Best Practices: Organizing Law Firm Case Records

Creating an efficient filing system for managing legal case documents is not as difficult as it may seem. Using the basic principles of all Smead Organomics filing solutions, simply examine and optimize each of the three main components of the filing system:

1. The Finders
2. The Keepers
3. The Storage

A number of factors need to be considered to determine the best solution for your office. An assessment should be made of your current situation, and a set of objectives for the new system should be defined. Once you have these parameters outlined, you can address each of the system components.

The Finder

One of the first decisions to make is how files will be identified. Cases or matters can be indexed by client name, or by an assigned case and matter number. For small to mid-sized firms, the case can simply be identified by the name of the client, followed by the name of the matter. Large firms generally use numeric indexing because the risk of misfiled records is minimized. Often cases get assigned a number in a practice management application that can be used as the identifying number for the files.

Whether you choose alphabetic or numeric indexing, be sure to use color-coding on your file labels to help find files more quickly, and to reduce the risk of misfiled records.

The Keeper

Legal cases accumulate a lot of documents. Large cases can create thousands of pages of discovery, correspondence and filings. Keeping bulky documents organized helps attorneys and support staff save time. Expanding file pockets are a standard for most law firms. Documents are separated within the pockets using manila

folders. For firms who specialize in simple matters, a casebinder or pressboard folder works well.

The Storage

Your choice of filing equipment will determine the tab placement of the Keepers, on top for drawer filing, and on the side or end for shelf filing. When deciding on the Storage for your system, consider how your situation is affected by these factors:

- Physical storage space available
- Number of files to be stored
- Convenience of access by users of the system
- Projected growth
- Security and confidentiality issues
- Legal requirements
- Existing filing equipment
- Budget for new equipment and supplies

In general, end-tab shelf filing systems are the easiest to use, save the most space and are the least expensive to set up and maintain. However, if your total number of case files is relatively small, traditional drawer filing cabinets may be the right choice.

Smead Organomics offers a variety of filing solutions for managing legal case records. Choose the Team Organomics button to find out which one is best for your business. If you need more help, consult your office supplier or request a free onsite analysis by a Smead professional.