

The logo for Duane Morris, featuring the company name in a white serif font on a dark blue rectangular background.

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services—Legal

Customer Profile

Duane Morris LLP employs more than 725 attorneys in dozens of practices. The firm is headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and has offices in another 19 U.S. cities and three other countries.

Business Situation

Duane Morris wanted to reduce operational costs, improve collaboration and communication, position itself to retain top talent, and set the stage for a unified communications infrastructure.

Solution

Duane Morris is providing the 2007 Microsoft® Office system to its attorneys and other professionals. It is using Software Assurance benefits such as Training Vouchers, E-Learning, and the Home Use Program to expedite software adoption.

Benefits

- More productive and cost-efficient environment
- Greater opportunity for internal and external collaboration
- Ability to retain top legal talent
- Foundation for unified communications

Law Firm Improves Operational Efficiencies and Collaboration with Software Deployment

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John Sroka, Chief Information Officer, Duane Morris LLP

Founded in Philadelphia in 1904 and now operating worldwide, the law firm of Duane Morris LLP has a long tradition of promoting a culture of camaraderie and of maximizing client service while minimizing operational costs. Seeking to reduce costs even further, Duane Morris decided to migrate its desktop software from Microsoft® Office 2003 to the 2007 Microsoft Office system. With the help of Microsoft Software Assurance benefits such as Training Vouchers, E-Learning, and the Home Use Program, the firm is rolling out the 2007 Office system to its 1,600 employees throughout the United States and in Europe and Asia. As a result, Duane Morris is seeing productivity improvements, cost reductions, and stronger collaboration among employees and clients. The firm also is well positioned to retain top talent and has begun plans to implement a unified communications infrastructure.



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Situation

For more than a century, the Philadelphia-based law firm of Duane Morris has been recognized for its commitment to the ideals of partnership, consensus building, and dedication to client service. In recent decades, Duane Morris also has been recognized for its innovative use of information technology to further those ideals. In 2007, for example, *Law Technology News* named the firm's Chief Information Officer, John Sroka, as “IT Director of the Year.” The award was based on the firm's successful execution of such projects as centralizing and standardizing technology resources; building state-of-the-art data and network-operations centers; implementing an IP docketing and workflow system integrated with billing, document-management, and customer relationship management (CRM) applications; and advances in data security.

Not surprisingly, the more than 725 attorneys who work at Duane Morris or at one of its international affiliates in Europe and Asia enjoy access to a wealth of sophisticated research software, information-rich databases, and other specialized knowledge-sharing tools. In using these tools, the attorneys are supported by a team of onsite IT professionals who maintain the firm's technological and administrative infrastructure and enable the attorneys to focus on providing outstanding service to clients.

As always at Duane Morris, that service is distinguished by professionalism, judgment, and a commitment to providing the best value for the client's dollar. “In any economic climate, there is pressure on profitability, accompanied by far-reaching mandates from clients for operational efficiency,” Sroka says. “We must assure our clients that we are continually working to wring out every drop of non-value-add costs.”

Solution

With the help of a dedicated onsite resource from Microsoft Premier Support, Sroka and his team determined that the best way to demonstrate the firm's commitment to operational efficiency was to migrate the attorneys' desktops from Microsoft® Office 2003 software to Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2007. Sroka points to two primary factors that motivated the decision.

“Many of our clients had already made the move to Office 2007, so by doing the same we could improve collaboration with them,” Sroka explains. “Moreover, a move to Office 2007 would fit in with our longtime investments in Microsoft technologies and our ongoing pursuit of a unified communications infrastructure.”

Sroka and the attorneys at Duane Morris also liked that Payne Consulting Group, which provides the firm's primary legal tools and templates, was committed to Microsoft Office 2007. “One key moment was when Payne Consulting Group presented at a Microsoft CIO Council meeting and demonstrated what they were doing with Office 2007,” Sroka says. “This really helped to drive home the value of the technology for us.”

Sroka and a team of six IT professionals working part-time on the project launched the deployment of Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2007 by delivering it to a select group of pilot participants: 60 IT professionals, 10 marketing professionals, and 10 attorneys. The company collected feedback from members of the pilot group over a period of several months, while concurrently purchasing new PCs firm-wide to provide employees with some of the latest tools available preloaded, including the 2007 Office system. According to Mike Rivera, Technical Training Manager, the deployment is proceeding on an office-by-office basis so

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Mike Rivera, Technical Training Manager,
Duane Morris LLP

as to avoid interrupting operations throughout an entire department.

In addition to Office Professional Plus 2007, the Duane Morris deployment image includes templates, shortcuts, macro suites, pleading formats, and other legal-specific documents and tools, as well as the latest release of line-of-business systems for customer relationship and document management. Rivera explains that feedback collected from the pilot group has led the firm to make customized business process improvements in the standard image. To streamline the deployment, the team is using several Microsoft server products and Office add-ins.

