



Gradual Rollout Gains Increased Acceptance

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by Natalie Huha

Technology can be a very good thing — especially if people actually use it! After several years in the legal industry, I have learned that the best technology in the world can have virtually no benefit if it is not marketed properly. However, if presented to users in a strategic way, a piece of software can be successful and have a revolutionary impact.

Looking to Save Time

Recently, our law firm, Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor, LLP, needed a new solution for building a Table of Authorities (“TOA”), a list of citations in a litigation brief. For years, the firm’s Legal Administrative Assistants (“LAAs”) had created TOAs manually, marking the citations using Microsoft Word’s built-in citation marking tool. Generally, this process would require at least an hour, usually two or more hours. Lawyers often had last-minute changes to their briefs, and sometimes the TOA could not be easily revised.

Our IT department knew it needed to find a better way to streamline the workflow and save time. Members of our department researched potential solutions and found that a product called Best Authority from Levit & James had a great reputation. A demo was scheduled, and in April 2010 the firm started a phase one training and pilot test of Best Authority with its bankruptcy group.

At the time of the Best Authority pilot, one of our bankruptcy LAAs had a TOA generation project looming for a brief with more than 400 citations. Understandably, she was dreading the manual TOA process with Word, and was hopeful that Best Au-

thority could help speed up the process and improve the accuracy. She used Best Authority to create the TOA in a *fraction* of the time and became an evangelist at the firm for Best Authority. This was a strong initial benchmark in the IT department’s strategy to get a TOA solution for the firm.

With the success of the bankruptcy group pilot, we purchased Best Authority, but for planned purposes, decided not to *initially* make a firmwide roll-out of the product. Instead, we made a strategic decision to target an additional group of LAAs from different sections of the firm as the second phase of the pilot.

The second pilot group was trained by Levit & James, and when the LAAs started using Best Authority, it won them over. One of them was so excited and impressed that she sent an enthusiastic e-mail about Best Authority to her entire practice group. A few moments after she sent the e-mail, our IT department started receiving inquiries from other LAAs and lawyers who were interested in having Best Authority installed on their PCs.

We continued with our small group training strategy. This led to staff and lawyers asking for Best Authority earlier than anticipated. The demand was such that I ended up doing about five training classes in one week.

By the time the firm officially rolled out Best Authority in July 2010, Young Conaway



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lawyers and staff were 100% in favor of the product based upon all the positive feedback from the early users. This level of buy-in greatly streamlined the firm’s implementation because there was no internal resistance or contention.

Adapting to Lawyers’ Styles

In order to further cement our success with Best Authority, some options were tailored to our lawyers’ individual needs. At Young Conaway, some of our lawyers use split citations and provide detail in footnotes. Best Authority is set up by default to automatically pick up those split citations, which made our LAAs very happy. Also, some lawyers wanted case names in italics, others underlined. Best Authority was customized to fit those parameters, which saved the LAAs time and pleased our lawyers in the process.

Best Authority recognizes the Harvard Blue Book, a uniform system of citation widely regarded as “The Bible” for citation formatting. Lawyers learn citation skills in law school, yet they often need reminding of the Blue Book citation format to stay within those guidelines. An unforeseen benefit of Best Authority was that the software enforced the Blue Book guidelines, which helped our lawyers follow them

more closely. However, if a lawyer wanted to do citations his or her own way, Best Authority was flexible enough to allow for individual citation styles.

Conclusion

At this point, approximately 30 people are using Best Authority across five of the firm’s practice groups, including bankruptcy, corporate, employment, intellectual property litigation and personal injury. TOAs now take about 15 minutes for a basic brief rather than one to two hours (or more), and are more accurate than they were with the manual method. Since the process of creating a TOA now takes less time, this time savings is transferred to our clients.

At Young Conaway, the IT department’s pilot strategy that introduced Best Authority proved to be successful. Rather than rolling out the product firm-wide, we introduced it gradually, getting buy-in from key stakeholders and letting the need facilitate the process. The result is that members of the firm are creating TOAs better and faster than before, meeting deadlines, as well as accommodating our lawyers’ personal preferences. Best Authority has proven that technology can indeed be a good thing, and the good news is that people are using it.