

March 2018

# Knowledge Management

A TOOLKIT FOR LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS

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# Introduction

## What is Knowledge Management?

You know about case management, document management, and records management. You use your knowledge of the law, the courts, and your clients to represent, educate, and defend them. Knowledge management is way to address two critical facets of strategic, successful organizational management:

- Making the information that you manage more useful and accessible.
- Documenting the reasoning behind critical business decisions.

Legal work creates a lot of documents and files. You probably already store those files in some logical manner—for example, you may store your case files by case and/or client, and presumably in folders on your network. Some files, such as case-related forms and filings, might be stored in a Case Management system and associated with the case record. That's document management, which is the foundation for Knowledge Management.

But what if an attorney picks up a case involving long-term representation, and though the case is similar to one tried by the organization a few years ago, no one on staff can remember the exact case name, number, or client? That's where document management falls short. Documents are organized for easy retrieval by people who already know how to find the case. Knowledge Management ensures that you're storing documents with multiple ways of identifying them, including by case and by client—but also by area of law, courts, parties, and maybe even citations. The more "metadata" associated with a document—metadata is, essentially, descriptive information—the more avenues to retrieval there are when primary identifiers aren't sufficient.

But Knowledge Management also includes the storage of critical information that isn't commonly stored in your organization's work product. For example, say you open an office in a small town and staff it with nine people. Early critical decisions about the building made in meetings and on phone calls may not have been recorded or saved. As staff turnover and organizational priorities change, the reasoning behind those decisions and investments can easily be lost.

Our knowledgebases—where and how we store information—change as staff comes and goes, priorities and perspectives shift, and things are forgotten. Knowledge Management is a way to ensure that the insights behind our work is memorialized, and that strategic successes can be reused and improved upon.

This toolkit will cover the main approaches to managing knowledge using technology and standardized procedures, and includes recommendations for implementing a Knowledge Management system. It also includes a case study from LAF (formerly the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago) that looks at that organization's approach.

# Document Management

Much of our day-to-day knowledge is documented in print and digital files. How we store, label, and retrieve those files can be a critical part of our work.

At its most basic, document management is a set of tools and standards for classifying and storing documents. It's also a class of software—there are many document management systems and products available—but specialized software is not required. In fact, specialized software may not even make implementing document management procedures easier than using existing tools, because the challenge of doing successful document management is getting all staff to agree to and comply with standard procedures and conventions. That has to be done regardless of the system deployed.

Every document has attributes that describe it. Examples of those attributes include the following:

- Name
- Creation date
- Last modified date
- Topic
- Author
- Type (letter, memo, pleading, etc.)
- Format (Word, Excel, PDF, etc.)

Another term for these attributes is metadata. A document is a type of data, as is a database record, graphical image, or spreadsheet. Metadata is the information associated with a piece of data. As a basic example of this, Microsoft Word lets you create and store metadata about documents, including who created them, when, and when they were last modified within the documents themselves. This information is searchable using Windows Explorer's built-in search tool.

## WORKING WITH METADATA

Documents—digital documents and files, not printed or paper documents—are traditionally stored in folders on a computer. For legal aid organizations, this is most likely to be shared folders on a file server. Clear and accurate file and folder names can help organize and classify

documents and make them easier to find. These are the simplest ways to associate metadata with a document: by including it in standardized file-naming conventions and by creating folder names and structures, or hierarchies, that further identify the work product.

When you develop these file conventions, a good approach is to put more granular metadata in the filename and broader information in the folder names. For example, if you have a family law case for a client named Burberry, and you've assigned it a case number of 12-635, you might save a letter to the client like this:

*/Cases/Family Law/Burberry/12-635/Client Letter re Custody Hearing - 11-4-2017*

The metadata regarding the document topics (case-related, family law), the client, and the case are clear based on the folder names, and the document type (letters) is made clear by the file name, as is the subject of the actual correspondence.

It's important to stress that, in lieu of specialized document management software, adhering to agreed-upon conventions is *the minimum* your organization should be doing in terms of knowledge/document management. It allows everyone a chance to find the documents that they're looking for when they need them, and can protect you from the nightmare of discovering that a former employee's preferred filing system was to dump all documents in one folder "Sam's Documents" with vague names like "Jones Letter 17" and "Pleading re Paternity Case."

Most document management systems work with document types. This can refer to the document file type—for example, MS Word document (.doc), .PDF, or Excel spreadsheet (.xls)—or the business classification—for example, a pleading, a memo, or a legal brief.

