

Boies, Schiller & Flexner

Boies, Schiller & Flexner Increases Control, Productivity with Captaris RightFax

“RightFax is the best thing that has happened to the Firm in terms of outside software,” Mike Flanagan, Boies, Schiller & Flexner

Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP specializes in commercial litigation and international arbitration. With 200 lawyers and more than 470 employees total, the Firm also represents corporate clients and financial institutions in significant merger and acquisition and project financing transactions.

While the Firm maintains headquarters in New York, it manages 15 locations across the U.S., including offices in California, Florida, New Hampshire, New York and Washington, D.C. Among its clientele: CBS, DuPont, Ernst & Young, Miller Brewing, Napster, Philip Morris, Owest Communications, Siemens Westinghouse, New York Yankees and other enterprise organizations.

THE CHALLENGE

“It was insanity.” Strong, emotion-filled words accompany Mike Flanagan’s description of the Firm’s previous manual fax system. As Managing Clerk in the Boies, Schiller & Flexner Armonk headquarters office, Flanagan is responsible to ensure attorneys receive pleadings and other documents quickly and copies are stored in a central, accessible location.

Flanagan elaborated, “Managing manual fax machines and paper faxes became a challenging process as our firm grew.” While the Armonk, New York office now houses 40 lawyers and 40 support staff, it grew to that size from just a few attorneys in the period of only a year-and-a-half. “The office was growing exponentially while the infrastructure was creeping along,” Flanagan explained.

On average, the Armonk office receives hundreds of faxed pages every day. Recent tracking numbered inbound and outbound fax traffic to exceed 211,000 pages over the course of less than a year.

With the manual faxing system, all faxes were delivered via two machines at a main number. “The machines were busy all the time,” Flanagan said. “There were delays and people couldn’t get faxes through easily.” Like other law firms, Boies Schiller & Flexner depends on faxing as one of the most critical parts of its communication process. “It’s the way we get information and serve our clients,” Flanagan said.

Compared to email, faxes are more tangible and professional (with printing on letterhead) for use as exhibits and communication for court proceedings. As such, many documents necessitate quick attention and distribution-requirements that, especially through a manual process-are extensive and time-consuming.

Flanagan illustrated: “Each paralegal spent half their time just handling faxes. They had to monitor the paper fax machine, check distribution lists, then re-fax the document to several other lawyers at various locations.” Sometimes, Flanagan related, this would mean receiving a 100-page fax and immediately turning around to re-fax 100 pages to several contacts-a process he described as a “nightmare.”

Document management also involved making several copies for distribution within the office itself and for storage in the filing system. Besides copying faxes for transmittal or mailing to other offices, “We finally had to hire a messenger to run back and forth between the two Armonk buildings to deliver paper copies,” Flanagan said.

Storing and finding hard copies in the file room was a challenge in itself. One recent case resulted in paperwork filling more than 600 boxes full of documents. “It would often take 20 minutes to 2 hours to find a paper in the file system,” Flanagan explained. Since it is a common occurrence for files to be accessed and prepared for trials and hearings, retrieving files from stacks of boxes added up to substantial productivity challenges and time delays for time-sensitive processes.

Still, handling of urgent documents is status quo in the legal industry, even after-hours and on weekends. Flanagan explained, "It is common practice in the legal field to send or receive faxes on a Friday night that require a response by Monday morning." With a manual fax process and minimal staff coverage for evenings and weekends, the staff faced a hectic start to the workweek. "We would come in on Monday morning to 300 or 400 faxes sitting on our fax machines," Flanagan said. "Half of our day would be spent figuring out where the faxes needed to go." Unfortunately, in some cases, the influx made it challenging to meet Monday deadlines.

Additional challenges accompanied the manual fax process, including complexity of capturing costs for reporting to clients. "Due to the difficulty of tracking so many pages, we were not recouping the costs related to faxing," Flanagan said.

In all, the firm wanted to take control of its fax process-doing so would lead to increased productivity and cost-savings.

THE SOLUTION

"RightFax was the end of the insanity," Flanagan sighed. "It is the best thing that has happened to the firm in terms of outside software."

When the Armonk office moved to a new building in Fall 2002, management personnel discussed possible fax solutions. "They were thinking about installing at least 15 fax machines in the new space," Flanagan said. "I told them my clerk's office would not be responsible for the machines. I knew it would be a 'runaway train' system going from two machines to 15." He warned of lost faxes and high expenses-upwards of \$45,000 for the machines themselves along with hefty annual maintenance, long distance and toner costs. Not to mention the "cost" of consistent headaches to keep the machines running smoothly.

