

Honest Feedback from Real Users of Document Management Software



Document Management

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Going Paperless Adds to Your Bottom Line

“Paperless office” has buzzed around the accounting profession for several years; the mere concept of “no paper” previously undermined the confidence of many an accounting professional. After all, there was security in all that pulp: a work product and sweat equity! Just as the Internet continuously migrates to a must-have professional tool, more accountants than ever before are beginning to see the value of the paperless office.

The bottom line is this: Going paperless just begins to describe the rich benefits of today’s document management software. There are many more reasons to take a look at how this category of software adds to your bottom line.

One obvious benefit is the ability for multiple employees to view or work on the same documents, sometimes simultaneously, all while the software tracks who made changes, who accessed a particular item, when the changes were made and what was done to the document. With document management software, gone are the days when an admin has to search for hours for a misplaced item or file. In addition, most software stores various versions of a document as it progresses. Don’t like the current version? Users can access the prior version, or even three versions back.

What about sending documents to clients? Again, employees no longer have to spend time tracking down a file, copying the requested material and sending it via snail mail or fax. Within the software, choices abound for sending clients their information: the usual print and mail, export to removable storage like a CD, attach to an email, send as a password-protected web-link, or even send to a client portal that is password protected. The best aspect is that one answer does not fit all – and options are plentiful. In fact, different clients may receive different styles of communication, depending on their needs. This is a dramatic improvement in client service and quick turnaround.

In hearing what various clients have to say about using document management software, an unexpected whisper came out: **Some firms have actually been able to reduce their personnel costs because these systems so dramatically improve office efficiency.** Apparently, employers don’t like to shout this information while migrating to a paperless office; however, it appears to be a real benefit, nonetheless.

Disaster recovery continues to be a focal point in this era of terrorism, floods, hurricanes and accidents of the plain ol’ garden variety, such as fires and sprinkler system floods. Document management software creates huge leaps of efficiency in its ability for an office to be back up and running very quickly. However, the software backup methodology varies widely; within the available mix is an ongoing backup, daily, nightly or some other interval set by the user. From there, options include onsite backup; backup to another network computer; and offsite Level 4 security, administrator and password-protected. This benefit alone makes document management a good investment.

Users also mentioned that irksome item – the absent employee. If your firm is under deadline during tax season and no one knows the location or status of the “Jones” return, much time and effort goes into retracing steps and recreating information. Document management programs eliminate the issue. All documents, including prior-year information, notes, emails – in fact, anything that can be printed or scanned – are located in one electronic file that is easy to locate, search and read.

When evaluating software, it is important to determine if various programs interface with your current tax software. Some programs are purely independent and interface with any other software, while others integrate well with existing programs in your practice. Depending on your office, there could be benefits either way.

Not sold yet? Read some of the user quotes in the accompanying articles. You will see a wealth of real-world information about satisfaction, improved efficiency, peace of mind and even company growth due to newly developed billable hours from eliminating stacks of paper.

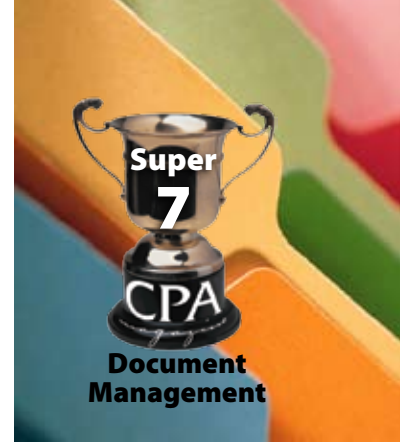
While “paperless” is the buzzword, any person whose expertise lies in financial efficiencies should be able to see that this is a trend whose time has definitely come – and the outcome is more time for busy professionals.

By Alysia McDonald

... By Practitioners December/March 2007

Integrating Tax Preparation and Return Storage

An innovative cabinet, drawer and folder structure enables users to recreate paper-based storage taxonomies in a technology-driven environment.



