

Business:

Law Firm

Company:

Stephen Plopper & Associates

Objectives:

Manage cumbersome legal documents more easily, efficiently and reliably



SmartSearch and the Case of Plopper vs. Paper

In a tough battle against paper documents ad nauseam, SmartSearch helped a prominent business law firm win a decisive victory

At the enviably high hourly rates earned by experienced, skilled attorneys, time is a precious thing to waste indeed. But managing the enormous volume of documents that are essential to the legal profession seems to have a way of doing just that. In endeavoring to improve efficiency and client service, however, the business law firm of Stephen Plopper & Associates discovered a crucial ally in their battle against paper: SmartSearch.

The attorneys at Indianapolis-based Stephen Plopper & Associates practice general business law, including corporate and international law, and specialize in mergers and acquisitions. Attorney Stephen Plopper founded the firm in the late 1990s after 20 years with a major Indiana law firm. Attorney Nick Plopper, his son and a principal of the firm, has been working at the family-owned company for three years. "We pride ourselves on having great personal relationships with our clients," he said. "They feel that they can rely on and trust us; some have been with my father for 20 years."

Since joining Stephen Plopper & Associates, Nick Plopper has led the campaign to use technology solutions to help the firm operate more efficiently. "We had begun to realize that we needed an electronic solution to streamline the processing of the documents that come in and out of the office," Plopper recalled. "In the six months since we installed SmartSearch, filing, retrieving and sharing documents with SmartSearch has already saved the firm and our clients thousands of dollars in professional labor hours. Now our documents are secure in SmartSearch and cannot be lost or misplaced."

Documents are the lifeblood of the legal profession. Stephen Plopper & Associates' general business practice produces a wide variety of them, including contracts and various types of agreements. The firm's litigation work generates lengthy pleadings with numerous exhibits sometimes exceeding 200 pages for a single filing; matters with multiple filings generate even more. Mergers and acquisitions also generate reams of documents. "Any time a business is being bought or sold," Plopper explained, "you are closely examining every aspect of that business to establish its value and the paperwork can mount up very quickly."

Initially, Plopper experimented with a homegrown system for storing documents electronically, but met with limited success. "Without a real document management system in place," he said, "the process was frustratingly slow and depended much too heavily on how computer-savvy the person using it might be. We stored computer files on various portable media and in some cases these got damaged or were lost. Basically, it was a free-for-all."

Impact Networking, a highly respected office technology company with offices in Chicago, Indianapolis and the Greater Wisconsin markets then introduced Nick Plopper to SmartSearch and custom configured the solution for him. "Impact Networking helped to make SmartSearch address our firm's specific requirements perfectly," he said. "SmartSearch is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of any company willing to take a look at it."

For Stephen Plopper & Associates, processing all kinds of legal documents with SmartSearch is now easy and efficient. A multi-function printer (MFP) automatically scans up to 50 pages of documents at a time into a SmartSearch Inbox called "Scans." If time is short, Plopper and his associates can create PDFs directly from the Scans Inbox. They then drag the files into "Client Files" or another SmartSearch Inbox and index them whenever their workload permits. The documents are indexed using a variety of fields so they can be retrieved easily and quickly when needed.

Stephen Plopper & Associates does a lot of litigation in federal court. Federal court, Plopper explained, allows attorneys to file briefs and pleadings electronically, but requires they file PDFs with the court. "Prior to having SmartSearch in place," he said, "I used to have to plan on an extra two to three hours trying to prepare the PDFs for filing. Now, with SmartSearch, I can do this in less than 10 minutes."

In just six months after installing the new solution, Plopper estimates that the firm has stored 300 documents with SmartSearch, representing more than 3,000 pages of material. Based on an average of only five minutes to process each document now, versus 25 minutes to manually process each before using SmartSearch, Plopper calculates SmartSearch has already saved the firm over 100 attorney-hours collectively worth well over \$16,000. "SmartSearch has increased our productivity four or five times for document processing activities, freeing up time that can now be used for other tasks," he said.

"I would absolutely recommend SmartSearch," Plopper insisted. "SmartSearch proved crucial to our winning the battle against paper by allowing us to manage an overwhelming number of documents easily, efficiently and reliably. As technology has changed the landscape of the legal profession, so too have client expectations changed. Having a content management solution like SmartSearch helps us to meet those expectations. SmartSearch has proven so successful for processing legal documents that we will soon begin using it to streamline our accounting and other departments as well. My goal now is to take the office completely paperless."

What professional counsel does Plopper offer to those considering installing SmartSearch? "Just do it!" he exclaimed. "You'll be glad you did."

About Square 9 Softworks

Square 9 Softworks is a leading developer of innovative, business-centric software solutions including the award-winning SmartSearch Content Management Suite. Dedicated to making content management available to organizations of all sizes, Square 9 Softworks designs solutions built on open architecture and cutting-edge technologies that drive efficiency and productivity across all business applications.

Through decades of experience with content management technologies in business enterprises of all kinds, Square 9 Softworks has acquired a thorough understanding of

document-driven business processes. Intensely customer-focused and highly responsive, the company delivers effective, value-driven solutions and has achieved a reputation for excellence in meeting the rapidly evolving needs of its customers.

Square 9 Softworks distributes its solutions exclusively through a network of highly skilled channel partners from its corporate office in New Haven, Connecticut. For further information, visit **www.square-9.com**