

THE CASE FOR PAPERLESS COURTS AND CASES

The most recent technology trend in the courtroom can be summed up in one word: paperless. Disadvantages of paper include: the expense of paper, ink, and file storage; delays with finding and filing documents; problems with misfiling, versioning, and poor organization.

There is an easier way and it is becoming more common.

COURT E-FILING HISTORY

In 2009, a study in Manatee County, Florida found that e-filing more than 2 million documents per year saved around \$1 million. Where did the savings come from? Documents are filed electronically or scanned into the system where judges can then download the information about the case to their laptops. Tim McMillan, technology consultant for the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), says that electronic filing for court records is easy for both staff members and attorneys. Electronic records also free up space and save the taxpayers money.

Unfortunately some states are finding it difficult to switchover. Oklahoma, Maryland, and California have faced speed bumps when they tried to update their court technology. Generally speaking, states with centralized courts transition more easily because they already have the infrastructure and can take advantage of economy of scale pricing.

Going paperless can have a positive impact on the courts and your firm. No more missing documents as access, organization, and filing becomes easier with everything online. More physical space will be available to your firm as you transfer hard copies to electronic files. There are a few steps to take before going paperless and a lot of things to consider. To save time, money, and more, transition your firm to a paperless model.



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN CONSIDERING PAPERLESS CASES

ELECTRONIC STORAGE

Determining where to store your files is the first step. There are many options but here we consider two of the primary choices: external hard drives and cloud based storage.

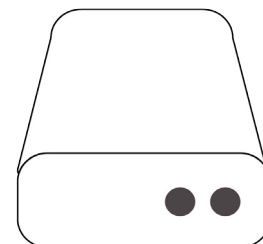
External hard drives are becoming more expensive but getting larger so the cost per storage unit is actually dropping. A 1 TB (terabyte) hard drive can cost around \$75 and can store years of documents, depending on file size. If you don't want others to have access to the stored documents, you will need to secure your hard drive as data can be accessed by anyone who has access to that physical resource.

Cloud based storage options abound. Google, Apple and Amazon are a few companies who offer cloud based storage for files. Make sure to review the backup procedures or file redundancy of each cloud based provider. Some offer storage at no cost up to a certain maximum storage size. By professionally managing the care and keeping of the storage devices, the process is simplified for you. For either approach, data security must also be carefully reviewed.

DATA SECURITY

Protecting your digital files is extremely important. Implementing internal security measures should be one of the first steps you take when going paperless. Adding endpoint security agents, firewalls, and internal intrusion detectors will help to keep your files safe. Encryption is another option to consider, which can offer another layer of protection to your files.

A set of policies and procedures should be developed and followed to establish a firm's technology resources and how they are to be utilized. [The American Bar Association](#) (ABA) offers its members many resources to help develop policies and procedures for the use of technology. There are also many data security consultants that have a list of guidelines you can follow. For more information on data security, you can also download our [Cybersecurity White Paper](#).



HARD DRIVE
 PORTABLE AND SECURE
 DOES NOT RELY ON INTERNET
 CAN ONLY ACCESS DATA WITH
 PHYSICAL HARD DRIVE



CLOUD BASED STORAGE
 CONVIENENT, EASY ACCESS
 SOME SERVICES OFFER UNLIMITED STORAGE
 EASY AND CHEAPER TO RECOVER DATA



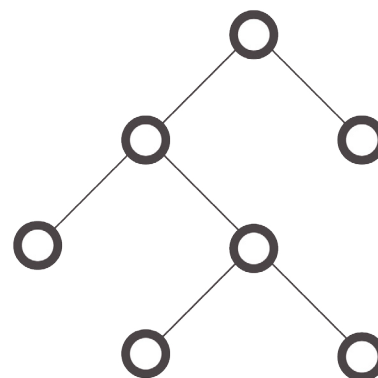
**MAKE SURE THAT DATA
 STORED ON CLOUD
 STORAGE SERVICES IS
 SECURE**



FILE ORGANIZATION

Determine how you will organize the digital files: by client, type of document, or another method. The likely ideal organization method is by case or subject matter, depending on the document. Avoid saving unnecessary documents. It's highly recommended to separate completed documents from active files. Look at how you currently organize your physical documents and see if anything needs changing when you switch to paperless.

How you organize and name your files will have a great impact on how quickly you can find those files in the future. Nomenclature for document storage can make the process of locating and retrieving documents a lot faster and easier. Some information that you might want to include on your file name include: any acronyms, date, type of data, case number, or location. Consistency is key.



