



# Intuitive, Fast and Accurate

## BEST AUTHORITY ENHANCES OFFICE CULTURE AND BUILDS STAFF CONFIDENCE AT FOSTER PEPPER PLLC

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**A** Table of Authorities (TOA) must be comprehensive and flawless. It may seem like a trivial administrative task, but a poorly executed TOA can hinder the judge's ability to review the citations in a brief, and reflect poorly on the attorneys. A brief's TOA is an important representation of a law firm's professionalism. However, the process of generating them has historically been gruelingly detailed, lengthy, and most often on a short deadline. TOAs put enormous pressure on the legal staff who must create them.

Compiling a TOA by manually finding and marking all citations in a document is daunting. The inclusion and accuracy of every citation is crucial. To this end, technology is vitally necessary to assist attorneys and staff in achieving the precision required. Legal staff leverage software to aid in picking up all citations in a document, but *not all tools are created equal*.

**O**ur law firm, Foster Pepper PLLC, had been using Word 2003's native capabilities to find citations in our legal briefs. In addition, two staff members were using CiteIt! by Sidebar Software. Both Word and CiteIt! required too many time-consuming manual steps, which were prone to errors, and our staff did not trust Word's native TOA tools.

While we trained our secretaries to use Word's complex TOA functionality, there was often a long lag-time between their TOA projects, and their skills became rusty. This, combined with deadline pressures, increased their anxiety and insecurity with the overall TOA process.

Ultimately, faced with deadlines and the unworkable Word feature set, our secretaries and attorneys hesitated to create TOAs on their own. Instead, the TOA requests were sent to our Document Production staff, which then required the secretaries and Document Production staff to collaborate on the TOA.

**T**his was not a good solution since it added another layer of staff and even more to production time. The collaboration proved difficult because we only have two Document Production team members working during the day, and two at night. The Document Production team handles a heavy workload on a daily basis, and it could be another three hours before the secretaries received their completed TOA back. In the meantime, the lawyer may have revised the brief, and the TOA would be incorrect and have to be redone. Our TOA creation process just simply was not as efficient as we needed it to be.



We decided to find a more reliable and capable product. Our IT Director, Lucas Clara, researched and reviewed the software tools that were most popular with our peers, specifically the ALA (Association of Legal Administrators), ILTA (International Legal Technology Association) and the Toledo Group. We consistently heard positive reports about Best Authority by Levit & James, and reached out to them. Ian Levit, Vice President of Levit & James, responded, and we scheduled a demo. We made sure that both our IT staff and secretaries attended the presentation.

**W**e then formed an evaluation group, consisting of our Word Processing department and three prominent litigation secretaries, to test Best Authority for one month. During the pilot phase we required a few minor tweaks for some TOA requirements, which Colin Lowry at Levit & James accomplished by building a custom Best Authority scheme

for us. Right out of the box, Best Authority integrated seamlessly with Word, and operated flawlessly with the other applications we use.

**A**fter one month of testing Best Authority, our evaluation group came back with a very encouraging review, and in April 2010 we purchased Best Authority. Installation was fast, smooth and worry-free. After the brief testing phase, we rolled out Best Authority to all litigation secretaries and a number of attorneys. We also offered daily training classes, which were well attended. Foster Pepper has two offices in Washington State, in Seattle and Spokane, with approximately 110 attorneys and 125 employees. Levit & James is located across the country in Leesburg, VA. Even with the time zone difference and the size of our two offices, Levit & James was very helpful throughout the installation and rollout, with both training and support. They also trained us on how to customize the product for our own requirements. Our legal work is very time-sensitive, and it was crucial that Levit & James provided responsive service as well as a great product, which they most certainly did.

Best Authority has dramatically reduced the amount of time needed to create accurate TOAs. As importantly,

it has relieved the insecurity and reduced the pressure felt by the staff. Feedback from our secretaries and attorneys has been overwhelmingly positive.

As a Training Specialist, I want to ensure that people walk out of classes adequately trained to face real-world challenges back at their desks. Best Authority made my job easier. For example, one secretary attended training and then did not use Best Authority until a month later. She was able to build the TOA, but had forgotten some nuances of the software, and the attorney needed it “Now!” I showed the attorney and the secretary how easy it was to edit and then rebuild the TOA. A bit stunned, the attorney turned and said to me: “It *can't* be *that* easy.” With Best Authority, it actually *was* that easy.



**B**est Authority was rapidly adopted as Foster Pepper’s TOA creation and editing tool. Now the secretaries confidently generate a TOA within 15 minutes, as opposed to the three-plus hours it had previously required. The final TOAs our firm now produces are comprehensive and correct. Best Authority has not only helped us solve a productivity problem; it has enhanced the overall culture of our office, a benefit we did not foresee, but one for which we are very grateful.

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Go to <http://www.bestauthority.com> to:

- See our 5-minute video
- Request an evaluation
- Schedule a class
- Download our E-Learning modules

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