

WEBBER WENTZEL EMBRACES DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION WITH iMANAGE AND MICROSOFT

Lawyers get back 18 minutes per hour with productivity gains



WEBBER WENTZEL

in alliance with > **Linklaters**

Industry:

- Legal

Headquarters:

- Johannesburg, South Africa

iManage footprint:

- iManage Work in the Cloud
- iManage Insight



About Co-operative Computing:

- Implementation partner, Co-operative Computing, offers comprehensive business process automation solutions and support services for professional and corporate business services.

Respected law firm Webber Wentzel wanted to transform the way their lawyers worked. They knew that embracing iManage Work in the Cloud with Microsoft Office 365 would offer the productivity improvements they needed to work in a more client-centric way. After they made the upgrade, the firm was able to save lawyers 18 minutes per hour and shorten their trade council submission process from seven months to three weeks.

Webber Wentzel is a South African law firm that aims to work alongside its clients as a trusted advisor, delivering world-class legal expertise and innovative thinking. Webber Wentzel's market-leading position is reinforced by numerous accolades and achievements.

The challenge

Developing a new business model

As a forward-thinking law firm, Webber Wentzel saw several years ago that shifts were occurring in the traditional working model.

"I think it's a global trend, where clients are starting to move away from the billable hour concept. And as we looked at our own digital transformation, we were trying to conceptualize what an alternative or new business model would look like for us," said Warren Hero, CIO, Webber Wentzel.



We didn't move to the cloud to save costs. We moved to the cloud in order to realize the innovation premium.

Warren Hero
CIO, Webber Wentzel

Benefits

- Shortened trade council submissions from 7 months to 3 weeks
- Saved 18 minutes per hour for lawyers
- Upgraded technology in just 4 months

He went on, “We realized that in order to have the leeway to introduce a new kind of business model, we have to be able to deliver a degree of productivity improvement. Ultimately, we envisage that our business model would be much more value oriented and outcome oriented with our clients.”

To achieve this “new kind of business model” and get closer to their goal of being more client oriented, Warren Hero envisioned a digital transformation that would offer a new way of working for the firm’s lawyers.

The solution

Embracing a brand-new technological interface

Hero wanted to update and streamline the entire technological interface that Webber Wentzel lawyers interacted with every day. At a base level, that meant getting the latest versions of all their solutions. Looking at the big picture, however, it meant fully embracing the synergistic capabilities of iManage Work in the Cloud and Microsoft Office 365 used together.

“We [already] used to work mostly in Windows 10... [but] in changing our technology interface, we needed to move to Office 365 and iManage Work 10 [in the Cloud]. We needed to use iManage as our repository of record to drive interaction with our clients, but also internally in the organization,” Hero explained.

In early 2020, Hero was initially planning on a 12-month process for making technology upgrades. But when the pandemic hit, the Technology Advisory Committee asked to accelerate the change so that lawyers could access Work in the Cloud without a VPN, making it easier to work remotely.

Hero clarified, “We still have a lot of last mile problems in our neck of the woods in terms of connectivity. That ability to [connect without a] VPN, because of Office 365 and some of the other multi-factor authentication options we introduced, gave our firm the ability to work more flexibly.”

An easy upgrade and time saved for users

Fortunately, the teams at Webber Wentzel took quickly to the changes being made. Because of their previous familiarity with Work 9 and Windows 10, they largely found Work in the Cloud and Office 365 to be very intuitive. Implementation partner Co-operative Computing also helped to ensure that the upgrade was a smooth process.

As a result, very little training was needed to get users up to speed on the upgraded technology. The transition was so frictionless, in fact, that the planned 12-month process ultimately took only four months—a stunning success that led to enormous time savings. With the productivity gains from the new technology, lawyers now had an additional 18 minutes back per hour.

The benefits

Shortening a process from months to weeks

As part of the Webber Wentzel digital transformation, Hero wanted to address a time-consuming process at the firm: trade council submissions.

“These large, regulated submissions used to take in the region of about seven months to complete,” Hero explained.



The ability to read an email in Outlook and file it into iManage is absolutely invaluable to our firm.

Warren Hero
CIO, Webber Wentzel

After studying the process as it was currently done, Hero had two realizations. First, encouraging people to view the same document and collaborate in real time using iManage Work in the Cloud was going to be critical to speeding things up. Second, ensuring that the firm had the right structure in place in Work and making sure that everyone understood how to progress a letter through that folder structure would make the process a lot smoother.

Hero worked with the firm's knowledge management team to implement legal project management procedures to support the above, while also improving the virtual meeting system to ensure that submissions weren't held up because the right people weren't able to get into the same room at the same time.