PLAN HOW YOU WILL ORGANIZE AND NAME YOUR FILES FOR EFFICIENT DOCUMENT RETRIEVAL

TRANSITIONING EXISTING CASES TO PAPERLESS

HOW TO START

If you are moving existing cases from a paper based approach to paperless, plan when and how to convert cases. For new cases, start with your paperless approach from the beginning and then move on to open cases. Closed cases do not need to be scanned and moved to electronic files unless you would like to eliminate the paper. It is critical to complete cases as quickly as possible.

DRAFTS VS. FINAL

Recognizing a draft from the final file is important. This clarification can be completed with a file naming standard or as a file type. Some recommend that all files are saved in their native file type, like Word or Excel, until it is finalized and then it would be saved as a PDF (portable file document). There are many options to how you will save a file to signify draft versus final, but make sure you address this and are consistent in your approach.



PRIORITIZE OPEN VS. CLOSED CASES



GETTING IT DONE

COMPUTER

Computer prices continue to drop making great technology more budget friendly than you might think. RAM (Random Access Memory) is a form of computer storage that should be carefully considered when purchasing a computer.

Computers with 32-bit operating systems should have 4 GB of RAM and computers with a 64-bit operating system should have 8 GB of RAM. The basic rule of thumb is the more RAM the better and more efficient.

SCANNER

It's recommended to have more than one scanner in the office depending on how many documents you scan. Think about the features you need in a scanner before purchasing. It would be ideal for your scanner to scan double sided papers, in color, and different sized documents. A flatbed scanner is useful for things that can't go through sheet feeders. If you find yourself traveling often with time sensitive work, a portable scanner is a great tool to have on hand.

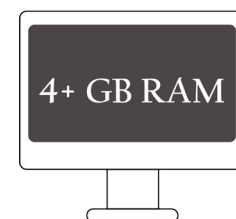
PDF SOFTWARE

It is very difficult to go paperless without PDF software. Ensure the PDF version you are using allows for searchable and editable files. Remember, for new cases, most of the documents will be created online using a template or a word processing tool like Microsoft Office that can save documents as PDFs. Only documents from external sources sent via paper will need to be scanned. [Adobe Acrobat](#) is a great tool for lawyers that allows them to create and work with PDFs.

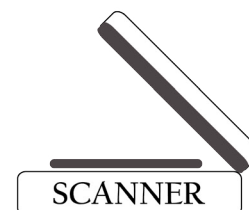
BACKUP TOOLS

Create a backup plan for your electronic files. A large hard drive can be purchased to allow for backup or for a desktop computer, a second hard drive could be installed. A quick solution to file storage is to upload the files to a secure, sharable cloud storage site. If your firm uses a website, check to see if the hosting provider offers storage. Check out these backup options individually and figure out which is right for your firm. Look at the maximum storage space, online editing options, file versioning, and whether they have phone or desktop applications.

PAPER TO PAPERLESS PROCESS:



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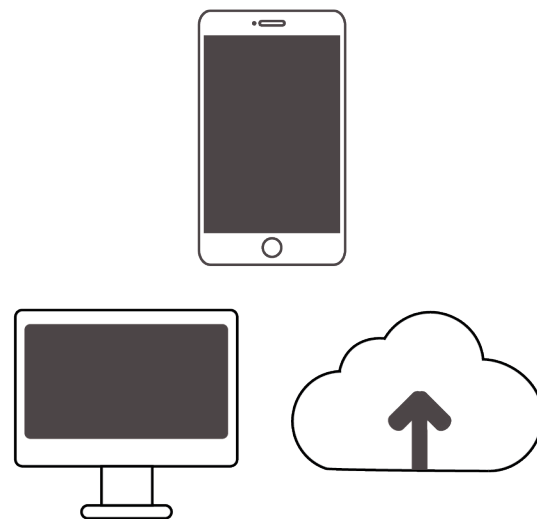


THE EFFICIENCY OF TECHNOLOGY

Can you remember the last time you used a physical map to find a location? Most people can't.

Advantages of electronic maps include the ability to see possible delays, identify the fastest route, and figure out where to stop for gas or coffee.

There are just as many advantages to legal technology as the right system can provide great cost and time savings, reducing the potential expense to clients, making the law more accessible to people. While courts are still in the process of going paperless here in the United States, the [Supreme Court of India](#) is leading the way. But that doesn't limit your firm from making the transition successfully, leaving you more time to help clients or provide more work life balance. The trend toward technology resources supporting the legal industry will continue as the benefits greatly outweigh the costs. Technology has made all of this possible with time management strategies that make us more efficient. [Take advantage of it.](#)



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