Best Authority® by Levit & James Continues A History of Success at Baker Donelson

By John Green, Chief Information Officer, and Lisa Williams-Smith, Training Manager

In order to make sure Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC is always using the best and most comprehensive technology, we do a best-of-breed analysis of all software every time we do a technology refresh. In July 2009, we rolled out a new desktop, so we started our most recent technology analysis then.

At the time, we were using FullAuthority® by LexisNexis® to create a Table of Authorities (TOA) for legal briefs. LexisNexis had recently discontinued support for Full-Authority, so we knew we had to find another solution and began researching options. Through our extensive research, we narrowed down our options to CiteIt! by Sidebar Software and Best Authority® by Levit & James.

Best Authority (BA) came highly recommended by many of our peers as the most comprehensive product on the market. We have a long relationship with Levit & James, having used their Mass Transit product, and knew that they were committed to excellence. In 1994, we needed to merge two law firms that ultimately became Baker, Donelson, Berman, Caldwell & Berkowitz. One of the firms was using Wang minicomputers and we needed to transfer that information to PCDocs. Levit & James' Mass Transit was the only product on the market that could do that. Levit & James' technology was fundamental to our success in merging the two law firms and we knew they developed quality products.

The main requirement Baker Donelson had for TOA-creation software was that it integrated with Microsoft Word. We realized early on that Best Authority was the closest thing to being a built-in feature of Word. **After a demonstration of the software, we immediately saw why everyone had raved about Best Authority.** Our staff was blown away by Best Authority's features and the accuracy with which the software performed in comparison to Full-Authority. The belief we had in Levit & James was reconfirmed based on what we saw in Best Authority.

We ran an internal pilot program of Best Authority and were amazed at how well the software worked. There were absolutely zero issues with the product and we were impressed at how adaptable it was according to the citation rules of different states. **We did not have to make any customizations to the software – it worked right out of the box.** After the pilot program, we were sold on Best Authority and the day we purchased it, Levit & James e-mailed us the files. The product was simple to install.

Our trainers taught the users how to use the software and, again, people were confident in their ability to use it. Our staff tells us again and again how accurate Best Authority is and how much time and trouble it saves them. FullAuthority required about five minutes to create a TOA, but the resulting document was never accurate and we needed 30-60 minutes to go back and fix all the errors in the citations. With Best Authority, it takes under five minutes to create a TOA, and we can trust that everything is correct and ready to go out.

Before we implemented Best Authority, several users were still creating TOAs manually – FullAuthority was producing so many errors that they felt it was more time-consuming to use the product than to create their own TOAs from scratch. Those users, without hesitation, are now users of BA.

Our staff has confidence in Best Authority. They know their citation errors are being caught the first time around. From an IT perspective, there are never any issues with the software, which is great for us. It is a major relief to have a product that just works and we hear repeatedly how easy it is to use Best Authority and how reliable it is. Basically, the software supports itself and we do not have any problems with it.

Previously, we had merged the technology of two 140-attorney law firms with the help of Levit & James' Mass Transit technology. Now 20 years later, Levit & James is still creating fantastic products, this time by providing our litigation support professionals with Best Authority. As a CIO and Training Manager, we realize that trouble-free legal software that does what it is supposed to do can be hard to find. Fortunately, that is precisely what Baker Donelson has found in Best Authority.

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