By Tom Johansmeyer

What Users Say

The ArkWorks document management solution, a product of TaxWorks, provides a rapidly installed, easy-to-use storage and records management solution for smaller- and medium-sized businesses that have pressing business requirements without a substantial technology budget to support a full implementation. With folder templates, repeating subfolders (another template feature) and other accelerators, tax and accounting professionals can reduce the time and cost of putting ArkWorks into action. An innovative cabinet, drawer and folder structure enables users to recreate paper-based storage taxonomies in a technology-driven environment.

Benefits and Features

- ArkWorks is preconfigured to integrate with the TaxWorks suite of products, facilitating the storage of tax records pertaining to specific client tax filing status.
- Document retention and management aligns closely with normal business activity.
- The cabinet-creation feature flows into the configuration of drawers and folders based on traditional tax practice needs, such as folders for previous years, various document types and correspondence exchanged with clients.
- A rapid installation process does not require the expertise of technology consultants or other information technology professionals, except in a networked environment. Practitioners can begin to use the software immediately, accelerating the realization of a return on investment.
- Scanners can be configured for direct use with ArkWorks, with specific document features assigned for each new item to be added to the archive. Once configured, a scanner can be used repeatedly.
- An import tool reduces the time needed to populate the archive with previous years' tax records from TaxWorks. A status window indicates the number of records converted, skipped and archived.
- Navigation is restricted to basic buttons and menu items that relate directly to specific functionality, instead of cluttering the screen with ancillary features not related directly to the tasks of document storage and retrieval.

Support

ArkWorks offers email and toll-free telephone support to all users. In addition, the online "Download Center" allows users to experiment with new software packages and features before deciding to purchase and implement them. Add-ons, upgrades and other utilities are available for download as well, empowering practice managers to enhance their use of the ArkWorks solution. Recent updates include improved user and security tools, custom icons and batch processing.

Summary

The storage, retention and management of tax records can be vital to the ongoing success of a tax practice, making the selection of document management software a significant business decision. ArkWorks integrates tightly with TaxWorks, resulting in a seamless process for managing tax records for clients with different filing statuses from one year to the next.

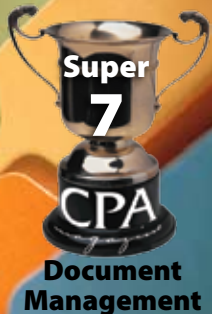
Mary L. from San Francisco, Calif. said, "This is so much easier to use than the one that I had last year, it is laid out so that I can see everything right on the screen, and the search function has come in handy so many times! I can't even begin to describe how much this has helped me."

Kim B. From Denver, Colo. said, "I was reluctant to switch from my filing system to a paperless office option, but after looking at the way it was laid out, I decided that now was the time for me to make the leap in technology. I am so glad I did! The process of switching to this went very smooth and the support in training my staff was second to none. We now can find the documents that we need in a matter of seconds."

ArkWorks Document Management

www.ark-works.com

800-706-8261



One-Screen Options Streamline Processes

The audit function does a great job of tracking all documents detailing anyone who viewed, edited or handled the document in some fashion.

By Alysia McDonald

What Users Say

Stuart Cook, network administrator, Maxwell, Locke & Ritter, said ProSystem *fx* Document met all of his company's requirements. "We were concerned with security, mainly from the point of view of accidental deletion or dragging something to the wrong folder. Another big concern was document retention. We needed something that could automate the whole process so that documents would be retained for appropriate periods and then purged appropriately."

Mike Johnson, O'Sullivan Creel, experienced immediate benefits in his specialty areas. "Our ability to develop niches and drive our expertise in areas of specialization is much better; even if a specialist within a certain category isn't in my office, the information is still right in front of them and he or she can respond with feedback immediately."

CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business
www.tax.cchgroup.com
800-630-2218

ProSystem *fx* Document offers complete document management and paperless office benefits, with a focus on integration with the ProSystem *fx* suite and Microsoft Office products.

