

Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of PA

Case Study



Justice for Documents

The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania was established in 1972 to assist the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in protecting the public and maintaining the integrity of the legal profession by regulating attorney conduct and disciplining misconduct. The Board is an independent ethics organization funded solely by annual fees assessed on each attorney practicing in Pennsylvania. The Board employs a staff of 70 located in 6 offices throughout the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania has a roll of approximately 100,000 attorneys with roughly 65,000 of them practicing. With such a large number of attorneys in the Commonwealth, the Disciplinary Board must manage and store a great deal of information with accuracy. Their largest division is the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC) which investigates 4,500 – 5,000 complaints annually against attorneys, and when appropriate also prosecutes, resulting in either private or public discipline. The Office of the Secretary to the Board is charged with, among other things, housing the official record of any case resulting in a hearing or discipline. The Attorney Registration Office collects attorney registration fees and maintains a copy of each attorney's annual registration form. The Accounting and Human Resource Office handle basic business functions.

Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Industry:
Government

Location:
Pennsylvania

Application:
accounting, live case files, complaints

Document Types:
invoices, legal documents, complaint forms,
attorney registration forms

Requirements and General Environment

After evaluating its business practices, the Board decided it needed to revise some of its processes in order to gain efficiencies, better manage its documents and create approval processes for the Accounting Office and ODC that could be easily reviewed and audited.

The Disciplinary Board was already using DocuWare as an archiving tool, but wanted to expand its use to include live case files, as well as integrate the solution with other key software they use. They wanted a solution that could provide them with version control and could facilitate employee collaboration. Even more important, they needed to find the right vendor, one that was local and who could quickly meet their needs.

Tasks

- Accurately track attorney registrations
- Develop business processes that can be audited
- Automate invoice approval workflows

Solution

Their Authorized DocuWare Partner, Toshiba Business Solutions, visited each office to understand their paper processes and show the Disciplinary Board how to improve and optimize their existing processes using DocuWare.

The ODC's process starts when a complaint is filed. Hard copy documents are scanned and indexed using a drop down list for the document type and one-click technology, which allows users to point and click on the text they want to use as an index value, avoiding typos and reducing indexing time. Electronic documents are directly imported into DocuWare and indexed in a similar manner.

Within the ODC, electronic approval workflows are in place to allow a colleague to either concur or dissent with any specific decision relating to a case under investigation. If the colleague concurs with the recommendation, the document is automatically routed to a manager for final approval. Tracking these approvals is important to maintaining the organization's directives.

Accounts Payable invoices are received by any of the six offices. When received, a barcode sticker is placed in the corner of the invoice which will act as a unique identifier. The invoice is scanned and information extracted. The documents are fully indexed by referencing the accounting database to fill in vendor information. Hard copies of invoices never need to be sent to the central office and the invoice approval easily moves through a pre-defined, auditable electronic workflow.

Modules in use

- Autoindex
- Barcodes & Forms
- Connect to Outlook
- DocuWare Import
- Task Manager



Benefits

Each of the four ODC offices normally handle the complaints in their own region but with DocuWare in place, staff from one office can be redeployed to work on complaints logged at a neighboring office, without having to physically drive there. This has allowed the ODC to balance its workload among its staff and easily cover employee absences.

When charges are brought against any attorney, the 13 unpaid Disciplinary Board Members act as the judges to determine if and how an attorney should be disciplined. The ODC acts as the Prosecutor and the attorney who wronged someone is known as the Respondent. Using the security and access features in DocuWare, the Secretary to the Board gives the ODC access to filed documents in the case, while other documents remain secure or unavailable. These features allow the Secretary to store all documents for a case in one location while still limiting access, simplifying a complex process.

Once a hearing is complete and public discipline is determined, the Secretary can change an index field, which then allows full access to the final decision and supporting documentation.

For the Finance Director, having an audit trail in place is crucial. Storing and processing all accounting documents from a central repository has eliminated the unintentional role of information gatekeeper. The entire Disciplinary Board staff now has self-serve access to the information they need regarding invoices and payments, freeing up time and energy for other tasks. Invoice approval time has sped up now that invoices can quickly be approved even with busy travel schedules.

The Attorney Registration Office can now easily update and monitor the records of its roughly 100,000 attorneys. All funding for the Disciplinary Board comes from these fees so accurate records are essential.

“Our DocuWare system functions very well, but our relationship with our authorized DocuWare Partner is even better. A strong vendor relationship was very important to us from the outset of the project and we feel lucky to have both a great vendor and a great system all-in-one,” said Hereda.

Benefits

- Work load balance among offices
- Provide employees with flexible work options
- Timely invoice approvals while away from the office
- Created controlled self-serve access to accounting information

Conclusion



"A significant benefit we've experienced from our use of DocuWare was the ease and flexibility of reviewing and approving documents. The ability to review and approve documents remotely has changed the working lives of some of our employees and has allowed our organization to more effectively utilize our human resources."

Jesse G. Hereda, Finance Director for the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

The Disciplinary Board has decided to implement DocuWare in the Human Resources division and is developing a roadmap for another successful installation.



This document can also be found here:

<http://pub.docuware.com/en/disciplinary-board-of-the-supreme-court-of-pa>

For more information please visit our website at:

www.docuware.com