

Title:

A Peek Into The World Of Hi-Tech Litigation Support

Word Count:

631

Summary:

At the heart of any legal undertaking is the mass of data that legal professionals need to perform their jobs. The demanding task of acquiring and organizing the documents that comprise this data is known as litigation support. It's a task that requires a high level of organizational ability and a painstaking attention to detail. And with these documents increasingly in electronic form, litigation support professionals need IT skills as well as legal and organisational expertise.

Keywords:

computer forensics, electronic discovery, litigation support, document imaging, document scanning, form processing

Article Body:

At the heart of any legal undertaking is the mass of data that legal professionals need to perform their jobs. The demanding job of acquiring and organizing the documents that comprise this data is known as litigation support. It's a demanding task that requires a high level of organizational ability and a painstaking attention to detail. And with these documents increasingly in electronic form, litigation support professionals need even more skills and knowledge.

The legal system runs on information. Any law suit or court case involves a veritable sea of documentation ranging from witness statements to affidavits to any documents that can be applied as evidence. And the legal system demands impeccable documentation with accuracy, security, integrity, speed and efficiency. The management of this rigorous process is known as litigation support.

Litigation support can be defined as any operation involving human and mechanical systems to process information for use by attorneys or expert consultants in preparation for a lawsuit or a trial. And in these high-tech times it's an especially demanding task.

Nowadays, a major part of such documentation is likely to be in electronic form and stored on a computer system. The retrieval and authentication of such digital documents is a field in itself and one of vital importance in a successful legal undertaking.

What's more, paper documents also have to be scanned and stored in digital format. This allows easy access to concerned parties. It's a process that demands impeccable organisation and supervision. Documents have to be tagged and indexed and stored in document management centers in a way that they're instantly retrievable.

Clearly people working in this field have to be skilled in both technology and law. And generally employees in firms that offer litigation support services are qualified paralegals.

The challenges of dealing with digital media are many. For one thing, there tends to be large volumes of such data and each document may have many copies or exist in several versions. Also electronic data is much more volatile than hard copy. So it requires special handling. What's more the data may be concealed or encrypted which demands special expertise.

Other than procedures such as the scanning, imaging, and indexing of documents, litigation support firms also provide such sophisticated activities as [electronic discovery and computer forensics](http://amdoc.com/scanning.shtml "electronic discovery and computer forensics"). These are essentially the same procedure - the retrieval of data from computer systems for a specific purpose. The difference is just in the reason for the retrieval; electronic discovery is for general purposes, while the term computer forensics is generally used when the retrieved information is for use in a law suit or in a court of law.

Forensic investigations could involve recovering hidden, damaged or corrupted files. Or perhaps decrypting password-protected or encrypted files, as well as recovering emails, chat data and other forms of online communication.

The range of crimes that might require these services is extremely wide ranging. Some examples are copyright infringement, money laundering, blackmail or corruption. In fact any crime in which relevant information is stored on a computer system. And in this day and age that could mean virtually anything.

The legal system depends on accurate and documented information in order to function so it's essential to have professionals take charge of this task. More and more data is now in digital form, so it's essential for litigation support

firms to be able to deal with this. And with data security becoming increasingly important in this wired world, the field of computer forensics is one that has to develop accordingly.