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Newsletter/Post

Word v. WordPerfect: I Have Just Two Words for You ...

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TechnoLawyer member Jon Calhoun asks:

>"I think for most of us that swear by WordPerfect it is the
>Reveal Codes feature that always puts it head and
>shoulders above Word. I've not worked with Microsoft Word's
>Reveal Formatting that Kim described as "similar to"
>Reveal Codes." I'd appreciate further comments from those
>who use Word 2002, who also are familiar with WP, as to the
>ease of use and other characteristics of the Reveal
>Formatting."

Lynda LaPan responded:

>"I would like to go on record as being "FOR" the
>proposition that WordPerfect is much more cost effective
>that Word -- because complicated tasks can be completed in
>about 1/3 of the time, and edits of the document likewise
>take about 1/3 of the time. Please refrain from
>attempting to prove to me Word is better...."

I could not let the opportunity pass to comment on Lynda LaPan's dissertation. I have just two words for her: Training and standardization. Not just training for the legal secretaries and paralegals but training also for any attorney who will be working with documents. Standardizing Word styles and templates will make the creation and editing of documents MUCH more efficient than WordPerfect.

What are my credentials? I, too, started out with WordPerfect for DOS working in a word processing department for a medium size firm in San Francisco. Eventually I became manager of that word processing department and we were still on WordPerfect. Every year, starting with the introduction of Office 97, I gave Word a shot and every year I was extremely disappointed. Being a die-hard WordPerfect person, I had been heard to say "we'll move to Word over my dead body."

Three or four years ago, with the introduction of Word 2003, I, as usual, tried it out and was floored. Not only did it do everything WordPerfect could do but it ran much faster in a Windows environment. And, needless to say, I "ate my words." At that time, I was IT Director for a small law firm in North Carolina and I made the recommendation to move to Word. Since this firm was small, I sometimes took on the role of "word processor" and, yes, I created complex litigation documents. But one thing we had that many firms do not provide was formal Microsoft Word training.

Two years ago I started a training business specializing in WordPerfect to Word conversions for law firms. In those two years, I have trained approximately 200 "die-hard" WordPerfect users on the ins and outs of Word. And, I'm happy to say, I've had several of those "die-hard" WordPerfect users come to me and whisper, ever so quietly, "don't tell anyone but I like Word better than WordPerfect." As a matter of fact, many

people, after receiving training in Word, have difficulty going back to WordPerfect.

I'm not saying there aren't problems. But those problems usually occur when someone who "doesn't need training" tries to work on a document. And, many times, these people can't use WordPerfect adequately either!

As for standardization, a firm will increase its efficiency and, therefore, its bottom line by standardizing. With everyone using standardized templates and styles, creating and editing documents is much more efficient than WordPerfect. And, here's a little known fact for you: WordPerfect uses styles as well! Again, there will be problems usually occurring with documents from external sources. As a matter of course, I always recommend stripping those documents immediately and applying firm-standardized templates and styles. That will cut down on problems as that document works its way through the editing process.

I could go on and on with examples, ideas and suggestions on how to get the best bang for your buck when using Word (it is my business to do just that), but suffice it to say, training is the most important tool any firm will have with the introduction of ANY new piece of software. And, with Word, standardization will take most of the pain out of the transition.

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