As an example from a real world document management solution, LAF (formerly the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago) defined the content types (or document types) in the chart on the next page for its case work and client files, which are stored on a Sharepoint server. (You can read more about LAF's knowledge management system in the case study on page 27.)

## LAF CONTENT TYPES

Legal Library	Central Library	Program Policies & Forms	Human Resources Library
Advance Directives/Wills	Accomplishments	*Article	*Chart or Table
*Article	Agenda	*Chart or Table	Employee Roster
Brochure or Fact Sheet	Community Outreach	*FAQ's	Evaluation Forms
Canned Notes or Advice	Grants	Handbook or Manual	*FAQ's
Case Law	Office Brochures	LSC Advisory Opinion	HR Forms
Discovery	Office Forms	LSC Regulation	HR Memos
Forms	Office Letters	LSC Performance Criteria	Job Description
Letter	Office Memos	LSC Program Letter	Job Notice
Manual	Office Procedures/Re-sources	Policy or Procedure	Orientation
Intake Questionnaire or Script	Planning & Needs Assessment	Program Brochures	Summary Plan Document
Memorandum/Brief	Pro Bono & Judicare	Program Forms	Training and Travel
Order or Judgment	Survey	Program Memos	
Overview/Resource	Technology/IT	Retainer Agreement	
Pleadings	Work Plan	Quick Guide	
Settlement Agreement		Standards	
Training			
Video			

\*Content Types used in more than one library.





## DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Specialized Document Management System (DMS) software can add powerful tools for storing, retrieving, and working with documents, such as version control, which lets you “check out” a file for editing while locking it to prevent others from editing it at the same time. Most will also let you automate document archiving by tying it to your document retention policies, as well.

Other features include the following:

- Advanced full-text search tools
- More robust metadata functionality
- Flexible permission-granting
- Document sharing and collaboration
- Workflow automation, such as document routing and approvals
- Integration with e-signature, document comparison, citation checking, and other products

The market for Document Management Software is broad, with dramatically different feature sets across products. Pricing can range from free tools to robust systems that cost tens of thousands of dollars a year.

Many of the free and lower cost options are sophisticated products—most notably Microsoft SharePoint (<https://products.office.com/en-us/sharepoint/collaboration>), which is included with all editions of Office 365 (<https://products.office.com/en-us/business/office>). Other products, including Alfresco (<https://www.alfresco.com/>) and KnowledgeTree (<http://savogroup.com/knowledgetree-benefits/>), are open source. It's free to download and run them on your own servers, or you can pay providers to host them as a cloud service.

Mid-range commercial products, including SpringCM, NetDocuments, Box and Dropbox Enterprise, are available at nonprofit pricing. SpringCM and NetDocuments were conceived as document management solutions, while Dropbox and Box began as file-sharing tools, adding metadata, versioning, and other DMS features as they matured. This means the first two are a bit more sophisticated, but the others offer additional functionality that some organizations might find compelling—for example, the ease with which they facilitate collaboration with external partners. If you regularly share documents with others, be sure to give the newer systems a closer look.

At the high end of the spectrum are long-established enterprise products initially designed for large, commercial law firms, but now used in many industries, including iManage and Opentext (formerly called Documentum).

LAF (see case study on page 27) reported that its customized Sharepoint system “broke” during the upgrade attempt. As a result, it is moving away from custom components and replacing them with out-of-the-box functionality.

When selecting a Document Management System, remember, you're not likely to find one that does *everything* that you want—instead, you should look for the system that leaves you with the least painful trade-offs. A general concern is that older, server-based systems are not very easy to use when collaborating with outside parties, particularly when compared with such modern file-sharing products as Box and Dropbox. But neither of those has built-in email integration that allows you to save an email (not just an attachment) to the DMS.

So a DMS selection process should include an RFP that lists every desired feature. System selection should weigh the trade-offs heavily when considering features.

## EXERCISE: PRIORITIZING FEATURES

Prioritize the features that you want in a DMS.

Feature	Critical	Desired	Nice to Have	Not Necessary
Full text searching				
Boolean searching				
Proximity searching				
Tagging				
Taxonomy				
Versioning				
Check-in/Checkout				
Document Preview				
Activity logging				
Workflow				
Notifications				
Mass uploading				
Hyperlinking w/standard URLs				
Saving emails to DMS				
Folder level security				
Document level security				
File-sharing w/external parties				
Concurrent editing				
MS Office integration				
Office 365 integration				
Google Apps integration				
Active Directory Integration				
Archiving				

## MIGRATING FILES

When migrating to a Document Management System, a key question to ask is what you want to do with existing documents. They can be migrated into the new system in two ways: by manual import, or by mass migration using software. Which option you choose depends on a few things.

