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Mishcon de Reya Customer Success Story

The Goal

In 2006, Mishcon de Reya embarked on a firm-wide Knowledge Management project with the help of external KM consultants. The project was to implement an Intranet and a Know-how database. As part of this project, the need for document automation became more and more apparent; it was seen as an essential part of the mix. "There was an appetite to streamline our work and manage our risk better", says Jenifer Howie, Director of Knowledge Services at Mishcon. During this project the firm also hired several Professional Support Lawyers, who created a substantial collection of precedents. It was important for Mishcon to really make the most of and exploit the increasing amount of content available to fee earners. One of the ways to do that is through document automation. Mishcon was also aiming to create greater firm-wide efficiencies and improve risk management. "Every law firm knows now that clients are increasingly scrutinising what they are doing - it's positive to show that as a firm we are efficient" says Sandra Smythe, Knowledge Manager at Mishcon.

*"I think it is fair to say that Contract Express
is really well embedded in the firm now"*

*Jenifer Howie, Director of Knowledge Services,
Mishcon De Reya*



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The Solution

During the initial evaluation process, Contract Express stood out as the document assembly solution of choice, "Contract Express was chosen over the other products as it is a very straight-forward, 'out of the box', immediate solution that was easy to implement" says Jenifer. The other options would have needed excessive customisation in order to work as the firm wanted. Another factor that entered into the decision making was the ease of use of the questionnaire which populates the document that is being automated, "It's cleaner and more straightforward in Contract Express" says Jenifer.

The first departments to use Contract Express at Mishcon were the Employment and Corporate groups. The modular structure of their precedents suits document automation well. When the first transaction type was automated it combined the precedent modules to form a suite that could generate ten different documents. "The fact that you didn't just have to automate documents one by one, on a stand-alone basis, was very helpful – we could automate the creation of suites of documents in a single process" says Sandra.

For example, when Mishcon's Corporate team automated their share purchase agreement they took an end-to-end view of the whole transaction. Rather than automating just the share purchase agreement, Mishcon created a package that manages the whole process; the heads of term, the share purchase agreement itself and all the auxiliary documents, board minutes, resolutions etc. A help sheet and guidance shows the lawyers what they need to do when using the system for the first time. Another area of work where document automation became really popular is that of defamation letters. The lawyer can simply input "Editor of [enter publication names]" which pulls in information from a look-up table that is kept updated on all the current newspaper editors. This was an ideal solution for the lawyers since the nature of these letters mean they have to go out immediately. Mishcon's lawyers really appreciate the simplicity and efficiency of this process.

Both Jenifer and Sandra agree that the project greatly benefited from an initial enthusiastic group of people, "Many Professional Support Lawyers had seen automations in other law firms, so they could see the benefits and knew that it worked". Kevin Gold, Managing Partner at Mishcon de Reya, who signed off the project, was incredibly supportive and encouraging throughout and keen to get things done because he saw the potential benefits for the firm, and the heads of the Corporate and Employment groups particularly have also been very supportive. "I think they have benefited massively from document automation" says Jenifer.

The Result

"As soon as the documents were automated, people could see the process worked and that they looked good. Since then it has been consistently and successfully used" says Jenifer. Having decided to commit to Contract Express in the long term, Mishcon took the decision to skill up and keep the template set-up process in-house, "We decided it was better for us to have someone who could automate in-house" says Jenifer, "Sandra now manages the whole thing. The Professional Support Lawyers provide her with the documents they want to automate and Sandra is in charge of setting them up and maintaining them, as well as updating them when necessary". "Once a document is up and running, it's really easy to maintain" says Sandra. Her role has gradually expanded as she has got to know the solution and now includes introducing it to and training new lawyers in its use. Sandra is also in regular contact with the The Contract Express team support team, who she thinks are "One of the easiest companies that I have to work with in my day-to-day life. They make sure that any issues are resolved as quickly as possible. I've genuinely never had a problem that hasn't been solved, really quickly and pleasantly".

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Looking to the future

The use of Contract Express and automation is now really well embedded within the firm both within practice areas and business support functions and this allows for a future focus on using the software in innovative ways as well as expanding the existing offering to appropriate precedents and documents. There is a real desire to automate suitable documents and drive use across all areas of the firm and levels of users.

Going forward, Mishcon is looking to use Contract Express and automation more directly with clients and intends to look to further improve efficiencies by building document work flows across the whole of the business. "We are very conscious that we can do these things for any practice group now that we have the experience and the software" says Jenifer. The team of people able to mark-up documents and advise on best practice has recently been expanded. The software is considered integral in the range of tools available to help us to work efficiently internally and innovatively with and for clients.

For more information about Contract Express please see our website: contractexpress.com



Jenifer Howie
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