

Document Management Through “Intelligent Imaging” Provides Cornerstone To Data Integrity

Jackson Cross Partners (“JCP”) works with many corporate clients who are building, upgrading or maintaining their real estate information systems. With the experience of reviewing over 25,000 client files, JCP has developed processes and controls to insure the highest level of data integrity. Along the way, JCP has also identified critical areas in the document management process that can significantly increase the quality and efficiency of electronic document conversion and management.

Many corporations have undertaken scanning and creation of electronic document “warehouses” for reasons of disaster recovery, internal control and collaboration. When implementing such systems a major challenge is presented with capturing the historical documents for the system. In many cases, the company will contract with a scanning company (or employ temporary staff and equipment) to “power scan” complete files into the electronic form. Unfortunately, real estate files are sometimes the worst candidates for this approach. If the files contain multiple versions of Agreements, partially or unexecuted copies, as well as amendments or correspondence which might modify an Agreement, the resulting document pool becomes an electronic version of a file that needs to be organized and purged.

The process is further complicated when those performing the scanning are unfamiliar with the content of the files, and they may scan misfiled documents with the wrong property. This approach also presents difficulty in naming or “versioning” the electronic files since the operator may not know what they are actually scanning. In the end, what appears to be the fastest and cheapest approach (based on a cost per page comparison) yields a very bad result in the form of unusable or inaccurate electronic documents.

JCP has developed a process called “Intelligent Imaging” which implements a file review and document coding process BEFORE imaging. Implementing this approach for a major portfolio client reduced the actual pages scanned by almost 90%. With an experienced and trained team of attorneys, law students and property professionals, JCP works with the client to identify the key and critical documents in a file that need to be scanned. The process also includes development of customized document naming conventions that can include unique property identifiers, document type, date and other client information if required.

The file review and preparation process is followed by scanning the selected documents using high definition imaging equipment, that is capable of adjusting to variable sized originals and has software to enhance the quality of poor originals. Quality control is performed on EVERY page, including a page count of each document to make sure that no pages were missed, scanned together or cut off.

Through out this process, JCP staff actually performs a File Review for each client file. We develop and maintain exception reports for the client of missing, unexecuted or incomplete documents and provide a weekly folder of misfiled documents for anything discovered in the wrong files. This added benefit of auditing and cleaning up the paper files has proven to be a valuable benefit for our clients.

The JCP Intelligent Imaging process provides the highest possible level of quality for the electronic documents. It eliminates unnecessary documents and scanning, and provides an excellent internal control on historical files. A number of our clients continue to use our process for ongoing maintenance as files are amended or new properties are added.

One major question that is asked is whether this process can be done “on site” since most clients are highly concerned with taking files off site. While it is possible, the key advantage to this process is the experienced and deep workforce we have developed. Doing a project at our King of Prussia, PA headquarters is the most efficient and least expensive option. Our imaging partner The MCS Group is a bonded servicer of the medical records and litigation industries with a twenty five year track record. For a recently completed project for McDonald’s USA, we shipped, received, processed and returned over 16,000 files (4,000+ boxes) without incident. Our proprietary workflow and inventory system REViewer provides us instant identification of a files location. During the 2.5 year project, we responded to over 800 requests for immediate file returns that were needed. Any requests received up to 4:45 ET, were received by the client the next morning.

After final QC review of the electronic documents, we provide the clients with a back-up DVD for each batch. We also have the capability to provide an electronic “load file” to the client’s document storage system (provided such system can accept a batch upload) which significantly reduces the cost and improves the speed of populating the data warehouse. In the case of McDonald’s this involved over 1,000,000 pages uploaded, error free.

For companies that are undertaking imaging of real estate documents it is important to recognize that these documents may be different than other business files. The unique issues and nuances of a deal can change dramatically over the course of time. Investing the time and effort and enlisting the right partner to gather this historical information provides the basis for abstracting to a property database, enforcing rights and obligations on your property and managing risk. Having done work for clients such as McDonald’s, GE, Chevron and a number of smaller firms, we understand the importance of quality control, efficient process and “first time final” work product.

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