

## CASE STUDY

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| INDUSTRY          | LAW (TRANSACTION AND LITIGATION)            |
| LOCATION          | WHISTLER AND SQUAMISH<br>BRITISH COLUMBIA   |
| COMPANY           | NICHOLAS DAVIES<br>WHISLTER LAW CORPORATION |
| ORGANIZATION SIZE | SMALL                                       |

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*"Once we had digitized our files, we filed and handled the PDF' in a rudimentary manner. ... MasterFile has exceeded all of our expectations both in terms of evidence management and operational requirements. ... We now use MasterFile for every file we open, whether the file is a litigation file or a transaction file.*

*MasterFile is intuitive. It is easy to learn the basics and start working productively. ...*

*We would strongly recommend that any law firm – large or small, litigation or transaction oriented – consider MasterFile for their document management needs.*

*We believe that MasterFile is superior to any of the other document management programs we investigated. Between acquisition, installation and training the move to the MasterFile database can be made at a fraction of the cost involved in acquiring other programs"*

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### COMPANY OVERVIEW

We are a small, boutique law firm located in a resort community. Our practice is limited to 3 areas – family law, commercial and construction litigation and business transactions. We pride ourselves on our ability to take on files presenting challenges either in the amount of documentation requiring management or the complexity of the legal issues involved.

Overhead costs in resort communities tend to be significantly higher than urban settings, while the pool of skilled support staff remains shallow. To reduce costs and increase staff productivity, several years ago we digitized all of our files and disposed of several hundred bankers boxes of file material. We continue to look for ways to practice in manner which is as paperless as possible.

More recently we have located our “physical plant” such as servers, staff, library and physical files to the nearest service community (where our staff tend to staff) while maintaining a boardroom style office in our home community.

## THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Once we had digitized our files, we filed and handled the PDFs in a rudimentary manner. However, it became apparent that our existing methods would not work when we were asked to assume conduct of the commercial arbitration of a construction project. We soon realized that our existing methods would not be adequate for the 22,000 pages of evidence involved.

At that point, we realized it was time to invest in a new server and a document management system. We needed a system that would handle both our evidence management requirements and our operational requirements. In terms of evidence management requirements, we needed a system that could produce a detailed chronology in a useful form, organize documents by date, type or related issue, assist with production of lists of documents and organize electronic images of documents for the hearing of the arbitration. We wanted a system that was easy to set up for each new matter, and which would accept evidence easily. We also wanted a database system that had a flexible structure that could be customized and changed as circumstances required.

Regarding operational requirements, we needed a system that would allow us to access our databases over the internet. We also wanted a system that would allow us to work remotely and could be relied upon to synchronize quickly and accurately upon return to our office. Finally, because we are a small firm we do not have an IT department or a large budget for training. So we needed a product that was easy to install, easy to learn and well supported.

## THE SOLUTION

When we first embarked on the search for a document management system, we realized that the “old reliables” simply would not be adequate. In fact, it has long been our view that the larger players in the industry are able to continue to market relatively archaic software because they know that many (but not all) larger law firms are too risk averse, and their management structures too cumbersome, to allow a change to a newer product even if that product is clearly superior. Being a small firm, we had the flexibility to acquire whatever system was in the best interests of our clients and our firm. At the same time, we dreaded the hours, direct cost and lost revenue that would be involved in assembling a suite of software products that would allow us to meet all of our objectives.

## WHY MASTERFILE WAS CHOSEN

We chose MasterFile because we believed that it would meet all of our evidence management objectives and all of our operational requirements. Not only were we pleased with our decision, but MasterFile has exceeded all of our expectations both in terms of evidence management and operational requirements.

There are several features which we believe made MasterFile the best choice for our firm. First, MasterFile does everything we need for evidence management. We have set up a series of template databases so that we are able to open a new database with particular features depending on the nature of the file. The evidence loading process can be simple or can be automated in several different ways depending on the number of pages and nature of the evidence. MasterFile will handle not only PDFs and TIFFs but virtually any electronic file that a computer can process. In our construction arbitration that was important as the evidence included several hundred files containing drawings and calculations produced by AutoCad and similar programs.

MasterFile allows us to set up timelines, topics, issues and document types and to then cross reference amongst dates, topics, issues, witnesses and parties. The structure of the database can be easily amended as our knowledge of the case evolves. One of MasterFile's particular strengths is the ability to look at the evidence in many different ways depending on the line of analysis one is pursuing.

## BENEFITS

Once we installed and started using MasterFile, we were immediately able to enjoy the benefits of the program. MasterFile is intuitive. It is easy to learn the basics and start working productively, and to increase one's level of sophistication with experience.

Once we had some experience with MasterFile we realized that its usefulness was not limited to litigation files having many pages of evidence. We now use MasterFile for every file we open, whether the file is a litigation file or a transaction file. MasterFile is also useful for matters which are not thought of as suitable for document management programs. For example, we are the Registered and Records Office for many limited companies. We use MasterFile to maintain the corporate records of our clients and were easily able to develop a database template for that purpose. We also use MasterFile to store our financial records.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

We would strongly recommend that any law firm – large or small, litigation or transaction oriented – consider MasterFile for their document management needs. We believe that MasterFile is superior to any of the other document management programs we investigated. We are particularly impressed by the ease with which we are able to operate remotely. Between acquisition, installation and training the move to the MasterFile database can be made at a fraction of the cost involved in acquiring other programs.

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This case study contains illustrations of how customers use MasterFile products and the results achieved. Many factors contributed to the results and benefits described. MasterFile and/or its customers do not guarantee the same or similar results for other customers.

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