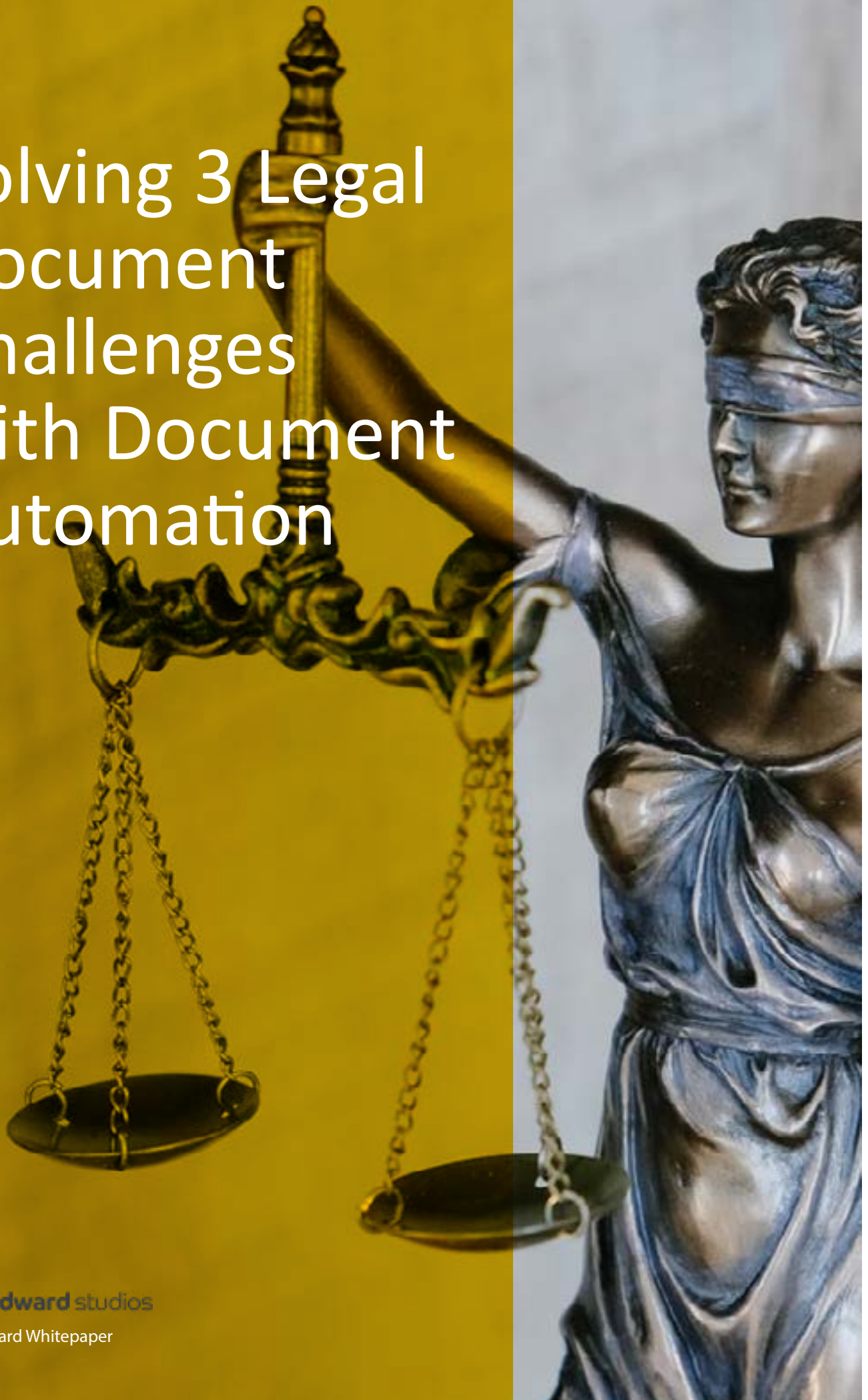


# Solving 3 Legal Document Challenges with Document Automation



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An IDC study reveals that several industries are plagued by “document disconnect.” This is a situation where gaps exist in the way documents are managed right from the generation of the document, to the final destination of that document. In some industries, documents will travel down the pipeline to the final destination and still lack critical data or have significant errors.

The legal industry is no exception to this plague, as another study reveals that typical law firms in the US are missing [50% of their data](#). The reasons for this vary but many of them center around the fact that documents are being poorly managed. For example, a lot of intellectual information is stored in emails, but the systems used within most legal firms don’t recognize email as a data source for the generation of documents so about 80% of critical legal data can be missed in the process of creating documents.