Workflow integration is apparent with one-screen customizable options, including such areas as Engagement, Messages, Document, Discussion, Recently Accessed Documents, Calendar and more. This capability includes adding other ProSystem *fx* applications, such as ProSystem *fx* Tax and ProSystem *fx* Practice, available in Release 3.0. Release 3.0 also includes a Document Drive with complete Microsoft Explorer functionality, enabling the user to work offline.



CCH

a Wolters Kluwer business

Benefits and Features

- Searches for documents, clients and key words are all on one screen. Users with multiple offices can search among any combination of offices from one screen. All of these options can be used in combination with one another.
- The Records Management function provides retention of unalterable copies during the required retention period, plus easy destruction when the retention period ends. A one-time retention period setup creates expiration dates so that documents can be eliminated at the appropriate time, another timesaver for busy staff who no longer have to remember to find and purge files.
- The Client Portal module allows secure document sharing and communication with clients via a secure client portal, with any document instantly available. Documents can be viewed from any computer that has Internet access.
- Document enables indexing and publishing from virtually any existing firm application directly to the Document Manager module. The Manager module creates the ability to index, store, search and retrieve all electronic files anywhere in the firm.
- The audit function does a great job of tracking all documents to detail anyone who viewed an item, edited it or handled the document in some fashion.

Support

ProSystem *fx* Document includes a client survey to evaluate existing hardware and software, personnel availability, training needs, technology understanding, and other implementation issues, including a one-time setup of retention policies to establish protocol for documents as they are added to the system. The base price is \$1,825, with \$475 for each additional user, minus any applicable discounts.

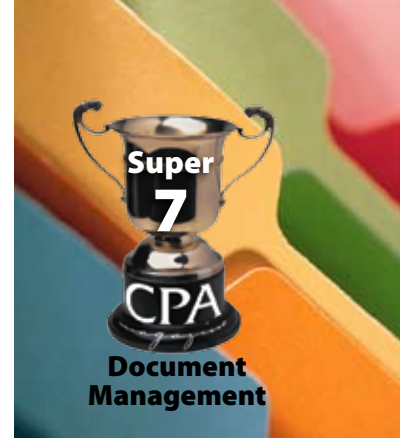
The company offers toll-free telephone support, along with extensive online support, during business hours; extended hours are offered during tax season. A 24-hour customer support mailbox is accessible by login. The support team also will schedule time after hours or on weekends to assist with upgrades or other customer needs. Users may download updates between CD releases.

Summary

ProSystem *fx* Document is a well-designed module that integrates into the ProSystem product line. Users with the existing software should consider the smooth integration and enhanced customer service of one vendor providing all software and support.

Published and Unpublished Docs Handled Separately

Doc.It manages collections of work-in-progress in a unique Binder format and stores the finalized version in a secure PDF Archive.



By Alysia McDonald

Doc.It Suite 2.0 differentiates itself in the document management arena by providing a very strong focus on up-front planning, support, training and customer service. For example, Doc.It Corp. will respond to each client support request within four business hours of the initial call or email, and resolve all issues where changes are not required to the program within eight business hours.



Doc.It seeks to anticipate the unique requirements of each individual client, offering implementation strategies to meet their needs. Planning for potential outcomes and training staff are two vital steps to implementing this product, with significant benefits derived from planning the process up front. The company just added a Workflow Management system that enables detailed tracking of engagements, including personal tax.

Benefits and Features

- A key differentiator of Doc.It is that it handles published and unpublished documents separately. A unique Binder interface allows processing of “unpublished” or active documents. Once the client engagement is complete, the “published” or final document is stored in a locked-down PDF format in a secure separate Archive. Automatic version control tracks documents and assigns a version code.
- The Doc.It Flow application includes several components, including the Workflow Manager, Work in Progress Binder, Web Client Portal (the firm’s clients can view documents on secure website), Bookmark Editor (documents are rolled into a single PDF with edit capabilities) and Advance Forms Recognition (scanned or printed documents are recognized without separator pages).
- The product runs on existing Microsoft (MS) Windows servers, eliminating any need for SQL hardware and licenses. This software uses a folder system familiar to all accountants.
- Doc.It allows the user to add diary-style notes, electronically sign documents and mark individual pages.

