



Case In Point

Law Firm Finds Relief in RFID File Tracking

"It's been nearly 100 percent accurate. Time spent is cut down tremendously. It is awesome!"

*—Erica Scott, Trademark Group Practice Assistant,
Fish & Richardson P.C., Boston, Massachusetts*

"It was so successful at our test site (the Boston office) that it made complete sense to roll it out firm-wide. Virtually overnight, our ability to track and retrieve files improved dramatically, giving it a big boost to productivity."

*—Vickie Williams, Records Manager,
Fish & Richardson P.C., Spring, Texas*

The Law Firm

With Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and the Wright Brothers among its earliest clients, the 127-year-old law firm of Fish & Richardson today defends more patent litigation than any other firm in the United States, and is the leading firm for patent cases at the International Trade Commission. Fish & Richardson files more than 4,200 patent applications each year, and almost 500 new trademark applications. The firm employs more than 300 attorneys who serve clients in three core practice areas: intellectual property, litigation, and corporate law. Based in Boston, Fish & Richardson has offices in Dallas, Delaware, New York City, San Diego, Silicon Valley, Twin Cities, and Washington, D.C.

The Need

Lacking an automated tracking system for their physical files, Fish & Richardson's attorneys, paralegals and legal secretaries were devoting countless hours to the low-productivity task of searching for files in offices, on desks and in file cabinets. Billing time was being lost, professional skills were being misused, and expensive office space was occupied inefficiently by files that were irrelevant to current casework. Management recognized the need for a better system for tracking and retrieving physical files, and for condensing files to allow for the offsite storage of non-active ones.

The Solution

Fish & Richardson management became aware of the emerging application of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to file tracking and storage and sought information about how it might apply to their practice. In response, 3M assembled a strong, multi-functional project team that studied the firm's operations and then conducted an on-site demonstration of the 3M™ RFID Tracking System. Fish & Richardson also evaluated two other RFID systems and a barcode system. Following an extensive period of deliberation, the firm chose the 3M system. In addition to the functional superiority of the 3M system, the decision to go with 3M was aided by 3M's extremely helpful and attentive technical, sales and training team.

The Trademark Group of Fish & Richardson's Boston office was selected as the test site for installation of the system. Installation was accomplished in three phases so as to provide minimal disruption of the normal workflow. First, the 3M database was populated with records from the existing records management system. Secondly, file folders were tagged with 3M™ RFID Tracking Tags. After tag programming was complete, the files that once occupied two file rooms now were conveniently located in one central file room, achieving the goal of conserving office space. In all, 49 shelves were cleared by locating files no longer in use and sending them to an offsite storage facility.



For the final step, an entire office inventory was performed with the 3M™ Handheld Tracker to assure that all files were accurately recorded in the database, and a 3M™ Tracking Pad was installed in the central file room to check files in and out. With the system fully functional, a short training session was held for the staff. Tracking Pads were then installed at the workstation of every paralegal to further optimize processes and increase productivity.

The Results

Once the 3M™ RFID Tracking System was installed, there was a feeling of relief within the Trademark Group, and management saw an immediate increase in productivity. Remarkably, file accuracy was improved by 60 percent even before the Tracking Pads were installed at individual workstations.

“During a weekly teleconference shortly after the installation of the 3M™ File Tracking System, I was asked to comment on how we handle missing files,” recalls Debra Rose Brillati, Trademark Practice Systems Manager. “I responded that since we’ve been using the 3M RFID system, we don’t have any missing files.” The System also eliminates unnecessary time employees spend searching for misplaced files in the office. As in any commercial enterprise, time is money. The total time savings per year with the 3M™ File Tracking System installed in the Trademark Group alone is estimated at \$144,000.

“The time-savings were immediately evident following implementation of the system,” confirms Tim French, Managing Principal of the Trademark Practice Group. “The 3M data-driven approach is sound and the ROI speaks for itself.”

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