Despite the existence of technology that could streamline document creation, many firms still depend on old fashioned document creation methods and they do not even realize how archaic the systems they use are.

**The Copy-Paste Job:** The use of existing documents to create new ones is a common practice and may seem efficient. This method however may be costing the firm thousands of dollars in billable hours because time is spent looking for the original document,

perusing the document to find clauses to include and exclude, and then copying and pasting the relevant sections. Time also needs to be spent editing the document and even then, there is no guarantee that the document is free from error.

**Knowledge Drain:** Another pain factor in the legal industry is a knowledge drain. Hundreds of great minds switch employment every year and that means they carry with them the knowledge they possess about crafting particular documents. While some firms may have covenants that stop partners from enriching the competition with certain information they acquired from their firm, there is no way you can stop an excellent legal wordsmith from using such an innate skill when they cross over to the competition.

**Billable Hours Drafting Contracts:** The document disconnect is simply the tip of the iceberg. A bigger challenge that law firms face with documents is balancing the number of billable hours put into creating different documents with the need to serve more clients efficiently at a favorable rate.

Legal fees are a big complaint that clients have and law firms find themselves in a situation where they need to be profitable to stay afloat but if they billed clients for the time they spend drafting contracts and other legal documents, they run the risk of chasing them to the competition.





Ensure accuracy and speed with auto-populated templates that do the hard work for you

Full document automation for all your needs

How is document automation used?

# How is Document Automation Used?

Document automation works based on predefined rules for the creation of particular documents. These rules are embedded within an intelligent template that serves as the blueprint for a document. Some of the predefined rules within a template include:

- Positioning of features within the document, for example, logos, date, and address
- Font style and size to be used
- Sections for variable content like customer's name, price, due dates, and addresses

-Static data that is always used in particular documents like clauses of a non-disclosure agreement  
The template is composed of both static and dynamic data.

## Static Data:

Static data is the one that doesn't change and will be entered into the template in the design stage. This is similar to the text that one would copy and paste from a preexisting document.

## Dynamic Data:

A variable depending on the document being created. For example, the name of a signatory to a contract. Dynamic fields would take up a lawyer's time if they are creating a document manually but with automation, the software will provide a simple questionnaire to complete such fields. When dealing with certain documents, the template will have descriptions and guidelines that help a user provide the data that should be added to a dynamic field.

## Datasources:

For effective automation, the software links to numerous sources of data, this can include a central cloud database as well as several computers that may contain information needed to create accurate documents without omission of important information. The data sources are linked to the template.

Once all the data has been entered using the questionnaire, the software will merge all the information into a single document and in a few minutes, the user can send, print, or take whatever action they see desire.

# Use Case Example

If a lawyer has to create a contract on behalf of a client, they would simply need to log into the automation system and then enter the name of the template they want to use. The template would then open and have a few questions that need to be answered. These could include:

- Legal name of the client?
- Identification number?
- Suppliers Name?
- Address?
- Start date?
- End date?

With the information provided, the software will use pre-installed text to complete the document and provide an error-free contract in a few minutes.

This technology can be used to generate any legal documents right from a letter indicating intent to sue, to a complex contract between multinational entities.



"It allows us to create multiple documents in rapid fashion saving both time and money."

Step 1:

## How to Implement

There are 3 stages in the implementation process:

1

Choose software and integrate it with the tools you use today

2

Automate templates within familiar applications such as MS Word

3

Set it and forget it

## Step 2:

# Choosing Software

This is a process that takes careful consideration. A legal firm needs to consider which product will suit their needs. Some of the considerations include:

- Deciding if a point solution is better for the company or an end to end solution. Point solutions simply automate documents and nothing more, while an end to end solution will automate and continue to manage to contract lifecycle.
- Ease of integration with existing tools and software already being used at the law firm.
- Language options to enable the creation of documents in different languages.
- Ease of use so that there is less time spent learning how to use the software.
- Choosing between Word plugins and browser-based software.
- Cloud-based hosting for better accessibility and security.
- Template design process (code or drag and drop).
- Digital signature capability.

## Step 3:

# Automating Templates

This process requires the involvement of experts. There should be an expert who can work with the system, as well as a legal expert who has extensive knowledge about contracts. Some document automation vendors believe that their products are so easy to use, so an ordinary user should be able to design templates without the help of an IT expert.

A law firm can determine the level of IT expertise their lawyers have before they choose to handle the template design and automation in-house or to outsource.

The automation process may be determined by the software chosen as some vendors need to help set up the system while others are ready for use out of the box.