Support

Pricing is based on a per-user monthly subscription model and includes all updates, modules and support at no additional cost. Software installation includes remote support and takes place approximately one week before user training. During training, there is an emphasis on implementation customized to the firm’s individual requirements.

Training is typically done at the user premises, with up to 10 employees trained at per session; however, web-based training is also available through direct links to the client’s computers. Support is available 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Eastern Time. If an issue cannot be resolved via phone or email, the company provides remote diagnostics through a direct connection with the client computer.

Summary

The creators of Doc.It Suite 2.0 have expended considerable effort focusing on the unique challenges that each customer encounters in moving toward a paperless office.

What Users Say

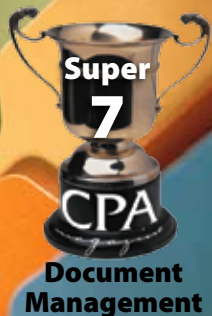
Sean Haggerty, COO, SB Partners, stated, “After a lengthy search process, our team discovered Doc.It. Our challenge was to find a solution that was cost-effective and productive. Doc.It® managed to go one better: simplify our business.”

Karl Springer, Middleton, Burns & Davis PC, stated, “The Doc.It Archive was one of our primary reasons for our office to change. Doc.It gave us a more organized structure within a secure environment.”

Jim VanTassel, CA, partner, Thornton McCain LLP, said, “It’s hard to fully appreciate in a few comments the extent of the impact Doc.It has made in our office. Suffice it to say that we feel it is the most significant piece of software introduced into our office since the advent of income tax preparation software. Its effect on operating efficiencies has been enormous!”

Jeff Ostrow, CA, partner, Hyatt Lassaline, LLP, said, “We interviewed two other firms providing similar products, but through it all, it was clear that Doc.It was the only company to truly understand the paper flow of an accounting firm. That made setup and transition much easier.”

Doc.It Corp.
www.doc-it.net
888-693-6248



Non-Encrypted Files and Strong Backup Create Peace of Mind

The audit function does a great job of tracking all documents detailing anyone who viewed, edited or handled the document in some fashion.

By Alysia McDonald

What Users Say

Rudi Thomas Floyd, CLU, ChFC, CFP®, MSFS, Chartered Financial Services, believes in the resulting paperless office. “eFileCabinet is the right way to go for anyone considering going paperless at this time. If you are not thinking about going paperless you should be ... eFileCabinet beats jerry-rigged alternatives hands down!”

Ernie Mayhorn, Mayhorn Financial Services, grew his business by using the product. “By using eFileCabinet this season, we went from 600 to 1,000 clients.”

Carol Stringham, office manager, likes her organized workflow. “I can retrieve information instantly. I provide better service and my clients know I’m incredibly organized.”

eFileCabinet
www.efilecabinet.com
877-574-5505

Through a “drawer” organizational system similar to a file cabinet, eFileCabinet opens to a series of file names designated by the user. The reviewed sample used client names for document organization, searchable by client name, part of name, client number, zip code or any other search names. Once searched, all related documents pop up, organized by year, function or any other template selected/created by the user.



eFileCabinet operates independently of any particular tax product, uses software in any industry, and customizes itself for any industry. If a user changes software, files can still be used. Automatic backup is integrated through three options: to another computer in the network, a removable device or an Internet-based system remotely located at eFileCabinet for immediate disaster recovery. A useful scanning program is shipped with the software, which integrates with the user’s scanner or network to retrieve scanned documents into the system. And, because files are stored in their original formats instead of being encrypted, backup files can be read on other computers outside the original database – an important consideration if the original database or computer becomes corrupted.

