

Thompson Coburn Optimizes Docketing Workflows with ANAQUA



INDUSTRY CHALLENGE

For decades law firms have dealt with the unintended consequences of putting technology — IP docketing systems in particular — into the hands of only a select few.

IP docketing systems were traditionally built exclusively for docketing teams, creating a centralized docketing function that is still found today in many law firm operations. Historically, the docketing group has been the sole team responsible for updating the system, with legal practitioners and law firm clients long discouraged from having direct access — partly due to perceived concerns around data accuracy with broadened access, but also due to the limitations of most IP management systems. For example, the way that many systems are set up and operated, attorneys generally are not able to update the matters they are intimately familiar with, nor adjust client-controlled deadlines or close tasks that have been assigned to them. As a result, many attorneys and paralegals have been constrained to communicating with their docketing departments through email, or other means. Instead of updating certain records in the system first-hand, they email docketing and wait for the system to be updated on their behalf. Thus, this “centralized accountability” model has created some unintended inefficiencies such as delays and double data entry.

A major reason for this is that IP management systems are often incapable of providing law firm teams (outside of docketing) and clients with visibility and permission-based access into the docketing system. As a result, these systems and the work practices they encourage exclude a firm’s attorneys and paralegals as well as its clients from helpful access to docketing updates and tools that can enhance internal communications and streamline operations for IP practice efficiency.

New and improved systems like ANAQUA, however, give law firms the ability to address such inefficiencies, while not compromising on data quality. In many ways, firms that use systems like ANAQUA can enhance the overall quality of their data by getting more people actively involved and allotting docketing more time for an even higher-level of QC.



Decreased

steps in update process
from 5 to 2



Reduced

administrative file maintenance
work for all attorneys,
paralegals, and staff



Increased

collaboration, productivity,
and efficiency



Improved

accountability and workflows



Enhanced

overall data quality and
report accuracy

THOMPSON COBURN SOLUTION

Recognizing ANAQUA is designed to accommodate all law firm functions and roles, Thompson Coburn's docketing team invited its attorneys and paralegals to work directly in the system, creating a more collaborative, streamlined, and efficient IP operational workflow.

ANAQUA serves as Thompson Coburn's centralized IP management system where all of the IP Department's documents, records, reports, and client IP portfolio information are securely hosted in a user-friendly, web-based platform. Recognizing ANAQUA is designed to accommodate all law firm functions and roles, Thompson Coburn invited its attorneys and paralegals to work directly in the system. The Thompson Coburn IP operations team evaluated their docketing processes and identified which tasks were critical for the docketing team to own and which tasks logistically made sense for the original keeper of the information to input directly into the system. The team then leveraged ANAQUA's robust security features to give attorneys and paralegals the ability to take greater ownership of their own work and provide clients with quicker visibility into docket-related work status.

With ANAQUA, attorneys and paralegals can assign, re-assign, and track progress of all tasks with staff from multiple offices. Working attorneys, paralegals, and administrative staff have an efficient interface to view and delegate the work they're assigned.

Below are the best practices Thompson Coburn created and implemented to increase productivity, and ensure data accuracy and integrity of docketing while expanding accountability:

1. The docketing department remains responsible for adding all prosecution templates, office actions, new filings, etc. All critical task functions such as statutory deadlines, office actions and responses, foreign filing deadlines, etc. still have to be logged and tracked by docketing.
2. Thompson Coburn's docketing team utilizes ANAQUA's user profile settings to give Legal Administrative Assistants (LAAs) and paralegals the opportunity to manage their own noncritical tasks. ANAQUA's functionality allows the team to add, remove or assign noncritical tasks to attorneys and paralegals. For example, they can remove reporting letters, status checks, etc.
3. Through ANAQUA's advanced audit capabilities, the docketing team can quickly see who changed what, and when, and enables them to check for and correct any potential errors as soon as they occur.
4. The docketing team creates guidelines to ensure consistency in how all matters are created and entered in the system. This includes a QC role that is responsible for making sure the system is consistent, standardized, and normalized.

"By utilizing ANAQUA's tasks and comments features to track important information, and by giving attorneys and paralegals visibility and permission-based access to their dockets, we are creating a more efficient and streamlined IP practice."

— Michelle Saitz, IP Practice Support Services Supervisor, Thompson Coburn LLP

RESULT

Through decentralized accountability, Thompson Coburn's docketing team can focus on an even higher-level of QC, enrich the overall quality of the data in the system, and allot more time for analytical work. Attorneys and paralegals are empowered to take ownership, manage their docketing-related tasks, and make the system work for them and their clients.

By giving attorneys and paralegals touchpoints in the system, Thompson Coburn created a more collaborative, streamlined, and efficient IP operational workflow. What once took about five communications steps in the update process (reviewing, emailing, assigning, responding, etc.) can now be completed in two steps. Through decentralized accountability, docketers can focus on an even higher-level of QC, enrich the overall quality of the data in the system, and allot more time for

analytical work. Attorneys and paralegals are empowered to take ownership, manage their docketing-related tasks, and make the system work for them and their clients by using features such as on-demand reporting. As demonstrated by Thompson Coburn, overall decentralized accountability supported by the right technology, can help bring efficiency to IP Practice operations.

"When our attorneys and paralegals look at their dockets they can immediately see updated statuses and comments, which makes everybody more efficient. Everyone can be on the same page instantly."

— Allyson Campbell, IP System Administrator, Thompson Coburn LLP
