILT INTO CASE MANAGEMENT:** Every case management program, (both shrink-wrapped software and cloud-based options, contains document management functionality, some more sophisticated than others.