The results were impressive. "With iManage Work as our knowledge repository, plus the legal project management, plus the improved process, plus the collaboration aspect, we were able to take the process down from seven months to three weeks," Hero enthused.

iManage and Microsoft are better together

The strengthened partnership between iManage and Microsoft and the implementation assistance from partner Co-operative Computing were both, in Hero's words, "colossal factors" in the productivity improvements that Webber Wentzel made.

He elaborated, "We were able to design a highly available system [with Work on Microsoft Azure]. Being able to be productive when you need to be productive in Work in the Cloud, where we do about 90% of our revenue-generating work, is absolutely critical."

The application integrations between iManage and Microsoft have also been crucial.

"The ability to read an email in Outlook and file it into iManage is absolutely invaluable to our firm. Because once you create the filing logic, that process...kicks itself off, [which is one of] the new benefits with the Microsoft Power Platform. Power Apps further gives us the ability to kick off workflows, and to see that tight collaboration between Microsoft products and the iManage platform."

Seeing the big picture

In addition to streamlining processes and saving lawyers valuable time, digital transformation has also helped Webber Wentzel refine their vision and get closer to their goal of being more client centric.

"The executive committee, the board, and the partnership realized that technology is no longer just a supporting part of our business, but actually a strategic enabler. And because of that perspective, we took another look at our organization's mission and vision," Hero explained.

"Part of what we interrogated was that sometimes this vision or mission is stuck on a wall somewhere, but we wanted something more. We believe in a digital context, an organization needs to be purpose driven. Part of the way we thought about that purpose is that we want to be transformative through our work and our actions."

For Webber Wentzel, technology is essential to doing transformative work.

In Hero's words, "When we think about transformation, we think about both the operational transformation and the strategic transformation. The operational transformation is about productivity improvements, and the strategic transformation is... the ability to use the time [gained from productivity improvements] not to enrich ourselves, but to find a way to give back to our community, to give back to our clients, and to become a trusted advisor."



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Warren Hero
CIO, Webber Wentzel

Using technology to achieve desired client outcomes

At Webber Wentzel, iManage and Microsoft are crucial components of becoming that trusted advisor. Microsoft Dynamics helps Webber Wentzel better understand client sentiment, while iManage Work, in addition to securely managing documents, also serves as a repository for behavioral knowledge that helps the firm assign the right lawyers to clients or matters.

“At Webber Wentzel we think about our human capital platform as a repository of your academic knowledge, and iManage as a repository of your behavioral knowledge and we put those together to understand what your core capabilities are,” Hero said.

He went on, “When a matter arrives at Webber Wentzel, we don’t depend on a partner to know that somebody has the capability [for this particular matter]. We take a data-driven approach to bring together [the information from our] applications to see our lawyer’s academic knowledge and their behavior in iManage Work to create a skill map of the individual, and then match that to the matter or an outcome that the client wants.”

Saving time with AI

Webber Wentzel has also been employing iManage Insight to make it easier to find the right information in Work.

Hero enthused, “We anticipate a partner spends at least 15 minutes every two hours searching for stuff. The ability to get rid of the time spent searching becomes significantly powerful.”

By pairing Insight with other artificial intelligence capabilities at the firm, it is now much faster and easier for lawyers to understand the content of documents housed in iManage Work.

As Hero explained, the capability to use technology to quickly understand a document “gives us the ability to consistently make sure that when we dialogue with the client, we understand the context of the dialogue, and we understand where the risks are.”

Looking ahead

For Webber Wentzel and Hero, the firm’s digital transformation is not a one-and-done change, but an ongoing process toward their goal of a new, more client-centric way of working. Going forward, the firm is watching the iManage and Microsoft roadmaps closely so they can prepare to take advantage of new features as they are available. Hero and his team are also looking at further ways to improve productivity through automation and bots. Innovation isn’t just a buzzword at Webber Wentzel—it is a way of life.

About iManage™

iManage is the company dedicated to Making Knowledge Work™. Its intelligent, cloud-enabled, secure knowledge work platform enables organizations to uncover and activate the knowledge that exists inside their business content and communications. Advanced Artificial Intelligence and powerful document and email management create connections across data, systems, and people while leveraging the context of organizational content to fuel deep insights, informed business decisions, and collaboration. Underpinned by best of breed security, sophisticated workflows and governance approaches, iManage has earned its place as the industry standard through continually innovating to solve the most complex professional challenges and enabling better business outcomes for over one million professionals across 65+ countries. Visit www.imanage.com to learn more.