

Sustainable Document Management Strategies for Legal Practices

White Paper

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Developing Sustainable Strategies for Law Office Document Management

Sustainability is more than a buzzword. It is a vital pursuit that can benefit law firms of all sizes. It is more than turning off the lights when you leave a room or watching your office thermostat setting. Ultimately, it's about your business processes and their impacts. Such effects are evident in paper workflows. Documentary data is, after all, the lifeblood of all legal work. Sustainable document management is key to access improvements, operational improvement, and the impact of your firm on the planet.

The average law firm could use up to 100,000 sheets of paper yearly, from court filings and briefs to demand letters and invoices. Legal professionals might create dozens of new documents on a busy day. In such work environments, it can be easy to overlook the real impact of potentially wasteful practices. When waste runs rampant, costs can soar—all while you still face problems such as losing legal documents or striving to remain compliant.

Improved sustainability is vital, but changing how you operate can present challenges. By overcoming these hurdles, your firm can unlock critical benefits beyond savings by reshaping how you work. This white paper examines the need for improving document management and explores how workflow automation tools can help you unlock tangible benefits. As we progress, we'll examine some examples of modern document automation software and related tools available today.

Here's what to know about driving your firm towards a more sustainable future.

Assessing the Impact of Document Processes on Sustainability

How much could paperwork and related practices impact a law firm's sustainability? A closer look at the numbers tells a startling story. First, consider the statistic we mentioned about law firms creating 100,000 sheets of paper annually. That volume will naturally be higher at larger scales, especially for firms engaged in complex litigation. Producing, storing and retrieving such documents can demand large spaces requiring more resources, from power to personnel.



In one study of larger law firms, researchers found the organizations use more than 4,200 tons of paper annually—or nearly 10 million pounds. That’s about eight Boeing 737 jumbo jets’ worth of paper consumed by the study participants. Said differently, researchers calculated that each employee of participating firms had a personal carbon footprint of three tons of CO2. The studied firms had a carbon emissions footprint of a staggering 191,000 tons.

Even though these numbers have been declining gradually for several years, the environmental impacts and rates of material consumption remain high. Wasteful practices, such as unnecessary or repetitive printing, contribute to these impacts. That’s before we even begin to think about factors such as the amount of energy required to produce that paper in the first place—or what you pay for the real estate to store it all.

Some of these practices persist because firms may not have the tools or solutions to reduce paper consumption. Others simply haven’t identified this as an area of concern yet. However, there are gains from focusing on sustainability and remaking paper-based processes. There’s the potential for positive bottom-line impacts and cost savings, but it can also be good for your reputation.

Let’s zero in on those advantages.

Why Make a Change? The Advantages of Improving Document Sustainability

The most obvious and immediate benefit from a sustainability push is a reduction in material costs. With more controlled printing practices, law practices will use less paper. You can reduce the usage rate of expensive consumables such as inkjet ink or toner for laser printers. Printer maintenance is necessary less often, as is replacing printers and related devices. You may even be able to reduce the amount of physical document storage you have. All these contribute to lowering ongoing organizational expenses.

Transitioning to a more paperless office also creates opportunities for improved efficiency. Efficient filing and retrieval solutions boost productivity and efficiency. How many hours of valuable time has your team lost trying to locate misplaced documents? How often do different hard-copy versions of the same document confuse your teams? Effective digital document management in legal practices addresses these concerns.

Leaving paper-based processes behind also affords opportunities for improved work between teams. Your business can see big-picture benefits, but so can those doing the daily work. Digital documents provide better accessibility, especially for teams that include remote workers. Supporting a hybrid workforce is increasingly vital for law firms. The right legal document management software also provides collaboration opportunities, which can lead to faster, improved results.

Finally, you can also use investments in sustainability to demonstrate your firm’s commitment to social responsibility. Many firms value being good stewards and a positive force in the local community. Showcasing a reduced carbon footprint and investments in more eco-friendly business practices can reflect positively on your team.

It’s one thing to talk about sustainability, but putting digital document management into practice is another. What tools fit the bill? Solutions from Tungsten Automation, including [Power PDF](#), are what you need. Here’s why.

Solutions for a Sustainable Strategy for Document Management

There are many ways to approach sustainability. Enhancing how you apply technology to the problem can deliver excellent results. Investing in a document or content management system is the first step many firms take. Centralizing document storage makes it simpler to store and retrieve information promptly. CMS systems also simplify sharing documents across an organization or with clients in distant locations.

Workflow automation solutions such as [Tungsten TotalAgility](#) and [Tungsten Capture](#) also provide exciting opportunities for sustainability improvements. These solutions provide access to document intelligence and cognitive capture features that strip away much of the manual work associated with document digitization. For example, from the moment you capture a scan, you can build a workflow that extracts that data and moves everything to the appropriate systems.

