How award-winning Benelux law firm Stibbe uses DocsCorp solutions for core legal workflows

About Stibbe

Stibbe is an internationally-orientated Benelux law firm with over 375 lawyers. From its main offices in Amsterdam, Brussels and Luxembourg, together with its branch offices in Dubai, London and New York, Stibbe handles complex legal challenges for its clients both locally and cross-border. As a specialist firm, Stibbe's lawyers work in multidisciplinary teams and deliver pragmatic advice. They build close business relationships with their clients that range from local and multinational corporations to financial institutions, government organizations and public authorities. Stibbe's understanding of its clients' commercial objectives, their position in the market, and their sector or industry allows the firm to always provide clients with timely, effective, and appropriate advice on their complex local and cross-border legal challenges.

Legal	375 lawyers	Productivity

Ongoing issues: time for change

Olivier Van Eesbeecq, Head of ICT & Facilities at Stibbe's Brussels office, explained that, as a full-service law firm, none of the applications were new to Stibbe. He said, "We already had solutions in place for PDF editing, document comparison, and metadata cleaning. But we were not entirely satisfied with those solutions."

Jochem M. Roelofs, Head of ICT at Stibbe's Amsterdam office, added that a second driver for change was the number of PDF applications Stibbe had licensed. He said, "We had multiple versions of PDF readers and editors that had more functions than what a law firm would need, and it was costly to maintain. So, we did a quick business case, and it was obvious that we could save a lot by consolidating the functions into one cost-efficient PDF editor."

The firm's software-testing strategy

Stibbe's Brussels office was the first of the two to look for alternative solutions, and as part of that search, it tried out the DocsCorp desktop productivity suite: compareDocs, cleanDocs, and pdfDocs.

"I assigned one of my team members to spend a week testing the applications," said Olivier. "We had a set of test documents that we used to see if the DocsCorp solution would perform better than the existing solutions we use. For example, in cleanDocs, we tested the speed of removing metadata from multiple attachments, and we saw a big difference. The speed in cleanDocs was a lot faster than the speed of the solutions we were using."

The business needs:

Replace legacy software and eliminate performance and stability issues

Consolidate multiple PDF readers and editors into an all-purpose solution

Quickly and easily send tens of thousands of documents to printers

Improve version-control with an accurate document comparison tool

Implement document security with password protection and metadata cleaning

Find cost-savings working with a single vendor

Test and deploy a set of desktop productivity tools for two offices in the EU

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Olivier Van Eesbeecq, Head of ICT & Facilities at Stibbe Belgium

PDF editing and bundling

pdfDocs replaced multiple applications that were used at Stibbe and became the firm's only PDF viewer and editor. Besides the basics, like adding digital stamps to contracts and marking up a draft with comments and annotations, staff can rely on pdfDocs for automated conversion from and into PDF. Olivier said that the Stibbe ICT Helpdesk would get calls to convert a (Word, Excel, or other) document into PDF in the past, but "With pdfDocs, we have set up watch folders that automatically convert whatever file is dragged or dropped into them. Now our Helpdesk no longer needs to spare time and effort to do this."

"The second use case for pdfDocs," continued Olivier, "is its ability to print documents into PDF. Law firms often get access to a data room full of documents, which usually need to be printed. To do this, you would have to open the documents and click the print command one by one. This would take hours, and you would not be able to arrange the order of the documents, so they might not get printed in the correct order."

Fortunately for Stibbe, it used pdfDocs to skip this time-consuming manual workflow. pdfDocs was used to send documents to print in a fraction of the time it would've taken manually. This was a huge benefit for Stibbe when, at one time, it needed to print 25,000 documents in 24 hours. "Because we had pdfDocs, we were able to use the binder module to get it done quickly and easily," said Olivier. "We added them into the pdfDocs binder, arranged them in the correct order using drag and drop, and then pushed the whole file to the printers."

Document comparison and review

Legal documents and contracts go through multiple stages of editing and revision by multiple users. That's why Stibbe's lawyers rely on a document comparison application for version control. "Our co-workers want to see what has been changed from one version to another," said Jochem, "and with compareDocs, that process is much faster compared to the previous solution we were using." Additionally, Olivier said, "We noticed that the output and performance were much better in compareDocs than that of our incumbent product."

Data leak prevention, metadata cleaning, and an Extranet strategy

Document security is incredibly important for law firms like Stibbe, but applying the right checks should never slow users down or cause issues.

Efficiency is vital. "We found cleanDocs to be much faster at processing attachments than our legacy metadata cleaner," said Olivier. "But most importantly, it enables the firm to set up metadata cleaning policies that help minimize the risk of unintentional data loss. For example, part of our policy in cleanDocs is to apply security to PDF documents sent to external recipients, so only authorized recipients can access that information."

For its Extranet strategy, Stibbe uses the file-sharing platform, HighQ, to collaborate and share with clients and third parties certain documents and files. cleanDocs is embedded in the transfer process, so the metadata in any documents uploaded from the firm's document management system to HighQ is automatically cleaned. This is a crucial data-leak prevention strategy that happens behind the scenes, causing no delays for the end-user.

Bulk file processing for enterprise search

In addition to using DocsCorp desktop applications, Stibbe also uses contentCrawler to improve the value of its enterprise search engine. "We invested in enterprise search in the years prior to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We did this to make sure the firm's systems were future-proof," said Olivier. "The problem was, in order to have good search results, we needed to have searchable content, and not all PDFs are searchable. We were already using DocsCorp desktop applications, so when we found out there was a DocsCorp solution to convert files to text-searchable PDFs in bulk, it was a no-brainer for us."

Continue reading to find out how Stibbe used contentCrawler as part of its enterprise search strategy here.

Summary

Stibbe's Brussels and Amsterdam offices both replaced legacy software with DocsCorp solutions after experiencing on-going performance issues. In the process, they improved the speed and accuracy of document review, streamlined metadata cleaning, and cut costs by implementing a single, powerful PDF editor, and bundler.

Olivier concluded, "It was a pleasure working with DocsCorp during the pilot and deployment stages. Both the technical and commercial teams were very responsive to all our questions and made sure we had the information we needed to meet our objectives."