

Advanced document automation key point of difference for Ford Sumner



Client
Ford Sumner

Problem
Document preparation in the legal industry is time-consuming and susceptible to error. Ford Sumner was considering how the process could be streamlined, so that they could move away from templates and reduce formatting errors while producing accurate documentation for their clients.

Solution
The LawHawk documentation solution came along at just the right time. They had been imagining what a document automation system would look like, and the proof of concept LawHawk showed them brought those imaginings into reality.

When legal firm Ford Sumner began to seriously consider the ways automation could streamline their document preparation process, their thinking dovetailed with the LawHawk solution.

Moving away from templates, need for greater accuracy

As LawHawk founder and MD - and former Buddle Findlay partner - Gene Turner was establishing his HotDocs powered legal document automation business, Jaesen Sumner, partner with the legal firm Ford Sumner, was thinking of ways to streamline and speed up their processes around legal document preparation. They had their ideas firmly in place, but what they were lacking was the technology - and the knowledge of how to use it - to make it happen.

"Without being aware of Gene's plans, we were seriously considering a document automation process that would get us away from templates,"

Jaesen recalls. "By sheer coincidence, that was the business he was setting up."

Ford Sumner were interested in resolving two specific pain points. Working faster was the first. "When you're using normal templates over and over again, it's quite laborious," Jaesen explains. "Inevitably, you wind up passing some of that cost onto your clients. So we were looking to reduce costs as well as the time it took to produce the documents."

The second issue was accuracy. "Now people aren't re-using documents and attempting to edit their way through the legal content," says Ford Sumner lawyer Sally Dickison. "Automation eliminates the human error aspect."

Ford Sumner had considered some other document automation options before going with LawHawk and HotDocs. "The problem (with other automation options) was that they were quite basic and couldn't deliver the whole solution," Jaesen recalls. "And what they could do was going to be really expensive to implement, particularly if we had to do it all ourselves."

“Document automation is where the legal industry is heading. Getting on board with this at the beginning and then offering it as a service to our clients is one of the key ways we’ll grow our business.”

- Jaesen Sumner, Partner

The legal expertise LawHawk brings makes a massive difference. They have helped us look at our whole business process, tailored to us, our documents and our clients with great value for money”.

Time savings mean reduced costs and greater service for clients

“Once we got a look at what Gene was doing, we realised we needed to be part of it, and quickly,” Jaesen recalls. “Automation at that level was going to significantly speed up the time it took to turn documents around, which, along with the portal that allows client access, meant that everything would go much faster.”

As well as internal efficiencies, the LawHawk solution also meant that Ford Sumner would be in a position to help clients prepare their own legal documents. “We wanted to be able to offer that as a service, instead of them relying on Google and online legal templates,” Jaesen explains. “They can log in through us, and we’ll provide Ford Sumner quality documents at a really minimal cost, knowing that they’ll stand up to any legal scrutiny.”

Sally, who specialises in employment agreements, says that the ability to now create employment documents via an automated process has not only been a big-time saver, but has increased accuracy as well. “I can quickly create really customised employment agreements for clients that I have confidence are completely accurate,” she says. “I’m not having to base it on an old agreement that may or may not be out of date. With the employment agreement builder, I know I can consider all the options, tick the boxes that are relevant, fill in the details using the guidance, and it’s 100% accurate.”

Employment agreements are a big part of Sally’s working day. “I can focus on the big stuff, the important stuff, and I don’t have to spend a lot of time copying and pasting between documents and correcting the formatting. I can focus on the content.”

Document automation the future for law firms

Looking ahead, Ford Sumner have ambitions to really grow the firm, and automation is a key plank for them in terms of how they can differentiate themselves, create a new competitive advantage and win more work of the type they want. The LawHawk solution has had wide interest within the firm. It’s not just the partners; new lawyers like Sally are excited about the potential the LawHawk solution will have for how they’ll work in future and build their own practices.

“Document automation is where the legal industry is heading. We wanted to be on board with it at the beginning,” Jaesen explains. “A lot of legal firms don’t realise that advanced automation of this kind of work means there’ll be less for them to do in the next few years. Getting on board with this at the beginning, learning how powerful the HotDocs software is and how we and LawHawk can use it effectively, and then offering it as a service to our clients is one of the key ways we’ll grow our business.”

Ford Sumner are already leading the charge with this, and the work they’re doing with Nelson Airport is a perfect example of the strategy working. “They’re logging into the employment builder,” says Jaesen. “All their most used documents – lease renewals, licence forms – are automated across the board.” What this means for Nelson Airport is they’re able to create their own legal agreements using the platform that Ford Sumner has provided, and are 100% confident in it. “They wouldn’t be using it if they weren’t,” says Sally. “And they’re saving money too, which is a big plus for them.”

Full details of the partnership between Ford Sumner and Nelson Airport will be published in an upcoming case study on the Ford Sumner website.

About LawHawk

LawHawk’s advanced document automation, with its built-in real-time training and compliance, allows anyone to draft highly customised documents in minutes rather than hours and at very low cost. Document drafts will be better quality, more consistent and compliant with key requirements. Backed by HotDocs, LawHawk is committed to revolutionising how high quality and consistent legal and procurement documents are generated, and setting new standards for what is possible.

It’s law and procurement for the 21st century and how you’ll want to do all your work.

www.lawhawk.nz