

WHY TEMPLATE BUILDING IS CRITICAL FOR ALL LAW OFFICES

In order to capture your office's intellectual capital and put it into a usable form, you need to spend time creating "gold-standard" templates which represent the best of what your firm knows.

WORD PROCESSOR BASED (INEXPENSIVE AND EASY)

You want your templates to be word processor documents so they can easily be edited and updated later.

ERROR REDUCTION

Building Gold Standards eliminates all of the potential causes of error described above under Find, Rename and Modify.

DRAFTING IS A MISSION CRITICAL FUNCTION FOR MOST LAWYERS

There are many practice areas in which drafting is the primary task engaged in by the lawyer; and in many cases, the service rendered is primarily a set of documents (estate planning, etc.). The Find, Rename and Modify drafting method described above is incredibly inefficient, slow and has a high margin for error. One could argue that it is inappropriate to rely on such inadequate drafting methods considering the importance of the task.

THE HYPER-COMPETITIVE LEGAL MARKET PENALIZES LAWYERS WHO WORK SLOWLY

For many years, the legal industry had little incentive nor ability to change the inefficient Find, Rename and Modify method of drafting. With hourly billing predominant, one who takes a bit longer to get a set of documents together isn't penalized (in fact, they might be rewarded). Furthermore, there were few alternatives from a technological standpoint.

However, the emergence of flat fee billing and other non-hourly methods began creating an incentive to generate documents more quickly. Competition has increased significantly in the legal industry in the last 25 years; and technology has enabled firms to handle much higher volumes than they could in past decades thereby forcing administrative tasks like drafting to become more efficient. The paradigm shift is that lawyers are now looking for ways to generate documents in a quicker fashion without sacrificing accuracy. Sophisticated form building is a great way to achieve those objectives. Document assembly technology allows you to take it even further in terms of efficiency.

SPEED GAINS

Imagine a tool that could save you hours each day. If you're buried in drafting and it's a primary stressor in your work load, then template building can make a big difference. Here's an example regarding Will drafting:

DRAFT A WILL USING FIND, RENAME & MODIFY

This can easily take an hour depending upon complexity and has a high margin for error.

DRAFT A WILL USING A GOLD STANDARD TEMPLATE

This can take half the time (30 minutes) and improve accuracy.

DRAFT A WILL USING DOCUMENT ASSEMBLY

This may take 3 - 5 minutes and offers the highest accuracy.

TEMPLATES ALLOW YOU TO SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW WITH OTHERS

Knowledge Management is the ability of a lawyer to share what she knows with others in her firm. Unfortunately, a lot of what most lawyers know is wrapped up in documents they've created. Processes and drafting methodologies are often never written down anywhere. However, building templates allows you to take much of what you and your colleagues collectively know about a practice area and perform a "brain dump" into an expert drafting system. For example, assume you have 5 lawyers in your real estate department and they collaborate to build sophisticated gold standard templates for leases. New associate Jim needs to draft a lease in which your firm represents the landlord of a strip mall and the proposed new tenant is a restaurant business. The templates and drafting guides could skillfully guide Jim through the process, making sure that he a) is using the latest and best form your firm has prepared; and b) addresses all issues that should be addressed in a lease of this type (strip mall, food service tenant, your firm is representing the landlord, etc.). Review by the partner takes minutes instead of hours because the first draft was so well done, even by a relative rookie. The drafting system ensures that the firm's collective knowledge is utilized in every deal; even though the documents are generated in much less time than the old Find, Rename & Modify method.