If your existing documents are well-organized and free of duplicates, and include only the file types you want in the new system (e.g., not overrun with documents that are either not work product or in need of archiving), then a mass migration might make sense. Some systems come with tools to facilitate mass importing. Others require you to purchase third-party tools. The key is to import not just the documents but also any metadata you can capture with them. How much metadata you can capture will be determined by the quality of your migration tool.

Importing documents without such key metadata as *author* or *last modified date* will make them difficult to search and could impede adoption of the new system by frustrating users. Importing multiple drafts and duplicates will also impair the use of the system. To this end, LAF kept its existing share drive accessible to staff during migration to its new system, but only as a read-only drive, which made it possible for users to search for and access documents but prevented them from saving them anywhere but in the new system. (Read the case study on page 27.)

Another consideration in a mass migration is to decide how far back you want to go. That, too, will vary based on your situation. Mass migrations bring existing problems into the new system (including bad filenames, duplicate documents, and irrelevant information), so it's advisable to limit it as best you can to a timeframe that will cover most of what's still pertinent.

When Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation implemented its SharePoint based Knowledge Management System, it decided that automated migration might lead to a higher volume of errors than a more thoughtful manual approach. Individual offices were responsible for dividing up office documents for clean up. Project managers drafted memos to guide staff through a process of cleaning up old files and preparing file types and names to minimize error rates based on file-name lengths and forbidden symbols. They also described the migration process and let staff know what to expect and how to complete migration. In end, this approach gave the organization more control over what it migrated and how it was stored.

## SEARCH APPLIANCES

Document Management Systems generally work under the assumption that you will make the effort to identify and organize your documents. Inspiring staff to conform to such conventions and make the time to tag and describe documents as they create them can be challenging, and can lead to failure. An alternative method is to pay less attention to *where* you put them and rely instead on advanced search technology to find them later. This is true of all your documents, including client and case files.

Google offers the Google Search Appliance, a hardware device that connects to your network to index all of your files so you can search the full text of them at lightning speeds. A similar product, Metajure, was designed for law firms and is currently offered free or at discounted rates to legal aid organizations. Like the Google Search Appliance, Metajure indexes everything and offers an advanced searching interface

with which to find them. The advantage of such products is that they eliminate the requirement that you adhere to naming conventions and the application of metadata.

But there are downsides, too—the ability to locate relevant documents relies heavily on the search terms used, and without consistent metadata, you might have trouble finding the right document when you need it most. Search appliances can also be complex to implement, depending on the size of your program and your network architecture. The Northwest Justice Project uses Metajure at its headquarters in Seattle, but hasn't rolled it out to its numerous branch offices because each office has its own local server and document storage, which means staff would have to install an appliance at each location. (Looking at Cloud-based options like Office 365 would alleviate that problem, assuming that your search appliance can work with Office 365. Metajure connects, but be sure to ask the vendor if the appliance you're considering does too.)

## COLLABORATION

A key benefit of document management, which directly addresses the challenges of knowledge management, is that all work files will be saved according to standards determined by the organization rather than the individual sensibilities of each employee. This can prevent the challenges of trying to find documents created, named, and saved by a long-departed employee who had an incomprehensible approach to document management. But document management supports collaboration in other ways, as well.

As already mentioned, document versioning, with check-in and check-out (also called document locking), allows multiple people to work on the same document without overwriting each other's edits. Modern systems also support Google and Microsoft's concurrent editing in their Cloud-based applications.

Additionally, document commenting and workflow automation allow any online comments about a document to be saved with the document right in the system, not lost in various people's emails.

## DMS, OR SEARCH APPLIANCE: WHICH APPROACH IS BEST?

In technical terms, both a DMS and a search appliance will index your documents to facilitate complex searching, but a DMS will also create a database with the metadata related to those documents. What's the difference? If you're searching a library for a particular novel, using the title will likely help you find what the book you're looking for—but if you're looking for a well-reviewed book about the history of Poland, you might have better luck using the library catalog to find a list of books on that particular subject.

A traditional DMS will succeed or fail based on the willingness of staff to properly code their documents and adhere to the policies. A DMS also offers advanced tools for working with documents that search appliances lack, including version control, workflow automation, and improved security. With a search appliance, staff save documents to a network server and name them as they choose. There's no need for additional description as each document is created or saved. The danger is that a keyword search will produce all documents that contain that phrase but not documents related to that case that lack those precise keywords.

