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When lawyers experience technical difficulties or face significant downtime, it's not a pretty picture. Downtime equals loss of billable hours, serious delays in client communications, and missed deadlines on court briefs. Support analysts face tremendous pressure to remedy a problem quickly, accurately, and within the lawyer's expected timeframe. That scenario may sound familiar to any support professional in any industry. Yet, the unique situations found in law firms generate a unique set of variables for defining IT services and building service management processes around them.

Linda Vega, IT support supervisor at Fish & Richardson, joined the HDI Law Forum specifically because of these unique situations when it comes to help desk issues. "The law firm culture is so similar across the profession, that we can easily relate to each other when it comes to technical problems and how we go about resolving them," says Linda. "Being able to collaborate with other people in this field has been invaluable in so many different ways."

Forum members select the topics they want to discuss prior to each meeting. Once together, they openly share challenges, discuss solutions others have successfully used, and puzzle through to uncover new resolutions. "We help each other solve problems and take away ideas that the entire forum can use to improve services back in their own offices," says Vega.

Forum Discussions Lead to Shared Best Practices

As a direct result of discussions and information sharing through the Law Forum extranet, the Fish & Richardson support team was able to create and implement a service catalog that improved the team's visibility to the users and demonstrated how its services aligned with the firm's business. With the unique nature of the Forum's structure and networking, Fish & Richardson weren't the only ones to get an industry-specific service catalog; all the Law Forum members received the same resource, leading to shared best practices around the profession.

The Fish & Richardson support team also implemented service level agreements, which came out of the discussions. The SLAs became instrumental in guiding the support staff on how to set the customer's expectations with regard to time-to-respond to help desk tickets. In light of staff reductions at the firm, the time to respond became an

even more critical variable. Letting colleagues know what services were available and whom to contact when they encountered a problem was a quick benefit of the service catalog. Prior to this, the staff often wasted time searching out who could help with an issue, creating even more lost billable hours. “Our staff has greater confidence in the support team,” says Vega. “They know they can rely on us to route the help desk tickets to the best tech and fulfill a response commitment within 10-15 minutes. That makes a huge difference to our lawyers whose time is extremely valuable.”

Firm Realizes Business Payback from Forum Participation

Implementing new service management policies and processes, which the team learned through the forum and other HDI events, made it possible for the IT support group to improve service levels even in the face of 50% staff reductions, according to Vega. “We’ve realized significant cost savings just by putting policies into effect that improved teamwork and efficiencies,” says Vega. “We don’t waste time, and we’re really able to service our customers more effectively as a result.”

Aside from these tangible benefits, the forum provides an open, non-competitive environment where members can relate to one another on hard issues, but also enjoy the social networking with peers. With the accompanying Law Forum extranet on the HDI site, that networking continues between each face-to-face meeting and all year round. “It’s a really great experience,” says Vega. “Everybody walks away having learned something new every time we meet. It’s just a tremendous, continuing resource for us.”



Linda Vega is the supervisor of desktop support and training for the law firm of Fish & Richardson PC in Boston, MA. She has been a member of the HDI Law Forum for three years and brings eight years of experience in technical service and support to this community.

About the HDI Law Forum



The HDI Forums are the highest level of HDI membership. The HDI Law Forum is an all-inclusive annual membership package that includes admission to the HDI Annual Conference & Expo, two three-day HDI Law Forum meetings, one HDI Gold Membership, and online tools that keep you connected to the Forum group year-round. The HDI Law Forum provides an opportunity for IT service and technical support managers, directors, and executives from law firms and legal services companies to engage in a strategic level of communication about similar support center issues. HDI Law Forum meetings provide members with a valuable opportunity to learn from each other, network, share ideas and experiences, discuss benchmark ideas, and develop support center best practices specifically for the legal services industry.

About HDI

HDI is the world's largest IT service and technical support membership association and the industry's premier certification and training body. Guided by an international panel of industry experts and practitioners, HDI is the leading resource for help desk/support center emerging trends and best practices. HDI provides members with a vast repository of resources, networking opportunities, and the largest industry event – the HDI Annual Conference & Expo. Headquartered in Colorado Springs, CO, HDI offers training in multiple languages and countries. For more information, visit www.ThinkHDI.com or call +1 719.268.0174.