

Leading Patent Law Firm Automates Document Management

Challenges

On average, F&R files more than 4,000 patent applications each year. Of these applications, F&R obtains more than 1,500 patents each year. Not surprisingly, F&R handles massive amounts of print documentation related to all aspects of the patent application process.

The process used by F&R to manage its paper documentation required much time and effort. When print documentation arrived at F&R via mail or fax, F&R's support staff needed to manually review and route the paperwork to the appropriate lawyers and other personnel. This process added an extra day or two to the distribution process. In addition, when email arrived, it needed to be routed to the appropriate staff and there was no way to easily access and sort through all emails.

To facilitate the exchange of information among offices and streamline procedures, F&R sought to better manage its incoming volumes of print documentation by switching to an electronic system for content and document management. F&R worked with a few system integrators to develop a solution, and had created an interface for their system. However, the firm found that it was in need of a high level of customized support, and decided to partner with a new solutions provider.

Solution

F&R turned to Quality Associates, Inc. (QAI), a systems integrator that built its reputation by performing large-scale implementations of advanced document and knowledge management solutions for major government agencies, such as NIH, FDA, and DOD.

Rolf Hille, director of practice systems, F&R, said, "We chose to work with Quality Associates because we needed an experienced solutions provider who could handle the complexity and scope of this project. We could not simply purchase an off-the-shelf solution, because we needed additional support and customization for our ten geographically diverse locations."

QAI consulted with F&R and performed a requirements analysis. As a partner to all the leading providers of document scanning and management software and hardware, QAI was able to develop the customized solution to meet F&R's precise needs. The solution called Automated Practice System (APS), enables F&R to scan, store, retrieve and manage all incoming documents. The APS includes four elements:

- Kofax Ascent Capture: Scanning software that enables data capture via the Internet from documents scanned at remote sites. This software also generates searchable PDF's, which are then released into the document storage and management software.
- Interwoven/IManage Document storage and management software.
- Handysoft Bizflow: Business process management and workflow software platform; and a
- User interface custom-designed by F&R that integrates all three solutions. This interface also links databases such as ProLaw and MicroPatent that F&R uses for research.

For this project, QAI upgraded F&R to the newest available version of Kofax Ascent Capture software, and added an Ascent Capture Internet Server to make it possible to use the software in a distributed environment. The solution was rolled-out across all ten F&R locations, and the implementation included the installation of additional PDF processing servers to handle high-volume days.

FISH & RICHARDSON P.C.

Fish & Richardson P.C. (F&R) is a highly respected national law firm with over 350 lawyers in ten offices across the U.S. F&R is one of the largest firms practicing intellectual property, litigation, and corporate law and the only firm with a truly national intellectual property practice. The firm helps its clients capture the value of their intellectual property through patent, trademark, copyright, and trade secret protection. Founded in 1878, the firm has represented a number of well-known clients, including Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell and the Wright Brothers. Today, the firm defends the intellectual property of many of the nation's largest technology companies.



QUALITY
ASSOCIATES
INCORPORATED

The Chesapeake Building
9017 Red Branch Road, Suite 102
Columbia, MD 21045

www.qualityassociatesinc.com
800.488.3547



Results

Now, F&R uses the Automated Practice System as a centralized system for its document management needs. With this system, all incoming documentation, including hundreds of pieces of postal mail, email, attorney notes and United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) documents, are scanned and saved, and faxes are not automatically saved as PDF's as soon as they arrive.

Scanning occurs at F&R's Twin Cities, Minnesota office, and documents are uploaded and available the same day that they are scanned. Documents are then indexed using Doc Codes, many of which match the codes used by the USPTO. A slip sheet that contains the document number and page count is included with all documents. The electronic files are then routed to the appropriate individuals within the firm, such as secretaries, paralegals, and attorneys. Hard copies are then filed and stored as appropriate.

The reliable and quick performance of the Automated Practice System enables F&R to readily exchange information across its Wide Area Network (WAN). The system's user interface provides F&R with a means by which authorized staff members can log-in and easily access, review, forward and print documents, and add comments or notes to each document prior to saving or forwarding them to another staff member. Users can sort through thousands of patent applications based on information in real time from the MicroPatent web site, which is the world's largest digital patent archive, and access various legal databases including ProLaw.

Since QAI's involvement in the implementation of the APS, F&R has improved communications and has been better able to utilize human resources across the enterprise. By moving from a one-to-one distribution approach with print documentation to a centralized, electronically based system by which to view and access information, F&R has decreased the likelihood that important documentation will be overlooked. Soon, F&R will have a system in place by which all outbound documentation is captured and stored.

F&R's staff has provided positive feedback about the Automated Practice System. Overall, the staff has found that the system is reliable and quick, and document quality is high.

According to F&R's Hille, "Quality Associates came in and solved our immediate problems, and were continuously responsive to our needs. We are very pleased with the work performed by Quality Associates on the Automated Practice System project."

Summary

Business Requirements:

- A high-quality scanner
- Software to produce quality images for improved/maximum OCR
- A solution that would support staff efficiencies in a national distributed environment
- Quality assurance to ensure that documents are properly accounted for, scanned and distributed

Technical Requirements:

- Needed a solution that would operate in a WAN environment and would integrate into a .NET Service Oriented Architecture (SOA)
- Required redundant technologies, which would maximize uptime and scale as needed for use during peak periods.

Business Value & Benefits:

- High-quality scanned images
- Reliable full text searching
- Increased throughput
- Increased human resources efficiency
- Quality assurance enabled by Kofax Ascent Capture software, which ensure that all documents are properly scanned
- Improved business process efficiency

Technologies:

- Kofax Ascent Capture - scanning software
- Interwoven/IManage - document storage and management software
- Handysoft Bizflow - business process management and workflow platform
- Customized User Interface and Integration