Which approach is best for you depends on whether you want to take a disciplined approach to knowledge management—or you might even want to use both.

## BRIEF BANKS

Brief Banks are collections, or “libraries,” of important documents that you want to store in a safe, retrievable place, including leases, contracts, or other correspondence. But legal briefs, in particular, should be stored in such a way that particular documents can be easily located and opened or copied when needed. One of the most compelling reasons to use a DMS is to maximize the use of a legal aid attorney’s time by making existing language easy to locate, copy, and incorporate into new filings.

## ARCHIVING

As important as it is to clearly identify your historical work files, it is also necessary to regularly clean out documents that are no longer relevant or needed. This contributes to the quality of your search results when seeking particular documents.

Most document management software allows you to automate your records retention policies with intelligent archiving by assigning “lifespans” by document type—for example, you can put a five year lifespan on correspondence and a 25 year lifespan on briefs, ensuring that they are kept for the appropriate time but that they don’t clutter files beyond it.

## DOCUMENT ASSEMBLY

While not a standard DMS feature, Document Assembly is a key tool for the efficient creation of standard documents and forms. Most legal aid orgs, if not all, employ tools like HotDocs or A2J Author for this purpose, often via LawHelp Interactive’s legal aid-specific service. If you run HotDocs on your local server, it has the ability to integrate with most Document Management Systems.

Part of the appeal of email is that it exists only digitally, with no envelopes to open or papers to file. But archiving and searching electronic mail can pose new challenges.

Letters and memos made up a significant percentage of our documents not that long ago, but now both are relatively uncommon. They've been almost completely replaced by email. But email isn't stored in public fileshares the same way that documents are. Standard email applications are personal systems. Employees can organize and tag emails, but unless they take the multiple steps required to export them to files—or you have a DMS that supports adding emails—they remain confined to the mailbox. They're only as well-organized as each employee deems necessary—in some cases, stored in a single inbox without even any subfolders—and critical emails can easily be deleted. When key employees depart a company, their mailboxes are usually archived, which makes it easy for important information contained in those emails to be forgotten.

How do you make sure important email is catalogued and saved? The short answer is, it depends upon the email system. We'll take a look at two of the most popular, Microsoft Outlook and Gmail—while these are not the only two options, most systems will work in a similar manner to one or the other.

## MICROSOFT OUTLOOK

Microsoft Outlook allows you to organize emails in a folder structure. While it also lets you export messages to text and save them on a shared drive, this is a tedious process and not recommended. A better option is to share folders with other employees using the Public Folders feature.

This feature creates a shared folder visible to designated users from within their own inbox. Everyone with access can create and share information by dragging emails from their personal folders to the Public Folders. The execution can be a little difficult—permissions must be granted, and each mailbox must be configured to display the shared mailbox. In addition, each shared folder is displayed as a subfolder of the owner's mailbox, which can make navigation confusing.

If you use Sharepoint as your Document Management System, you can get around this to some extent by displaying the shared mailboxes on a Sharepoint site, which can embed Outlook folders similarly to document libraries or lists. But this still won't resolve the issue that the shared folder is owned by a single user—if that user leaves the organization, the shared folder disappears when their email account is closed.

Other Document Management Systems vary in how well they integrate with Outlook. Some of the traditional, server-based systems allow you to save email messages with a click, much like with documents, but some of the newer Cloud-based systems only let you save email attachments to the DMS, not the emails themselves.

## EMAIL

In Gmail, there's no equivalent feature to Public Folders, nor can users share folders—only entire mailboxes—but third-party add-ons can provide the ability to share labels with other Gmail users, or add something similar to Public Folders to a Google domain. A few DMS products allow you to save Gmail messages to the system—including Hiver, CloudHQ, and Tandem, for example—but there are fewer than for Outlook. (You can find links to these Gmail add-ons at <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/search/shared%20gmail%20labels?hl=en>)

Both G Suite (aka Google for Work) and Office 365 offer a Litigation Hold feature. While it's not integrated with any DMS, nor intended to be made publicly accessible, it can provide the ability to retain and search emails by keyword or search term, spanning all user accounts—including the mailboxes of former employees.

If you don't have a DMS that integrates with Gmail, it's a good idea to purchase and implement Litigation Hold. It's included with G Suite for Nonprofits, and is also available in the E3 and E5 packages for Microsoft's Office 365.



# Internal Messaging Tools

Social media has become a mainstream means of communication in our personal lives. Are there practical applications for it at work?

