

Best Authority From a Trainer's Perspective At Davis Wright Tremaine

By Thomas Steele, Special to the Legal Technology blog

TRAINERS ARE TEACHERS, yes, but we are also salespeople in an important sense. When the firm purchases new software, we have to “sell” it to the firm’s employees, so that they will grow comfortable with it, and will actually adopt the technology. This can sometimes be a challenge, especially if the software is particularly difficult to learn or is not intuitive. As trainers, we need to be evangelists for these products and convince people to apply them throughout the course of their workday. Only then does the firm realize its return on investment for the software purchase.

At Davis Wright Tremaine, our training team supports eight offices in the U.S. and we do much of our training via teleconferences over the Web. Seattle is our largest office, with over 500 people. Other offices include Bellevue, Wash.; Portland, Ore.; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Anchorage, Alaska; Washington, D.C.; New York and Shanghai, China.

One product which our users have responded to especially well has been Best Authority, which helps our litigation staff build a table of authorities within a brief. Best Authority helps our staff generate a TOA very quickly. It’s superior to other TOA products we have used and produces the results we are looking for.

BEST AUTHORITY HAS SEVERAL ADVANTAGES. First, people can create any TOA format that they want, and they can change it on the fly. When the attorney revises a brief after a TOA has been generated, which happens often, the secretary or word processor can rerun the document and quickly create a new TOA, without repeating any of their previous work. This is a huge advantage because lawyers are always on deadline for the briefs.

The entire process is usually completed under intense pressure to build the TOA as rapidly and as accurately as possible. With Best Authority, our staff can quickly rework a TOA as attorneys make revisions, until the brief is done. Best Authority gives you immediate results. This is the kind of accuracy and reliability the lawyers are looking for.

Currently, we are rolling out Best Authority in our Los Angeles office. The other domestic

offices are already using the software. There are about 90 employees in Los Angeles—43 attorneys and 47 staff. Our training strategy for the rollout is two-fold. First, we start with a pilot group, preferably those who are more vocal or who are Microsoft Word experts. We show them Best Authority and they give us their comments and questions. We use that feedback to determine how to train the rest of the users.

As a trainer, it has been a very positive experience to teach Best Authority. We enjoy showing our staff how to use the product—it is both easy to demonstrate and use.

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT, we have been very pleased with the responsiveness of Levit & James, the company that created Best Authority. I have come to them with issues and if it turns out I was doing something wrong, they will explain the proper method. If it’s an issue with the software itself, they will quickly fix the problem. For example, we have offices in Oregon and New York and, at first, Best Authority did not find some of those states’ citations. Levit & James provided an update within three weeks that solved the problem. Their customer support routinely responds with a solution within the day we report a problem, often within 1-2 hours after we call it in.

We have begun deploying Levit & James’ free e-Learning video tools so our users can brush up their Best Authority skills as needed. In some of our offices, there can be several months between briefs, and the staff may get a bit rusty on using Best Authority. The e-Learning tools are ideal if they need a quick refresher before they use the product effectively again.

Best Authority has been a very positive addition to our firm’s technology infrastructure. It’s a pleasure to train people on a product that works this well and has such a potential to improve the workflow of putting out legal documents.

Thomas Steele is a senior technical trainer at Davis Wright Tremaine, LLP.

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