## Step 4:

# Choosing Documents

As part of the template automation, the law firm would have to choose the documents that need to be automated. It is recommended that the documents that are used most often should be the first in line. Different individuals will also have suggestions about other documents they believe should be automated as well.

Other documents can be automated eventually, even after the most commonly used documents are already in use as templates. It is advisable to have one template up and running as a test and once it is perfected, the rest can be automated as well.

## Step 5:

# Start Using Software

Once the first template is complete, make it available to the lawyers in the firm and let them test it. The feedback they give will determine changes that will be made and eventually everything should be fine and the same process can be followed for the rest of the documents.

# Benefits of Document Automation

Document automation software is designed to offer specific solutions to challenges that affect enterprises when it comes to document creation. In today's competitive market, it is hard to ignore the benefits enjoyed by legal firms that have adopted the technology. Key benefits of automating documents include the following:

## 1 Speeds up Document Processing

The average legal practitioner will spend about 60% of their time creating documents manually. With document automation, however, that time is cut to approximately 20% or less. Document automation saves over 80% of a lawyer's time. The task of redrafting a document is eliminated and searching for particular data is not necessary since the software takes care of all that. With faster drafting of documents, transactions can be concluded within the day to the satisfaction of the client as well as the firm. Much more can be done when great minds are not tied up performing the same tasks over and over again.

## 2 Business Opportunities can be Expanded

With more time on their hands, lawyers can offer more services to their clients which will grow the profits of the firm. The software as well presents an opportunity to offer more to clients. With the power to draft documents in minutes, a law firm can confidently take on business that requires specific documents. For example, if a business needs several contracts drafted for their service providers, a law firm can ably create the contract on demand. This in part addresses the challenge of trying to remain profitable even when they are offering lower rates to clients.

## 3 Guaranteed Error Free Documents

Humans are prone to error even when their duty is to search for errors in documents. Legal documents on the other hand must be free from error to avoid not just embarrassment but more importantly, costly consequences. Document automation can ensure that such errors are eliminated from all the documents that a firm produces. Even without proofreading, a user can be certain that everything within the document is as it is supposed to be. The software restricts users from making certain changes to a document and that can guarantee a significant reduction in the risk of errors.

## 4 Retention of Knowledge and Skills

Even when high-value staff or partners leave the firm, document automation can ensure their knowledge and skill is captured. The template design process captures skills and knowledge and as more staff use these templates, they learn and improve their knowledge. Document automation, therefore, enhances the sharing of skills and knowledge so that the entire firm can benefit from essential document knowledge. Drafting a complex contract is no longer the preserve of the most experienced partner, everyone within the firm can automatically generate any document and it will be just as perfect as one created by a senior partner.

## 5 Improves Efficiency

Every enterprise would like to do more, faster, and at a fraction of the cost. For legal firms, that is made possible through automating documents. Drafting documents accounts for a significant amount of billable hours and these hours can be made to count when more documents are generated at a lower cost. If a law firm decides to cut the rate for drafting documents, they can still make up for it by doing more in a fraction of the time it would take them if they were to do it manually. This makes it easier to compete with other firms in terms of quality of service as well as price. The constant complaint that legal services are expensive can be addressed using automation software.

## 6 Document Disconnect is Solved

Rule-based document generation ensures a perfect workflow. Problems like missing data or failure to get a document approved are unheard of when automation is in place. Data sources are connected to the system and data is consistently updated. Unlike humans who may take hours searching for particular data and probably give up for one reason or another, the software can quickly connect to several databases to find particular information. Apart from that, after a document is generated, there is a set action that will be taken, for example sending copies of a contract to different signatories to append digital signatures.

## 7 It is a Paperless Process

Although many lawyers still cling onto the old fashioned paper documents, there are many benefits of going paperless. With the entire document automation process happening within the computer, law firms enjoy the following advantages:

- Reduced cost on paper within the office since drafts and final documents are all electronic.
- Document storage is much easier and finding the document you saved is as simple as clicking on the document.
- Centralized storage is made possible and documents can be accessed on mobile devices for faster closure of deals.
- Cloud storage has numerous security features that guarantee the safety of sensitive information.
- Documents do not get lost or damaged.
- There is no need for physical space to store documents and data.

Windward's document automation software offers a powerful solution to major challenges facing law firms. Since a lot of the work lawyers engage in involves documents, introducing this technology will improve efficiency. Documents should not take the better part of the day and there is no excuse for missing data and other errors in today's legal industry.

If you've just discovered us, we're excited. Try Windward with our 14-day free trial and start creating documents in quick time with our low/no code solutions.