The practice of saving important emails is labor-intensive, as each relevant email must be individually exported to a file, and then imported into a DMS. While many companies do this, the challenge is identifying important emails among the sea of messages received every day. One way to address the limitations of email applications as knowledge retention systems is to install an internal messaging tool (sometimes called “corporate social media.”) These private network messaging solutions—including Office 365’s Yammer, Salesforce’s Chatter, Slack, and similar tools—allow you to capture intra-office communication about a case or client in a dedicated “channel” or “stream.” Most of these systems also provide a straightforward means to forward emails to the channel.

Corporate social media can be a powerful knowledge management tool when directly integrated with an information management system. In Sharepoint, for example, you can incorporate Yammer feeds into any site. Considering Sharepoint’s built-in document management, discussion forums, lists, and wikis, it provides one of the best options for maintaining a centralized system for all organizational knowledge.

Salesforce is also a compelling option. While it does not include a full-blown DMS, it does integrate easily with Box and many other Document Management Systems. Salesforce Chatter feeds can be associated with any record or entity, allowing you to keep important interactions, events, and considerations associated with a client case stored alongside their data.

Slack is extremely popular in some fields, including journalism. The platform ties into many other applications, including Dropbox and Google Apps, and provides some search functionality, but is best known for its chat function, which syncs across desktops, mobile devices, and the web. In addition to one-on-one chat, you can establish channels for groups and teams or for specific functions. As a collaboration and knowledge management tool, Slack offers a lot of potential. For example, you can store a PDF in your organization’s Dropbox and share it on Slack as a link, with a summary, that colleagues can review or comment on. Slack stores the conversation around the file as well as the comments and the text of the file itself, and makes it all searchable. Pricing varies from free versions for small teams to \$15 per user for a more robust version.

# In-Person Interactions

Some of our best work is done in person. Capturing that knowledge is just as important as the work we do in the digital realm.

## ONE LEGAL AID ORG'S SOLUTION

"One thing my organization has started doing is keeping Google Docs for regular (weekly, monthly, etc.) meetings. Each topic has its own document, shared with the regular attendees, where agendas are developed and shared and notes are kept—anyone at the meeting with a laptop can add to those notes. They help with building agendas by answering questions (What wasn't finished last time? What needs follow up?), we can assign tasks to individuals using these documents, and they create a historical record of all meetings that everyone has access to."

Though much of our work lives have moved online as we increasingly become a connected culture, we still spend a lot of our time in face to face meetings and conversations. Whether one-on-one or in meeting rooms with a handful of other people, these non-digital interactions can be a critical part of our work. But how can the knowledge that comes out of those meetings and conversations be captured as part of the larger management system?

One simple solution is to have an appointed note-taker at every meeting, and to give that person clear instructions about what needs to be recorded. This might be more than just conclusions and action items—for example, in a case where a decision is made to create a new position, all the key points in any debate should be recorded.

If a meeting includes visual aids—for example, notes on a whiteboard during presentations and discussions—those aids should be photographed before they're erased, and the photos should be kept with the meeting notes. Audio recordings or transcripts can also be saved as file attachments.

# Implementing Knowledge Management

If you're starting from scratch with no Document Management System in place, and without much consideration for the retention of key work product and related knowledge, then you need to be prepared.

Implementing knowledge management is less a software installation than an organizational culture change.

A successful knowledge management solution changes how people throughout the organization work. Influencing management and staff to make those changes requires getting them to buy in and commit to the project. It must be a clear organizational priority. The effort required to adopt new technologies and practices required for the project to succeed must be shared at all levels of the organization. Without each of these components, there's a good chance the effort will fail.

## PREPARATION

In order to successfully develop a culture that prioritizes knowledge management, you must clearly understand a number of things about your current culture, environment, and practices.

What knowledge do you currently maintain, and where is it stored? Take an inventory of all of your information systems (including databases, fundraising, and payroll), documents (including shared drives, Google sites, or Dropbox folders), and operational items (including meeting notes, publications, reports, website content).

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## ORGANIZATIONAL BUY-IN

The willingness and commitment of the staff to adopt new processes and systems once they're in place is also critical to the success of the project. Without their cooperation, projects that require changes in work habits are highly likely to fail. Change has a reputation for being difficult, but what's really hard is unexpected change. If staff are aware of the project goals and can clearly see how the system will, ultimately, make their lives easier and make them more effective, they are much more likely to adopt the new systems.

The following tips can help you get staff buy-in:

**Engage staff early.** Announce the project and seek input from every person who will be impacted by the changes (this is likely the entire organization). It's important to message clearly, so it helps to have two or three bullet points handy that outline the key project goals, which might include...

