

EVERYTHING You've Ever Wanted to Know About Your Data*

(but were too afraid to ask)

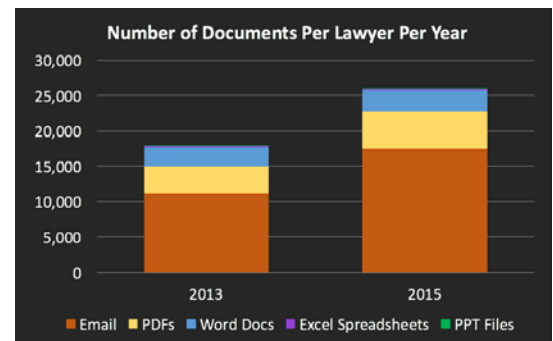
Everywhere you look, you hear about the “data deluge,” the “information tsunami” and “information overload.” What does this mean for the legal profession? Because MetaJure customers have a unique view into 100% of their documents and information, we talked to a host of them about quantifying their data. The results were astounding, even to us.

The Paper Baseline

For years, the volume of documents a lawyer dealt with stayed pretty constant. In the 1980's world of paper, the average lawyer touched around 16 documents a day. Over a year, this added up to around 4,000 letters and contracts, telephone message slips and notes of client meetings and telephone calls. That all changed in the 1990's as computers and email communications were widely adopted. The advent of mobile phones, tablets and online collaboration tools in the 2000's further super-charged this number as a flood of documents began to inundate lawyers' desktops.

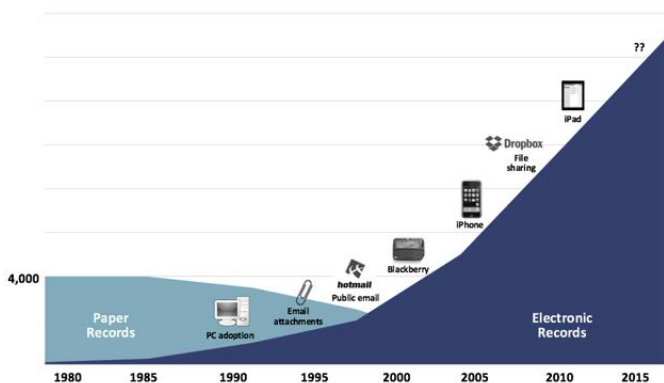
A New Normal

As learned from MetaJure's customers, the average lawyer in 2015 sent or received 17,449 emails and 5,349 PDFs, and created or received 2,942 Word documents, 223 Excel spreadsheets and 39 PowerPoint presentations. That's a total of 26,001 documents -- *around 70 documents every day of the year* -- and a six-fold increase in documents from the days of paper -- but that's not all. As shown here, electronic documents grew by more than 50% between 2013 and 2015. And, the document growth curve is not looking like it will abate any time soon.



The Perfect Storm

At the same time law firm documents were exploding, a number of other factors combined to create what could be called the perfect storm. First, the number of support staff per attorney declined leaving lawyers primarily responsible for dealing with all of this data. Second, document formats proliferated at the same time clients were becoming increasingly fee sensitive, demanding their attorneys accomplish more for less. Third, the tools available to the profession for dealing with all of this data weren't up to the task -- you could even go so far as to say they were downright terrible.



Your Data Is an Opportunity, Not a Problem

Rather than seeing all this data as a problem, the reality is it can be a huge asset -- provided you can put it to work. It is, after all, a historic collection of your knowledge and work product. If you can easily access it, it can provide a key advantage in your practice. It can help you avoid hidden conflicts of interest and quickly find and reuse past work. It can help you avoid repeating mistakes, and easily understand and utilize evidence whether received from your client or a third party. It can also help you get new business by being able to quickly tout detailed knowledge of your firm's experience in a given area.

New Technologies/New Approaches

Many lawyers we talk to are, with good reason, leery of existing “technology solutions” for addressing the huge volumes of data they have to deal with. These solutions, many of which were created in the early 1990's, have proved to be cumbersome, time consuming and expensive to implement. Moreover, many lawyers end up feeling the technology has simply turned them into the file room clerk of old. It is, without a doubt, why over 50% of law firms with less than 100

lawyers have not adopted any formal document management system. Even when a firm does adopt one of these conventional solutions, less than 50% of the firm's documents ever make it into the system.

It's ironic that outside of the legal profession, sophisticated technology is doing much of the work of managing information for us. The latest smartphones, for example, can automatically label photos with locations and people. And Internet search engines find spot-on information in the world's largest collection of knowledge at the click of a mouse or the tap of a finger, despite there being no formal organization of the data. These approaches have the potential to completely change how data is handled in our law firms.

Altering Your Thinking

Most lawyers have approached the data overload problem with a number of mistaken beliefs. First, while it is important to organize physical libraries of books and paper-based file rooms in order to find anything, this isn't true for electronic information—especially documents. The mistaken idea that a law firm's electronic records are like paper records has led lawyers to believe that they must create a limited number of agreed-to filing structures (taxonomies), force every user to save every document into a single, dedicated location, and then manually tag and label each and every document and email as part of that process.

Second, is the mistaken belief that unless all users follow the same process and structure, anarchy and chaos will ensue. The reality is attorneys religiously organize files, email and documents on their PCs in ways that make sense to them and their individual practices. Giving users autonomy does not result in chaos; rather it gives each lawyer the flexibility required as their practices and clients evolve.

Finally, is the belief that all documents must be brought to the repository rather than having the repository find, preserve and understand the documents. Just as a webmaster doesn't need to submit a website to Google for it to know about the site and its content, lawyers don't need to manually move and describe all of their documents to the firm's repository—technology can now do that for us.

Steps Towards 21st Century Document Management

We often get asked "What can I do to turn my data tsunami into a data goldmine?" Based on the experience of our customers who have managed to get the most out of their data, we offer the following:

1. **Digitize everything.** Paper records not only take up expensive space, they cannot easily be located or searched.
2. **OCR every flat image file wherever it exists.** Almost all of our customers have found that 80% of their PDFs are image-only files that cannot be searched. Existing, cheap technology can automatically OCR all of the text in those documents behind the scenes, making them all key word searchable.
3. **Connect your data systems.** MetaJure's customers have found that their documents reside in multiple, independent silos, ranging from network file shares, archived email, data on individual PCs, to billing systems and thumb drives or CDs containing client or third party data. The failure to connect those disparate data sources into a single system is akin to each state or country having its own Internet that has to be searched one by one. Such an approach is not only time consuming, it is also inefficient.
4. **Build a culture that encourages and rewards data sharing and reuse.** Possessive treatment of documents within a law firm (except when required by ethical walls or client confidences) decreases the resources and tools available to your broader team. The best and most efficient teams share knowledge and work product, enabling greater team success.
5. **Don't wait until your information is organized – start now.** Simply put, there is no better time than the present. New tools and technologies enable all of the above with little expense and no lawyer overhead.

We founded MetaJure on the belief that lawyers deserve technology designed by and for the legal profession. We love talking with those in the profession about technology. If you have time and interest, give us a call or send us an email.

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