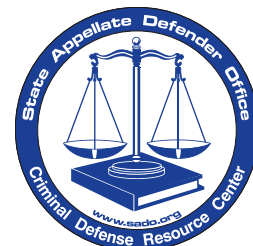




Coveo Case Study

Michigan State Appellate Defender Office (SADO)



*The Criminal Defense Resource Center (CDRC) of the **Michigan State Appellate Defender Office** (www.sado.org) was formed in 1977 in response to a growing demand from the private bar for help with criminal cases. Recognizing the collective legal expertise of SADO attorneys who practice only criminal law, attorneys throughout Michigan quickly came to depend on the CDRC for support. In addition to providing users with a host of printed trial manuals, case summaries, newsletters and an indexed brief bank, the CDRC provides telephone advice to approximately 3,000 callers per year. The CDRC helps attorneys who call with everything from a question about a recent court decision to a request for help with development of a trial strategy. The targeted audience for this support service is assigned attorneys, many of whom practice criminal law only occasionally, in remote locations, and for low assignment fees.*

Coveo Enterprise Search for Intranet Helps Attorneys Quickly Find the Legal Information They Need

In June of 1996, SADO launched its web site complete with a full-text searchable brief bank of all its printed materials. The SADO web site is nationally known in the criminal defense practice as a leader in brief bank development. While SADO's Brief Bank was powered for 10 years by the FolioViews and Folio SiteDirector programs, the system was found to be outdated in its support for current word processing programs and for incorporating file formats other than word processing.

In its plans to deploy a more enhanced Brief Bank in December 2006, the SADO staff developed criteria in selecting a new full-text information access solution. The requirements included: a user interface already familiar to users; full-text information access capabilities including: proximity, phrase and field searching; customizable user interface; the ability to quickly and easily add documents from many different formats and exploit the metadata capabilities of modern word processors; minimal hard coding of documents; and technical support of the product.

Since the SADO Brief Bank is currently made up of Microsoft Word and PDF documents, it was crucial that any document format can be incorporated into the Brief Bank as it continues to evolve. The previous version of the Brief Bank required all documents to be imported into a proprietary format.

Coveo Enterprise Search supports not only word processing formats of Word and WordPerfect, but also PDF, e-mail formats of Lotus and Microsoft, Microsoft Access, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Visio and html. Audio and video formats are supported by Coveo Enterprise Search for Multimedia.

Coveo Simplifies the User Interface and Allows for Full-Text Information Access

The user interface is by the far the single most important feature of any database. Since financial resources and time are limited for criminal defense attorneys, the SADO staff wanted an intuitive and familiar interface that would allow users more time for legal research.

“Upon deploying Coveo’s search-powered information access software, our users commented on its instant results and similarity to other popular online search sites,” comments John Powell, database manager and webmaster. “As with any quality information access solution, Coveo Enterprise Search for Intranet supports full-text searching, use of connecting terms (and, or not, near), as well as phrase, field and proximity searching. For users requiring additional assistance or advanced capabilities, the advanced feature is also very familiar and easy to use, making the whole search process a pleasure.”

One of the most noticeable differences of the Coveo interface is in the way results are displayed. Documents matching the search criteria are displayed in order of relevance. For SADO’s users, this is a big enhancement since the FolioViews program only indicated how many hits were contained within each document, whereas Coveo’s relevance is based on algorithms. The frequency of terms, position in the document and proximity of search terms are just some of the factors in determining a document’s relevancy within a search. Coveo allows the programmer to control additional factors in determining the relevancy of a document. If the end-user determines that the date of a pleading is more important than relevancy, Coveo provides an option to sort in date order.

“Several of the other features that make Coveo stand out among other information access solutions include its ability to extract keywords from the document and to produce a 100- to 500-word summary of the document automatically,” said Powell. “For small- to mid-sized organizations, this feature is powerful since an indexer is not required to summarize or extract keywords from documents. While it is impossible to replace the knowledge of a skilled attorney and indexer, Coveo makes significant strides in automating this feature. This solves one of the most costly problems in the development of a brief bank.”

“Additionally, Coveo allows the end-user to save their query for retrieval at a later time,” added Powell. “From a research stand-point, this allows our end-users to quickly update their research findings by looking for documents added since they last ran their query. With minimal or no changing of the web encoded pages, off-the-shelf Coveo presents a terrific user interface which supports every aspect of the SADO Brief Bank.”

“The incredibly simple user interface and fully-customizable back-end were key factors in our decision to deploy Coveo’s software for our new legal brief bank. Off-the-shelf, Coveo presents a terrific user interface which supports every aspect of the SADO Brief Bank.”

John Powell
Manager &
Webmaster, Michigan
State Appellate
Defender Office

Making the Most out of Metadata

In making the switch to Coveo, SADO staff insisted in leaving documents in their original format while taking advantage of the document properties fields or Metadata. Searchable information would be embedded within the original, self-contained file. Metadata captured would include: the document title, author and custom fields like: type of pleading, dates, court docket numbers and subject headings. By self-containing the subject information within the document, it is no longer necessary to maintain a separate 'card catalog' to index the Brief Bank. Since the information is in a searchable field, it can still be searched independently.

Adding the Metadata to a document is quite simple and through Coveo, the processing time for adding pleadings and other material to the Brief Bank was cut by 75%. Coveo Enterprise Search for Intranet also eliminated the need for additional coding. Coveo automatically generates a standard web browser version (HTML) of all documents in the database. This allows the end-user to quickly identify terms searched for within the document. Additionally, it provides a link to the original document in its original format. There is no need for additional HTML or proprietary software codes to be entered into any document.

With minimal training, SADO's brief bank is scaleable to any organization and can be maintained by either support staff or attorneys without much effort. Coveo requires little maintenance, so minimal staff time is required.

"Since Coveo can index many different formats, it is unnecessary for support staff or attorneys to be concerned with changing documents into different formats. Simply leaving documents in their native format makes Coveo an outstanding choice for law firms wishing to create an online brief bank," concluded Powell.

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