



EXTRANETS FOR LITIGATORS

Over the past few years, the use of extranets and intranets by law firms to share critical documents with co-workers, clients and co-counsel has been firmly established.

One area in which an extranet is particularly useful is in litigation, where a large number of parties require a massive number of documents over a fixed period of time.

Keeping things organized

An extranet provides a single location dedicated to the individual case. Access to documents can be defined by the need of the user. For example, documents relating to clients are very different than those required by co-counsel. An extranet allows everything to reside in one place, but access can be defined by individual needs. It also automates alerts – so that users know the instant a new document has been posted, and can find it quickly in a dedicated folder.

Many extranets go beyond the simple sharing of documents. Many include tools such as a comment function, calendars, project trackers, and approval functions. These tools can be used to report on the all activities and on the progress of the case.

Providing a permanent record

All actions taken within the extranet are recorded, and most extranets provide powerful search tools that allow users to quickly see who did what, and when they did it. All actions are name and date stamped, providing a complete record of activity in what is often a fast moving environment where documentation is difficult to manage.

Easy to setup and use

Extranets that are offered by application service providers can be created and used in a matter of days. It's a simple matter of subscribing to a service that provides all the technology and training. Many are so intuitive that they require no training at all – they're as easy to use as email.

A secure environment

Managing legal documents requires the highest level of security. Extranets require an id and password for access, and many provide encryption of all transmissions.

And when the case is over . . .

It is fast and easy to close the extranet and download all of the information. Often, litigators will create an extranet for each case they handle, and simply close it at the conclusion of the case.

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