- Increase organizational efficiency
- Improve the quality of data and documents
- Collaborate more effectively
- Deepen our understanding of our work

**Define requirements with all of your users.** Prepare a slide deck introducing the project, and schedule time with each department or practice group to go through it and discuss expectations and answer questions.

**Get all perspectives.** Survey staff about their current processes, and how well they work for them. Get their input not only on what isn't working for them, but also what they'd like to see.

**Lead from the top.** Make sure, first of all, that the CEO or ED and executive management are on board with this effort, and make sure that some of the early messaging on it comes directly from their mouths.

## SYSTEMS READINESS

Before you determine what software you'll be implementing in support of the project, evaluate what you're using now. In some cases, you might already have suitable software installed but not have it configured in such a way that it supports knowledge management.

## What databases are in use and are they/can they be integrated?

One goal of your knowledge management effort might be to improve the reporting in your case management system or other databases. For example, merging client eligibility data with attorney availability can be a powerful efficiency boost for intake staff—but if the eligibility requirements and client info is in your case management system and attorney info is in a time-keeping application, HR system, or spreadsheet, how will you integrate them? Identify the types of cross-system reporting that might provide big improvements, and then determine if, and how, the data can be combined.

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## Are you going to keep your systems in-house or move them to the Cloud?

This is a question that every organization should already be asking or have already answered. The nature of computing is changing, and the future is not in server rooms—it's in the Cloud. If you've already evaluated applications such as Office 365 and Salesforce, keep those evaluations in mind when identifying your knowledge management goals.

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## STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

Changing the way everyone works will necessarily involve changing some staff responsibilities—and it might require hiring people with skillsets that don't currently exist in the organization, such as Sharepoint or Salesforce administration. You'll need to understand how the new software and processes are being trained and supported. If the improvements result in efficiency and productivity gains, then you'll also need to look at organizational job descriptions to see if they also need to be modified.

### Do you have in-house IT staff who can continue to develop and manage the new information systems?

Is that a role that has to be added to IT or does the skill set already exist? Can you send a current staff member for training? Or do you need to hire an outside contractor for this project?

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### How is training handled in your organization?

Do you have an employee responsible for training staff on working with information and information systems, or do you need to hire someone? Can the training responsibilities be distributed among existing staff members? (LSNTAP provides a number of valuable training resources at <https://lsntap.org/trainings>.)

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## GOING LIVE

A major consideration for rollout is whether you will do it all at once, or in phases. A phased approach has many benefits, and lets you work out any wrinkles with less disruption. Starting with a department, practice group, or set of users who are eager to sign on lets you quash early bugs or make any changes that are required more easily than going live organization-wide. And there are *always* issues. By starting with small groups of more experienced staffers, you'll know much more about how to train and support the software by the time you get to the less tech-savvy users—and will already have addressed most of the problems.

The downside is that you'll have staff on two different systems until the phased rollout is complete. This might result in some confusion and disruption for the users who are yet to be converted as they try and collaborate with staff members who are saving documents in different places and using different processes to work with them. For example, in the Box DMS, files are sent as links rather than attachments—links that won't work for users not in the test group.

The stakes are higher with a non-phased rollout, but sometimes compatibility needs dictate it. Phased rollouts work best in siloed environments, but the business trend is toward more collaboration. If you do go live all at once, be sure staff is prepared. Publicize the "go live" date and manage expectations. Make sure that you have clear documentation of the basic functions waiting for each employee as they arrive. IT and project staff will be spread thin, but should be dedicated to support and bug fixes. Even after training, some staff will need hand-holding once they go live.

# Case Study: LAF

Recently, LAF (formerly the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago) implemented what might possibly be the most elaborate knowledge management platform in the legal aid sector. The project began a few years ago, and along the way, LAF followed a series of business process analyses that helped clarify its need for knowledge management.

Using Sharepoint as the platform, the organization set up sites for individual practice groups as well as a site for sharing staff communications and resources. The key goals were to enhance LAF's information management systems by deploying Sharepoint; to integrate that system with its LegalServer case management system; and to use these integrated tools to improve LAF's operational effectiveness and efficiency.

By the end of 2017, implementation was about 85 percent complete and already rolled out to most staff. Already staff have noted a number of benefits, including the following:

- Powerful search functionality for briefs and documents
- The ability to link to documents and sites
- Access to subject-specific wikis, how-to guides, and the staff resources site
- Support for workflows and the ability to automate standard forms and requests
- Staff surveys
- The ability to retain and share staff subject expertise.