For training on the new desktop, Sroka and Rivera are providing employees with customized flip charts containing hints on how to use the Office Fluent™ Ribbon and other Office Professional Plus 2007 features. They also are offering online classes through Microsoft Office Live Meeting. These classes are made accessible through an established Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003 site that is in the process of being migrated to Office SharePoint Server 2007. In addition, classroom sessions are delivered by the firm’s own training professionals.

For IT training, the firm is taking advantage of Training Vouchers, a Software Assurance (SA) benefit available through the company’s Microsoft Enterprise Agreement. “With the Training Vouchers, our IT professionals can attend specialized sessions at Microsoft Certified Training Centers designed to help them help other employees with the new software,” Rivera explains.

To register and track attendance at the onsite sessions, and to give employees a head start on these sessions and follow-up modules for later reference, the firm is using the E-Learning SA benefit, delivered through a learning management system. The firm also

is offering the SA Home Use Program to employees who want to use Office Professional Plus 2007 on their home PCs.

Benefits

Sroka is delighted with the enthusiasm expressed by employees who have received the Office Professional Plus 2007 software. According to their feedback, attorneys are working more productively, thereby offering Duane Morris clients operational cost efficiencies. Attorneys using the new solution are also enjoying streamlined collaboration, reinforcing the firm’s commitment to partnership and consensus building. In addition, the deployment of Office Professional Plus 2007 supports Sroka’s vision of a powerful and effective unified communications infrastructure.

Productivity Gains in Just 30 Days

According to Sroka, preliminary feedback indicates that the Microsoft Office 2007 programs are faster and more responsive than earlier versions. “Employees are saying that the Ribbon makes it far easier to access frequently performed tasks, and we are witnessing productivity gains after just 30 days of use,” he says.

Sroka and his team expect to see even more gains in the future, based on well-received Microsoft Office 2007 features such as tabbed browsing in the Office Outlook® messaging and collaboration client; conditional formatting and support for one million rows in Office Excel® spreadsheets; and SmartArt® graphics in Office PowerPoint® presentations. “SmartArt in PowerPoint is especially important, considering that the program is used so widely throughout the firm—in development of new business, in court, in practice groups, in CLE [Continuing Legal Education] programs, and more,” Sroka adds.

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John Sroka, Chief Information Officer, Duane Morris LLP

Sroka says the attorneys and other legal professionals at Duane Morris also are boosting their productivity with the help of new capabilities introduced in Microsoft Office 2007 that specifically target the needs of the legal community. These capabilities include new ways to create and store document building blocks such as disclaimer text and header information, a security-enhanced way of preparing documents for final publication, and Open XML Formats that support content tagging for later extraction or reuse.

A Robust Platform for Internal and External Collaboration

Collaborating, in particular, is becoming easier at Duane Morris, thanks to Microsoft Office 2007 capabilities that help to maintain document integrity in an industry where that is crucial, Sroka says. “Now that we are implementing the same desktop platform that many clients already have, it is easier to collaborate with them,” he points out.

Collaboration at Duane Morris is also supported by Open XML Formats in Microsoft Office 2007. “Being in a more open format with Open XML, our documents are now easier to correct and revise by authorized individuals,” Sroka says. “By supporting Open XML, Office 2007 gives us a robust platform for enabling attorneys to work together seamlessly. This is a huge advantage for a firm like ours that depends heavily on collaboration.”

The smaller file size afforded by Open XML Formats also helps with collaboration, Sroka says. “In law, documents are ‘stretched’ further than in almost any other industry, with multiple collaborators and dozens of revisions, and an imperative that the final version be flawless,” he explains. “Anything that can help control document size can help us to avoid document corruption, and Open XML-based documents, being smaller, are less prone to corruption.”

In addition, the smaller Open XML file sizes are vital in the firm’s large intellectual property (IP) practice. “Producing hundreds of gigabytes of data monthly, our IP group can better control its storage needs with smaller file sizes,” he explains. “Open XML gives them that.”

Dynamic Communications Environment

Through the productivity and collaboration advantages gained with Microsoft Office 2007, Duane Morris is not only helping its attorneys work more efficiently and control costs, but also providing a more attractive workplace for those attorneys and others the firm expects to hire in the future. “Law is becoming an increasingly mobile profession, in which attorneys are less and less likely to remain at one firm for their entire career,” Sroka explains. “Therefore, it’s essential to provide an IT environment in which attorneys enjoy working, and Office 2007 does that.”

In Sroka’s vision, such an environment also includes the unified communications infrastructure that he and other Duane Morris executives are now pursuing. That platform, being deployed for the purpose of helping further streamline collaboration and communication, encompasses earlier deployments of Microsoft Live Communications Server 2005 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, a recently launched deployment of Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, and a planned deployment of Office Communications Server 2007.

“By moving to Office 2007, we are taking advantage of the integration of Outlook 2007 with these other technologies to implement powerful document workspaces and a more dynamic communications environment, in general,” Sroka says. “In that sense, Office 2007 will act as the cornerstone of our unified communications infrastructure.”

For More Information

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For more information about Duane Morris products and services, visit the Web site at: www.duanemorris.com

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