

Is Office Enough?

by Matt Miller of Microsystems

The demand for legal professionals to have greater technical skills is growing. Law schools are increasingly addressing this reality, and the American Bar Association recently modernized its rules of professional responsibility to address technological competency. Computer literacy is a prerequisite in today's business environment, but lawyers are not always adept at utilizing the technological tools in their environment.

How can lawyers quickly get up-to-speed on the computer skills necessary to produce bulletproof documents?

Microsoft has delivered some incredible improvements to the Office suite that are big steps in the right direction. They continue to invest in formatting, content reuse, collaboration and comparison capabilities. Firms are continuously looking to consolidate vendors and do more with what they have. Some firms may even boldly venture into a world that is purely Office.

These enhancements to Word are just steps on a long journey, and alone they are not enough. Law firms need core competencies to maximize the use of a firm's technology to support the practice of law. They should look at attorney core competencies, as well as certifications and software that help provide the skills needed to address their professional responsibilities to their firm and its clients. Once you have this solid foundation, delivering excellent work products is considerably more likely.

Here are examples of key legal document competencies, that when applied to a document, increase overall efficiency:

- » **Automated Numbering:** When document numbering is automated, adding and removing other numbered sections allows the document to increment automatically.
- » **Cross-Referencing:** Referring to other sections of a document is common. If these references are typed, updating and maintaining document edits becomes incredibly time-intensive.
- » **Table of Contents (ToC):** Clients want to see the topology of a document's main components. Building a ToC should take seconds with a ToC field but can take hours if automated numbering is applied incorrectly.

Lawyers have a tremendous professional responsibility to their firm and its clients to create and oversee quality work product, avoid risk and maintain confidentiality and compliance. With the growing demand for greater technical skills, augmenting our legal professionals with core competencies and software to support those competencies is becoming the industry standard. **P2P**



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