

Spruson & Ferguson embrace innovation with Winscribe BPM

The Customer

As one of the first patent and trademark attorney firms in Australia, Spruson & Ferguson has been successfully servicing its clients' requirements for trademark, intellectual property and patent law for over 120 years. As one of the largest intellectual property (IP) firms in Australia, Spruson & Ferguson employs over 55 legal executives who apply their skills and experience across all elements of IP including its protection, management,

use, procurement, commercial assessment and exploitation, and enforcement.

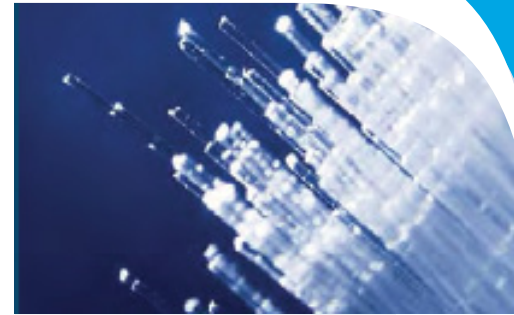
Spruson & Ferguson is the only Australian patent attorney firm with a direct presence in Asia, through its associated firm Ella Cheong Spruson & Ferguson (ECSF), with offices in Singapore and Malaysia and also supplies IP services throughout New Zealand and the South Pacific.

The Challenge

In 2010, Spruson & Ferguson contacted Winscribe initially looking to replace its old, analogue tape-based dictation system. After carrying out thorough research into different digital dictation providers, Spruson & Ferguson's selected Winscribe Digital Dictation as its preferred dictation provider, based on a comprehensive engagement process and previous positive experience by some staff members with Winscribe while at other firms.

Impressed by the workflow capabilities of Winscribe's digital dictation platform and its ability to route dictation jobs to different stakeholders in the document creation process, Spruson & Ferguson's IT Manager Simon Saunders began to think about using workflow technology to optimize a particularly

cumbersome internal process, unique to the IP practice. "In patent law, there is a fundamental requirement for accountability. Therefore all incoming faxes and e-mails have to be sent to a specific fax number and e-mail address, which are serviced by mail room staff who record the receipt of the message, print the message, identify the original recipient and then manually deliver the message to the intended recipient who informs the client that the email or fax has been received." While this process delivered the desired accountability, it contained a number of inherent problems. "We were not only wasting a tremendous amount of man hours, paper and calories by manually identifying and delivering these messages, we also had the added complication that we operate two mail rooms, on separate floors and the old system did not allow for us to re-route the workflow to a different printer or workstation, effectively meaning that mailroom staff would select messages for printing on one floor, then often had to take the stairs to collect the printed faxes or emails on another."



BENEFITS

- Significantly faster client response time
- More efficient back office operations
- Robust, re-usable and adaptive IT
- Improved process visibility and communication

"While we initially were only looking for a solution that alleviated a specific problem, we have realized the benefits that can be gained by looking at your firm from a different point of view. We have subsequently modelled over 60 different processes in our firm that we want to automate using Winscribe BPM."

Simon Saunders

*IT Director
Spruson & Ferguson*

The Solution

Uncovering business processes

After hearing about Winscribe's business process management software (Winscribe BPM) and its ability to connect and integrate disparate systems, pass information between users and workstations; while allowing for continuous bite-sized improvement through a graphical workflow designer, Spruson & Ferguson initially decided to re-create its existing Fax workflow as a testing ground for future projects. Spruson & Ferguson's senior in-house programmer Dat AuDuong explained: "Initially it took us a while to adjust the way we think about developing a feature. Where we originally would have just written a block of code to achieve a desired outcome, the graphical nature of Winscribe BPM has forced us to look closer at our business processes and examine its individual steps. We now have a much better idea of the processes in our firm and instead of a chunk of code that is hard to maintain and trouble shoot, we now have a graphical process tree with individual bits of functionality clearly defined. If we want to make changes, doing so is very easy and the graphical nature makes it much easier to communicate ideas between our business managers and IT staff".

Increased stability and flexibility

While the original project was only designed to re-create the existing bespoke solution, it actually enhanced this solution by allowing for automatically querying the document management system (e.g. Interwoven) and sending e-mails with an attached document link (e.g. iManage). Furthermore, the solution provided a number of benefits over the previous solution, for example, increased stability

through allowing for alternative workflow paths and error handling; less development time as individual workflow components can be re-purposed for different projects; easier troubleshooting due to the graphical nature of Winscribe BPM and semantic separation between different pieces of functionality; and most fundamentally, significantly more powerful routing options between process stakeholders. This meant that mail room staff did not have to walk the stairs any more to pick up their printed faxes.

Discovering new possibilities for automation and improvement

Encouraged by their initial success, Spruson & Ferguson are currently developing a similar workflow for capturing, routing and storing their incoming e-mails. This second project will be more advanced and provide some exciting enhancements. Spruson & Ferguson IT Manager Simon Saunders explains: "For the e-mail workflow we have spent a significant amount of time determining the best possible way to achieve the outcomes we desire. It has been great to have Winscribe BPM as a tool, as it has allowed us to model the processes we want to build and showed us where we need to develop and enforce specific rules in order to achieve an outcome. The result will be a new e-mail workflow which will automatically detect the associated matter and desired internal recipient based on a number of possible triggers, for example text in the e-mails subject line, the originating sender's e-mail address or even text in the body of the email itself. Furthermore it will route the work to the desired recipient

and interface with our document management system to store the document in the right place with defined naming convention. Most importantly, it will smooth the way to a wholly electronic filing system and away from the current paper based processes." The new e-mail workflow will result in significantly faster response times for all matters at Spruson & Ferguson, efficiency gains in back office operations, and a significant reduction in paper waste.

The Vision

After almost one year working with Winscribe BPM, Spruson & Ferguson's IT Manager Simon Saunders has a clear vision for the business moving forward: "While we initially were only looking for a solution that alleviated a specific problem, we have realized the benefits that can be gained by looking at your firm from a different point of view. We have subsequently modelled over 60 different processes in our firm that we want to automate using Winscribe BPM." He added: "Spruson & Ferguson stands for innovation like no other law firm in Australia and it is vital to not only support our client's innovation, but be at the forefront of innovation ourselves. By using our practice management system as the heartbeat of our organization and Winscribe BPM as the arteries and veins through which work tasks and information flow to individual stakeholders, we can transition to a simplified and more robust work environment for all. It will, without a doubt, make us more competitive going forward."