Benefits and Features

- eFileCabinet installs as a “printer” on user computers and everyone on the network has the capability to select a document, choose eFileCabinet as the printer and have the document sent as a permanent, non-changeable PDF to the software.
- A Lost and Found button allows the software to go to the backup files and compare documents, including the ability to find deleted and previous version documents.
- The system allows multiple types of file cabinets for different purposes. For example, separate cabinets could store clients; a separate business; and expense reports or perhaps travel arrangements, including hotel reservations, airline tickets and seminar registrations. Users simply open a specific cabinet for the appropriate function.
- Templates ship with the software, such as client folders with taxes organized by year. The user can also endlessly customize templates for his or her own company.

Support

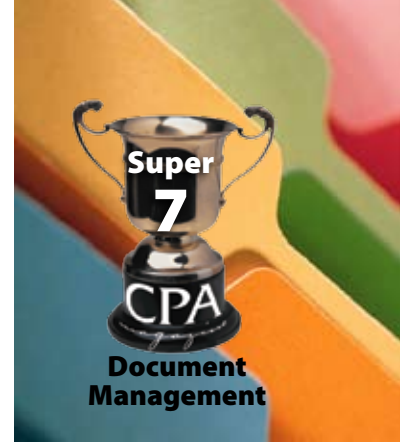
Pricing begins at \$1,700 for up to five workstations. Additional stations are \$100 each. The annual renewal fee is a flat \$300 for every 10 stations. Pricing includes all updates and unlimited support via email, telephone and/or live chat. Support is available 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mountain Time, with extended hours during tax season. Users receive the software via a CD with updates over the Internet. Using the telephone, technical personnel walk the customer through the installation process. This system also includes customer client list conversion: the software secures client names and addresses from existing tax software and converts it to eFileCabinet. Support personnel customize the file folders for each customer depending on his or her particular needs.

Summary

eFileCabinet provides a wealth of options, allowing strong customization and peace of mind through well-planned backup functions. The non-proprietary nature makes it usable with any software.

Templates Create Consistent Sets of Folders

When importing from Lacerte Tax or Tax Planner, the software automatically imports the same client passwords.



By Alysia McDonald

Lacerte DMS focuses on ease of use and convenience, with a company philosophy that the focus on document management should be to put your hands on a document in seconds. This program does just that through its ability to set up filters to find and use documents.

Benefits and Features

- DMS allows the user to set up templates that automatically create a consistent set of folders and subfolders for each client. Users can locate files quickly, even if they don't know the exact file name. Conversely, users can search by document name, including category, date, type or size. When a client needs a document, the user does not have to open the file; just select the document within the DMS program and click either email or fax to send the file.
- Like many document management programs, DMS opens documents in their original application, and when you save an edited document, DMS automatically stores the new version. Documents can be viewed (though not edited) by multiple employees simultaneously.
- DMS integrates, and is specifically designed to coordinate, with Lacerte's or Intuit's own tax programs; however, DMS also uses any document in a PDF format.
- When importing from Lacerte Tax or Tax Planner, the software automatically imports the same client passwords. The entire database also can be password-protected. Existing client information is automatically updated in DMS.
- DMS allows users to add individual files, or hundreds at once, with a simple drag-and-drop from anywhere in Microsoft Windows.
- DMS will continue to work as designed, even if the user stops purchasing future versions. The only exception is that older versions will not integrate with future-year tax programs.
- DMS can create custom categories for clients and documents that speed the process of finding documents. Some examples include Completed, In Process or other parameters the user selects.

Support

The \$450 price includes unlimited users and is available as a stand-alone or network version for the same price. U.S.-based free support is included in the price. To upgrade the product, simply renew for \$450 at the end of 12 months; however, there is no requirement to do this. The price also includes unlimited support through live Internet chat or toll-free telephone support from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Saturday. Tax season support expands to 24/7.

Summary

Lacerte DMS provides quick document location due to special filters and templates. The cost-competitive price and unlimited users within an office make it a great value in the document management software world.

What Users Say

Steven Brewer, CPA, Sizemore & Brewer, CPAs, appreciated the speed of operation resulting from Lacerte. "All of the workstations on our system have the Lacerte DMS program; now, information can be accessed in half of the time. Our office has two years of returns and supporting documents in the system. As a result, we cut our file storage in half."