In comparison, Captaris RightFax, the leader in enterprise fax and e-document delivery, combines fax, email and Web technologies to provide a one-stop, full service solution. Rather than sending and receiving faxes manually, staff members manage faxes directly from their desktops as images that can be easily printed or electronically forwarded and/or stored for later retrieval.

While RightFax is capable of assigning individual direct-dial numbers to each attorney, Flanagan appreciates the ability to customize and control the system through a centralized fax number and location. All employees have access to RightFax, but the clerk's office handles most fax receipt and distribution, ensuring faxes are not lost; but, instead, quickly routed to all team members.

The new structure is straightforward: From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., all faxes are delivered to a main fax folder. The documents are reviewed by the managing clerk's office and distributed as needed. Through the electronic system, sending large documents to several contacts is a matter of a few clicks rather than the costly process of printing hundreds of pages and running them through fax machines multiple times to reach multiple contacts. "Productivity has gone up immensely for our department," Flanagan said. "Using RightFax, we save man-hours every week amounting to thousands of dollars per year."

After hours and on weekends, faxes are routed to a second folder. All employees have access to check and route faxes at any time, though the managing clerk's office stays on top of documents by alternating turns to manage distribution via laptops from home. "There is no more staying late nights or coming in on weekends to check the fax machine," Flanagan said.

In searching for a network fax solution, Flanagan reports, "I looked at other fax products, but always came back to RightFax." He attributes the effective system to RightFax features and expert consulting from Advantage Technologies, one of the country's leading integrators of fax server and automated document delivery solutions. Along with offering seasoned advice and several useful results, Advantage Technologies developed customized scripts to leverage RightFax integration with the Firm's Equifax billing system. The integration provides the billing department a simple method to review and itemize pertinent client faxing charges. "With the versatility of RightFax and patient, careful planning from Advantage Technologies, every possible issue was addressed," Flanagan said.

For instance-Flanagan shares-switching from a manual to electronic system, some partners were initially concerned they may not receive all their faxes. Thanks to an effective distribution process, “The same partners were overwhelmed the first couple days because they were getting too many faxes,” Flanagan said. Then, the clerk’s office conducted training on how to view faxes via email. The result: additional timesaving and improved morale for all employees. “Lawyers no longer have to sit at the office to wait for a fax,” Flanagan said. “They can drive home, have dinner, and then simply check their email to read faxes from home.” The accessibility also proves useful when attorneys are traveling.

Storing and retrieving faxes is also an easier process, as reported by Flanagan. “What used to take us up to two hours now takes us a few minutes,” he said. “With the computer sorting faxes automatically, the difference is exponential. Instead of running to sift through hundreds of papers, we can sit at our computers and organize or find files in a matter of minutes.” This especially comes in handy in comparison to old methods of searching for lost faxes. “Now, with RightFax, we can easily find electronic images of faxes and re-print pages that have been lost from the paper files.”

Increased efficiency and productivity have enabled Flanagan and his team to increase billable hours and focus on more strategic tasks. “The first few years with a manual fax system the managing clerk’s office was really the paper-chasing office,” Flanagan laughed. “We were close to zero percent billable time since we were mainly conducting office support and administrative tasks.” With RightFax, the team is accomplishing 30 to 60 percent billable time.

Because RightFax is so versatile and can integrate with a variety of applications as well as multifunction devices, Flanagan said the company is always finding new ways to use RightFax. For example, while the Firm has not yet put the system to action, it has integrated RightFax with Hewlett Packard 9100 Digital Senders, a solution for integrating paper documents into the messaging and RightFax document management system. The joint solution will help the Firm transition to a paperless system as courts do so.

Lastly, along with productivity enhancements, the Firm has increased cost recovery. “RightFax is a cost effective system,” Flanagan said. “Since our users can use RightFax to assign client codes, it has helped us track and recover phone costs.” In fact, Flanagan estimated, “RightFax has likely paid for itself within the first year based simply on this cost recovery.”

About Advantage Technologies

Advantage Technologies, Inc. is one of the country’s leading integrators of fax server and automated document delivery systems. Advantage Technologies, Inc is a Platinum level RightFax Partner and has completed thousands of successful fax server installations worldwide. The company supports hundreds of RightFax end users and strategic partners through the US and over seas. For more information about Advantage Technologies, Inc. and the RightFax products services, please visit www.atechnologies.com or call the company Toll Free at 866-730-1700 to speak with a product specialist.