However, you don’t need to invest in a larger-scale automation project to begin finding success with sustainability. There is fundamentally important software you can’t afford to overlook here: your PDF editor. As a gold standard format in the legal profession, offices might handle dozens or hundreds of PDFs daily. Tungsten Power PDF offers an array of features that are perfect for more sustainable operations.

What Can Power PDF Do for You?

Designed in part with the needs of the legal industry in mind, Power PDF is a popular choice. As the second largest PDF editing option for legal offices, many firms have already experienced how the program’s features make a difference. It has been a key asset in striving for sustainable and paperless processes. Consider a few features that make it a go-to choice for firms prioritizing improved operations.

First, Power PDF integrates seamlessly into an existing legal document management system (DMS). Easily streamline the flow of documents across workflows and computer systems. End reprinting and rescanning when you can instead capably work on your documents in an all-digital environment that syncs to your DMS automatically. Additional connectors and a software development kit (SDK) for extending Power PDF integration reside in the [Tungsten Marketplace](#). Customize your approach to suit your firm’s needs.

Next, users can comment on and mark up documents directly in Power PDF. Why print it all out for editing or workshopping papers when you can do it directly on the document? You can connect your teams using Power PDF, and save time, too. A built-in collaboration tool lets multiple users work on the same document in real time.

Support for secure cloud connections extends this functionality beyond the office network. Loop in remote or hybrid workers and further reduce your reliance on paper. Simplify version control while doing more to reduce your firm’s footprint.

Document assembly and management are simpler in Power PDF, too. You can see an entire document at a glance or use drag-and-drop functionality to reorder pages as needed. You can also convert other file formats and incorporate their data into your PDFs. There is no need to print and rescan when a quick conversion is all it takes.

Finally, [Power PDF](#) also supports electronic signature workflows. Its support for DocuSign and [Tungsten SignDoc](#) makes it versatile for replacing wet-ink signatures. With this solution, there’s no need to send large volumes of paperwork by mail or courier for signature. That translates into a more sustainable process in many respects while accelerating the speed at which your team can operate.

These specific features align with the goals of building a more sustainable operation, but Power PDF also has much more to offer law firms in general. For example, built-in support for Bates numbering further supports the paperless transition and adequate digital recordkeeping. Could finding cost savings and reducing environmental impact be as simple as adopting a better PDF editor? The answer is a solid yes.

Anticipating Resistance and Achieving Buy-In

From a high-level point of view, sustainability investments may make immediate sense. The benefits are plentiful, and you can carry them into the future. However, it is also necessary to consider the effects on those involved in the daily work. Achieving buy-in for potentially significant changes is critical. This is especially important when implementing more advanced workflow automation, such as orchestrating processes in TotalAgility. Even adopting Power PDF requires good communication.

Always emphasize that these tools aren't for replacing employee capabilities. Instead, they're a means to augment and support their work. Highlighting how Power PDF offers ease of use and a gentle learning curve is essential. So, too, is demonstrating how users will see actual benefits in their day-to-day work.

As you build more sustainable operations by making a digital transition, it is important not to overlook the need for better security. Power PDF includes a range of features designed to provide access controls, from encryption and passwords to document-specific rights controls. As you develop your strategy, proactively plan for how to keep sensitive legal data under wraps.

Set the Stage for Future Sustainability Today

Improving document management procedures in your law firm can reshape operations for the better. By focusing on the sustainability of your work, you can improve efficiency and reliability while lowering costs. Demonstrating social responsibility and a commitment to reducing paper waste also creates a positive image for your organization. Ultimately, you can point to successful sustainability efforts as a positive part of the impact your firm creates.

Sustainability is more than just an idea; it requires action and work. Digital collaboration helps reduce the need for repetitive printing and marking up paperwork. Electronic signature workflows provide a secure means of bypassing the physical mailing of documents. Even many courts today now use e-filing systems for briefs and motions. The right tools to interface with these functionalities are essential.

With Tungsten platforms, from [TotalAgility](#) and [RPA, Capture](#) and [ControlSuite](#), law firms have access to robust tools. Adding Tungsten Marketplace solutions tailor-made to address specific needs provides even more ways to approach solving for sustainability.

At a time when concern about carbon footprints continues to grow, and business speed accelerates, sustainable document management is critical. Consider how your organization approaches this problem today and explore how advanced workflow automation can be a game-changer.



About Tungsten Automation

Tungsten Automation, formerly Kofax, is the global leader in intelligent automation solutions with a trusted legacy of nearly 40 years, with a team of 2,000+ employees in 40 countries, serving 25,000+ global customers. Our dedication to innovation and customer success has earned us industry recognition, including being named a leader in Intelligent Automation (IA), Intelligent Document Processing (IDP) and Process Orchestration by top analysts. We are trusted to help businesses gain unprecedented efficiencies and reduce costs through AI-powered workflow automations that propel their businesses into the future.

To learn more, visit www.TungstenAutomation.com

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