POOR DOCUMENT QUALITY – DOES IT MATTER?

A few years ago, a global survey of law firms showed that few believed that poor document quality would lose them a client, however the clients surveyed disagreed and said that they would fire a firm for poor quality documents. It seems that situation has not improved much. Many lawyers may still be working from home, at least part of the time, without desk-side support and it is almost inevitable that poorly laid out precedents and recycling of documents is happening over and over. Law firms should more closely monitor the quality of the documents they create and distribute to clients and should enforce a policy that ensures out-of-date precedents are never used.

Working alongside legal professionals across the industry LTC4™[1] has provided extensive guidance by providing industry-accepted standards for efficiency. Great care and attention were used to make sure that training developed against an LTC4 learning plan would result in the least amount of attorney time spent in actual training. One of 10 Learning Plans there is one called "Working with Legal Documents" which is designed to provide a structure for training delivery with the goal of achieving a more competent workforce – both among lawyers and their support staff. LTC4's Certification of competence is also offered and can give added reassurance to clients.

An unprecedented industry collaboration called the Effectiveness Project was launched last year to address the issue of quality document drafting. As the legal world moves toward productization and efficiency, clients, legal professionals and those who evaluate their fees are met with the same challenge time and again: How do we know that the time invested in creating legal documents matches the value received?

Legal professionals and legal technologists have sought to address the problems hinted at in this question through automation. But jumping to automation offers a solution before naming the problem. The release of this Project's free milestone document and supplemental materials has rattled a few cages and there is hope it will lead to law firms looking again at their documents and the skills of those who are working with them. www.ltc4.org/effectiveness-project

Law firms are increasingly investing in new technologies; however, that does not ensure user adoption. In order to maximise the return on their investment the legal industry must invest much more time and energy into effective technology training. It can now be delivered in a variety of ways and take up very little time. In spite of the mistaken idea that modern software is so intuitive that training should not be needed there are far too many legal professionals who simply do not have the basic skills they need to do their job competently.

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[1] www.ltc4.org