Once LAF received a Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) from Legal Services Corporation (LSC) to support the project, it hired a Sharepoint consultant. Executive leadership was on board, but for the project to succeed, staff buy-in was also critical. To engage staff, requirements-gathering was done through staff surveys and in-person interviews that helped ensure that they felt like stakeholders in the system's success.

LAF convened a core group of key staff to take ownership of the design of the Sharepoint system. In addition to IT staff, this group included attorneys, paralegals, and an office manager, giving it a rounded perspective. In addition to overseeing key design considerations, this group developed the organizational taxonomy, and appointed an information manager to work closely with the consultant on the technical aspects of the design—and to take over design work after the initial rollout was complete.

To continue staff engagement, LAF invited all staff to participate in system testing, and held a contest to name the system. The winning name was LAFPoint.

The IT team worked to train all other staff members prior to roll-out, and each employee was given a custom LAFPoint pen along with a welcome letter on the day the system went live. To promote adoption, the old share drive—where documents were traditionally stored—was made read-only the same day. This meant staff could view documents and import them into the new system, but could not modify or save documents on the old drive. Training continued for four months after rollout to ensure that users would continue to gain comfort with the new system, and to promote not just a successful implementation but a successful adoption.

To learn more, read the full TIG Report on the LAFPoint project in Appendix A.

# Preparation Worksheets

If you're planning to implement a knowledge management system, planning ahead can help eliminate unnecessary challenges or obstacles. In this section, we'll provide a number of worksheets you can use to prepare.

## RACI MATRIX

For any organizational initiative, a RACI chart is a way to detail who is...

**Responsible.** Who will insure that the project is planned and that the plan is executed?

**Accountable.** Who will take responsibility for the project outcome? (In addition to the person or people listed above, this should also include any senior management sponsoring the project.)

**Consultative.** Whose input is necessary or desired in order to develop and execute the plan?

**Informed.** Who are the stakeholders who need to be aware of the project's status?

In the chart on the next page, list as many individuals or groups as necessary, and put checkmarks in the column(s) that pertain to them, as in the example rows below.

Individual or group	Responsible	Accountable	Consultative	Informed
Project Manager	X	X		
CEO		X	X	X
Office Manager			X	X









## DUTIES MATRIX

Your project will require staffing during development and after the rollout. List staff members by name and/or title for each role. This might be an incomplete list, or you might not address all of these duties. Some people might assume multiple roles, and it is expected that roles will be taken on by people with additional job duties.

Duty	Role
System Administration	
Application Development	
Training	
Support	
Quality Assurance	

## WHAT'S MISSING?

This is the most difficult chart. What information is not being collected that should be collected? In general, these are things that are discussed without a process for capturing the dialog, such as meeting notes or telephone calls. Emails and chats that aren't properly saved with work product also qualify. List the things that are not being captured, and identify, as best you can, how and where it should be captured.

Type of Information	Destination



# Conclusion

A true knowledge management solution involves components of your work beyond just your files and documents—it involves your staff, too.

Knowledge management is not a type of software or an application you can add—it's an approach to working with your organization's information that incorporates storing your work product along with descriptions of your work. It's also about making key information and context about that work readily available, and providing your staff with tools that allow them to work strategically with their documents and data.

That said, from Document Management Systems to search appliances to corporate social media tools, many applications can help you manage your knowledge. Determining which of them to integrate into your network in order to facilitate knowledge management can be challenging. Before you set out on such an effort, you'll need to prepare with careful research, consideration, and planning.

You'll also need to prepare for the human side of knowledge management. Changing organizational work habits and culture is much more than a technical challenge. Management and staff must be committed to, and supportive of, the entire process. They must feel involved and connected. Otherwise, your efforts are likely to fail—and possibly at great cost. Staff must understand that knowledge management demands more work from them in the form of adding metadata to new documents, and fully documenting decision-making processes. They must also clearly understand what they will get in exchange for those efforts—all that additional labor will pay off when they retrieve information, making them more efficient and more effective and preventing frustration.

Put simply, knowledge management is about running your program efficiently and mindfully so that your information is strategically managed today, making it easily accessible and retrievable—and understandable—now and in the future.

**Did you find this TIG Toolkit useful? Please take a short survey to let us know what you thought of it to help guide future content:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TIGtoolkits>

# Appendix A: Additional Resources

For more information on knowledge management and the processes and products you can use to implement it, here are some additional resources.

