

Chapter 6 - Computer Concepts and Legal Applications

Fax Services

Fax communication is a critical business function of most firms. Today, you can receive, view, annotate and send faxes without ever having to print or manually feed a document. The cost savings for a law firm can be immense. If you can fax a document electronically in one minute instead of manually faxing a document in 10 minutes, it is a tremendous saving in personnel time. Since Alexander Bain patented the facsimile device in 1843 there are today over 110 million fax machines worldwide according to IDC. IDC predicts that there will be 200 million fax machines by 2020. However, IDC says these will not be 90,000,000 new standalone units. There will be more fax to e-mail services and multifunction devices that print, scan and convert paper documents to digital files.

Fax stands for facsimile transmission. A fax machine scans a piece of paper, digitizes it to an image and then sends it as electronic signals over transmission lines to a fax machine. The receiving machine recreates the image.

Your firm should consider a fax server. Fax servers send and receive faxes from a server integrated into the firm's network. Features to consider:

- Legal industry commitment and reputation of vendor;
- Vitally important is integration with e-mail programs and address books;
- Scalable software;
- Backup automatically;
- Remote management possible;
- Remote access to send and receive faxes;
- Access faxes from the web;
- Compression capability;
- Security of fax servers;
- Faxing several documents in a single transmission;
- Cost of system - fax server, training, maintenance, expanded licenses;
- Least cost routing feature - automatically transmits faxes by the least expensive path;

- Priority to incoming or outgoing faxes;
- User friendliness;
- Speed and volume limits;
- Automatic display of incoming fax;
- Location of important faxes;
- Billing validation with time and billing programs;
- Compatibility with MS Exchange, GroupWise, etc.;

- Screen display features - Single or multiscreen display, thumbnail sketches of faxes;
 - Broadcast fax capability;
 - History of faxes to specific client;
 - Compatibility with document management systems such as IManage, PC-Docs, etc.;
 - OCR capability;
 - Cost recovery statistics; Cover designer; Redelivery of faxes after annotations;
 - Annotation ability;
 - Tracking of Faxes;
 - Real-time routing of incoming faxes.
-

Products: Rightfax (www.rightfax.com); and Optus (www.facsys.com).