

The Veen Firm, P.C.

Successful law firm adopts Adobe® Acrobat® Professional software and Adobe PDF for fast, efficient case review and preparation

THE VEEN FIRM

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INDUSTRY

Legal

CHALLENGES

- Successfully compete against larger law firms
- Improve management of tens of thousands of case documents
- Adopt technology standards that are easy for legal staff to use

SOLUTION

- Document collaboration

The Veen Firm is using Adobe Acrobat Professional and Adobe PDF to provide legal staff with fast, efficient access to case documents.

RESULTS

- Reduced annual personnel costs by thousands of dollars
- Accelerated time to retrieve relevant case documents by as much as 95%
- Streamlined case preparation process
- Enabled firm to improve its competitive edge and succeed against larger law firms

Building stronger cases

Technology advances are leveling the legal playing field, as smaller law firms effectively compete against larger firms in court and in winning new business. San Francisco-based The Veen Firm is a case in point. With just over 30 attorneys and support staff, the firm—which has a winning record representing the catastrophically injured—represents individuals in multi-million dollar suits ranging from construction injury litigation to product liability, industrial accidents, and corporate fraud.

“We’ve found that the right application of technology enables us to prepare stronger cases faster and with fewer support staff,” says Rich Ramba, litigation support administrator & paralegal at The Veen Firm. Central to the firm’s efforts is the use of Adobe Acrobat Professional software and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). “With Acrobat and Adobe PDF, legal staff can easily find relevant case documents in seconds,” he says.

The paper chase

A typical case handled by The Veen Firm can involve well over 10,000 pages of materials. Documents from clients, law enforcement agencies, medical providers, defendants, as well as other materials, need to be reviewed, stored, and quickly accessed. Traditionally the firm handled these materials like many other law firms—on paper.

The Veen Firm had multiple filing cabinets with drawers filled with paper for each case. Not only did the information have to be copied and filed, but it also often required reading, sorting, and rereading again. For example, to find references to an individual, place, or occurrence, legal staff would read through every document, flagging information. In many cases, uncovering one piece of information leads to other questions, prompting staff to reread materials for additional details.

“With cases having thousands of documents, we needed a better way to search through the information we had on hand,” says Miles Cooper, an attorney at The Veen Firm. “By transitioning from manual, paper-based workflows to more automated processes using Adobe PDF, we make better use of attorney and support staff time.”

Finding information in seconds, not days

Using Adobe Acrobat Professional software and Adobe Acrobat Capture® Cluster software, the firm is eliminating as much paper as possible from its everyday processes while giving staff quick, convenient access to case documents. For instance, the firm recently substituted as lead trial counsel for an ongoing catastrophic injury suit filed by another firm. With less than two months before trial and 12 boxes of information to read, sort, and categorize, the firm needed to get started right away.

“Previously, it would have taken weeks and multiple people just to catalog and organize the materials,” says Ramba. “But by scanning the materials and converting them to Adobe PDF documents, the case materials were organized in just two days.” The searchable Adobe PDF files are placed on a secure, central server at the firm where lawyers can easily find the materials they need in seconds.

“By searching across the case materials we have in Adobe PDF, we’ve quickly found materials to help refresh a witness’ memory in real-time, during a trial.”

Miles Cooper,
Attorney,
The Veen Firm

The platform- and application-independent Adobe PDF files retain the exact look of original documents, whether scanned from paper or converted from other software applications. This capability is vital to helping ensure that referenced evidence is acceptable in court. In many cases, related documents are combined into single, bookmarked Adobe PDF files, further streamlining staff access to information.

“Within seconds, we can search thousands of case documents in Adobe PDF and find the exact references we need,” says Ramba. “Acrobat and Adobe PDF boost our productivity and the quality of cases we prepare.”

In addition to quickly searching across case materials, The Veen Firm staff can use Acrobat Professional software to add electronic comments to case documents, without affecting the original content. Attorneys and paralegals can highlight interesting case information and add electronic notes to pages in Adobe PDF—two capabilities that are useful when communicating information across legal teams.

Making gains inside and outside of courts

The use of Adobe Acrobat Professional and Adobe PDF delivers solid returns for The Veen Firm and its clients. “By working with materials in Adobe PDF, we can prepare for depositions in a fraction of the time,” says Cooper. This is a big advantage for small and mid-sized firms in that they do not have to continually reallocate or hire temporary staff to accommodate changing case loads. Adds Ramba, “We can save significant staff time because fewer employees can prepare cases faster.”

In many Veen Firm cases, medical records are critical. These documents are commonly 2,000 pages or larger in size and come in multiple sets. Copying, sorting, and managing the documents was time consuming for staff. By placing medical records on the server in Adobe PDF, and on CD-ROM for distribution to experts, handling materials is easier for everyone. “This is just one benefit of using Acrobat and Adobe PDF,” says Ramba. “Overall, this efficiency saves us many thousands of dollars annually by streamlining case management.”

An additional advantage of using Acrobat Professional software and Adobe PDF is evident once an attorney steps inside court. Prior to court dates, The Veen Firm attorneys are given CD-ROMs containing all of the bookmarked, searchable Adobe PDF files. “We’ve been in situations where witnesses on the stand are having a hard time recalling information,” explains Cooper. “By searching across the case materials we have in Adobe PDF, we’ve quickly found materials to help refresh a witness’ memory in real-time, during a trial.”

In the future, The Veen Firm is looking to integrate more interactive elements, such as video and graphics created with the Adobe Video Collection software, into Adobe PDF files for use in courts. “We have some of the best attorneys and legal staff in the business,” says Ramba. “With Adobe solutions, we can better leverage our expertise to develop the strongest cases possible, without getting delayed by managing huge volumes of paper.”

SYSTEMS AT A GLANCE

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 - Adobe Acrobat Capture Cluster
 - Adobe Video Collection
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 - Adobe Photoshop CS2
 - Adobe Illustrator® CS2
-
- Platform: Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional

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