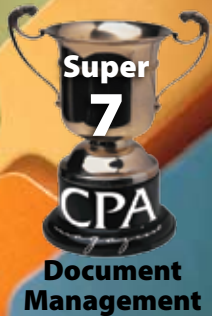
William Murray, CFP®, benefited from better work organization. "After two years of adding Lacerte DMS to my office, I am better organized, my work is easier and my clients enjoy the fact that I can provide all their documents with a touch of a button. With Lacerte DMS, everything is just a mouse-click away."

Janet Shriver, Buelow Financial Group, enjoyed the convenience. "At first I thought the biggest reasons for using Lacerte DMS would be space and cost savings. However, I find the real benefit is convenience. Being a tax and financial office, it's awesome to be able to find all a client's records at any time without leaving an office."

Intuit

www.lacertesoftware.com

800-765-4065



Browser-Based Program Eases Learning Curve

For multi-office businesses, the technology architecture facilitates collaboration from remote locations.

By Tom Johansmeyer

What Users Say

Marco Alcala, Alcala Consulting CEO, said, "Laserfiche is very easy for us to integrate with any work environment. Accounting firms rely heavily on their ability to serve their clients, so when they find a way to do it more efficiently, they're very grateful."

Donald Wood, president of Pasadena-based CPA firm Wood Weisinger Sacdalan & Associates, uses Laserfiche for peace of mind. "Identity theft is a big issue. We've always been discreet, but if critical information is sitting in a file cabinet somewhere, you have no guarantee it won't fall into malicious hands. All of the digital records are password-protected. It's a comfort knowing I can fully safeguard my clients' personal information."

Sue Yen Leo runs Leo Pelletier & Wu, an Alhambra, Calif.-based CPA firm. She had been running a successful business since 1985, but loose paper around the office still proved problematic from time to time. "Laserfiche helps me stay organized," Ms. Leo said. "Instead of having a bunch of paper floating around my desk, I see something on the computer screen and instantly file it where it needs to be."

Laserfiche Document Management
www.laserfiche.com
800-985-8533

The Laserfiche Document Management system provides an integrated solution for electronic records management, privacy protection, scanning paper into digital format and facilitating rapid access to archives. Through an intuitive user interface, Laserfiche focuses its business around document management rather than forcing a firm's staff to adapt existing operations to a specific technology solution.

Benefits and Features

- Laserfiche's browser-based user interface results in a lower learning curve and quicker gains in employee productivity, ultimately yielding a faster ROI. Users work with a familiar web environment instead of having to study the intricacies of a new software application.

Laserfiche
Run Smarter

- Designed to be deployed in days rather than weeks, the easier implementation process yields a lower total cost of ownership and mitigates the risk of managing a cumbersome technology project. The web-based interface eliminates the need for resource-intensive, fat-client software

installations across a firm or company.

- Flexible features enable customizations of Laserfiche to address company-specific workflows and other organizational requirements. Consequently, software conforms to the needs of the business, keeping the solution unobtrusive while still meeting plenty of document management challenges.
- Laserfiche's functionality resembles traditional paper-oriented storage and archiving tendencies; this leads to faster adoption of the software and less change to the existing operating environment.
- For multi-office businesses, the technology architecture facilitates collaboration from remote locations. The software's design provides for centralized system maintenance, and management and federated deployment to the business user community.
- Security features contribute to regulatory compliance mandates, preserve privacy and limit access to certain types of documents and folder structures. With these features, employees can reach records they need.

Support

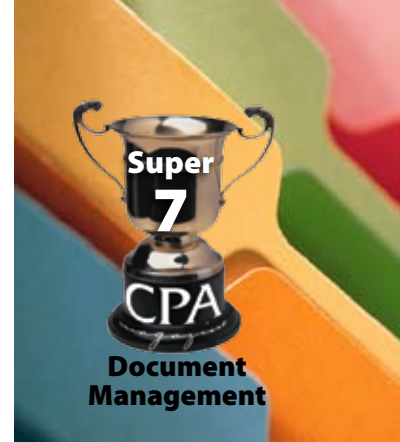
Laserfiche offers a variety of support alternatives to respond to user problems and foster more effective use of the software. Ongoing learning is available through regional training workshops, online forums, user conferences and webinars. The Laserfiche Software Assurance Plan (LSAP) provides a wide range of support services, from traditional call centers to online and onsite assistance. Regular software updates provide targeted bug resolutions and new features and are freely available through LSAP.