**LAFPoint: A Knowledge Management System Designed and Developed for LAF Using SharePoint Enterprise 2013**, *Technology Initiative Grant #13041*

[https://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/attach/2018/02/TIG\\_13041\\_LSC\\_Approved\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/attach/2018/02/TIG_13041_LSC_Approved_Final_Report.pdf)

**Defining Knowledge Management for your Organization**, *Idealware*

<https://www.idealware.org/defining-knowledge-management-your-organization/>

**Knowledge Management is Like Sorting Socks: KM for Nonprofit Organizations**, *Annkissam*

<http://nonprofitknowledgemanagement.com/sites/default/files/KM-Readiness-White-Paper.pdf>

**Punishments and Rewards: How to create a culture that supports excellent KM**, *Annkissam*

[http://nonprofitknowledgemanagement.com/sites/default/files/MNN\\_KM\\_Punishments\\_and\\_Rewards.pdf](http://nonprofitknowledgemanagement.com/sites/default/files/MNN_KM_Punishments_and_Rewards.pdf)

**Knowledge Management: A Discovery Process**, *A case study of the McKnight Foundation's Knowledge Management initiative* <https://www.mcknight.org/resource-library/grant-programs/general-information/knowledge-management-a-discovery-process>

# Appendix B: About This Toolkit

This Toolkit is the result of a collaboration between Idealware and the Michigan Advocacy Program (MAP), funded through the Technology Initiatives Grant Program of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC).

## ABOUT IDEALWARE

Idealware, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, provides thoroughly researched, impartial and accessible resources about technology to help nonprofits make smart technology decisions. Idealware's research publications, assessments, and training save nonprofits time and money by providing guidance that gives nonprofit leaders the knowledge and confidence they need to decide what's best for their organization.

## ABOUT MAP

Through direct legal help and statewide advocacy, the Michigan Advocacy Program provides access to the justice system for those who need it the most. The Michigan Advocacy Program's direct service components are Legal Services of South Central Michigan, which provides free civil legal advice and representation to low-income and senior citizens in thirteen counties, and Farmworker Legal Services, which provides free legal assistance and referrals to migrant and seasonal farmworkers throughout the state of Michigan. The Michigan Advocacy Program also provides administrative services to a number of independent statewide programs, including the Michigan Poverty Law Program, the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, the Michigan Legal Help Program, the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative, and the Crime Victim Legal Assistance Project.

## ABOUT LSC

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is an independent nonprofit organization established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. LSC was founded on the shared American ideal of access to justice regardless of one's economic status. LSC is the largest single funder of civil legal services to the poor in the United States. LSC is a grant-making organization, distributing more than 93 percent of its federal appropriation to eligible nonprofit organizations delivering civil legal aid. LSC also administers special grant programs supporting innovative practices in the areas of technology and pro bono engagement.

## AUTHORS

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Peter is an experienced technology leader, having held CIO, VP, and Director of Technology roles at a number of nonprofits and law firms, including Legal Services Corporation, Earthjustice, and Goodwill Industries of San Francisco. In 2003, he won a “Top Technology Innovator” award from InfoWorld for developing a retail reporting system for Goodwill thrift. Peter’s focus is on advancing communication, collaboration and efficiency through creative use of the web and other technology platforms. Peter blogs on NPTEch tools and strategies at <http://techcafeteria.com>; is active in the non-profit community as member of NTEN; and spends as much quality time as possible with his wife and son. He is currently available for consulting, projects, and Acting CIO roles as he considers his next long-term project.

### Angela Tripp, Michigan Advocacy Program

Angela is the Director of the Michigan Legal Help (MLH) Program, which is responsible for the statewide website for self-represented litigants (MichiganLegalHelp.org) and 15 affiliated Self-Help Centers around the state. In 2016, over 770,000 people visited the MLH website and over 86,000 people used its resources to complete legal forms. She has led the development and growth of MLH from its inception in 2011. She is also the Co-Director of the Michigan Poverty Law Program, the state support program in Michigan, and holds a J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston and a B.A. from the University of Cincinnati.

### Chris Bernard, Idealware

Chris is a career writer and journalist with two decades of experience in newspapers, magazines, advertising, corporate and nonprofit marketing and communications, and freelance writing. Prior to Idealware, he was managing editor of a newspaper and a senior copywriter at an ad agency. For the past seven years, he’s overseen Idealware’s editorial and communications efforts, driving the creation and publication of more than a hundred articles, reports, and other resources and managing the communications calendar. Outside of his work at Idealware, he’s an award-winning author and a frequent speaker and lecturer at literary conferences and festivals around the country.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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