Summary

Document management is a support activity, requiring a clear efficiency case to justify the investment. As document management is mandatory in the current regulatory climate, it falls to businesses to make judicious selections. Laserfiche's rapidly deployable and easily adopted document management solution addresses the core challenges that businesses face in conjunction with managing records archives – satisfying the need while providing an internal competitive advantage.

Web-Based Product Offers Improved Disaster Recovery

The Best Practices guidebook saves time because users don't have to reinvent the wheel.



By Alysia McDonald

With last year's purchase of GoFileRoom from Immediatech, Thomson Corporation added to its wide variety of software by addressing document management and workflow solutions geared to mid-market and large CPA firms, specifically those with 35 or more employees.

An important aspect of this system is that it is a web-hosted and a subscription-based service. For the user, this translates into quick implementation, decreased cost of ownership and controlled risk due to excellent disaster recovery. Users may access any document from virtually any PC with an Internet connection. The system's sophisticated security eliminates the inherent risks of in-house document management through two secure and robust IBM data centers.



Benefits and Features

- GoFileRoom uses a virtual file room configuration for all documents, regardless of where they originate. In each drawer, the user can define as many names or paperless files as he or she wishes. Opening the virtual drawer allows three easy options: search, add or TaxFlow. The product is fully text and content searchable. For example, searching by keyword returns every single instance of a word within a document, regardless whether it is five or 50 pages.
- A very useful Best Practices guidebook accompanies the subscription. This 125-page binder was developed based on hundreds of client implementations to define optimal workflow processes, document indexing templates and much more.
- Similar to using an Internet search engine, GoFileRoom makes it easy to find any document. Information is searchable by fields you define: client name, client number, date, document type and other variables. Because the system uses optical character recognition technology, users also may search text in electronic documents, including email and attachments that integrate as easily as scanned documents.

Support

GoFileRoom provides a full help desk. There is no separate support fee; it is included in the monthly fee, replacing other systems' traditional license fee, and percentage of cost for maintenance and support. Support is available through email, telephone or online tutorials. Phone support is offered 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern Time, with live technicians who can email or call back. During tax season beginning Jan. 15, service expands to weekends, with weekdays expanded to 11 p.m., Eastern Time.

Summary

GoFileRoom offers seamless integration with core accounting technologies, including tax, audit, and time and billing/practice management applications. As an enterprise-wide solution, GoFileRoom can be used in client service departments, including tax, audit and litigation support, in addition to internal departments, such as Accounts Payable and Human Resources. A firm's workflow easily integrates with document management for maximum simplicity and ease of use.

What Users Say

Scott Stone, CIO, Carbis Walker LLP, found he saved quite a bit of time. "I can already see that we have increased our efficiencies with GoFileRoom by giving our employees the ability to access information when it is convenient for them; this will pay us dividends in the immediate and long term."

Steven J. Cupingood, CPA, a tax partner at Singer Lewak Greenbaum & Goldstein, enjoyed the efficiencies that flow from the product. "GoFileRoom is intuitive, easy to use and allows us to retrieve company information from multiple locations. In addition, TaxFlow is a huge asset; there is no need for paper routing sheets, no need for piles of files on desks and no more wasting time searching for specific client files."

Donn R. McMahan, tax partner at Jaynes, Reitmeier, Boyd & Therrell, PC, likes the stability and security. "Business continuity is a major benefit of GoFileRoom. Having offsite storage and continuous backup gives me a high level of comfort and allows us to know that if something did happen, we could still be up and running quickly."

Thomson Corporation
www.immediatech.com
866-463-4531