

Sustainable Growth and Agility: Swift Currie's Move to the Cloud

swift/currie

"Southern grown, nationally known" Swift Currie McGhee & Hiers is the largest (over 350 employees) law firm in Georgia focused exclusively on litigation. With more than 50 years of litigation experience and offices in both Atlanta and Birmingham, Swift Currie is at the forefront of legal writing, speaking, and education. The firm maintains steady growth and considers its talented attorneys and staff to be the keys to its continued success. Named to the U.S. News & World Report "Best Law Firms" list and maintaining a consistent presence on the Atlanta Business Chronicle "Top 50 Atlanta Law Firms" list, Swift Currie prides itself on its efficiency, practicality, and rock-solid relationships with its clients.

When Swift Currie needed a fresh perspective on its IT infrastructure and help ushering in new technologies, the firm turned to the experts at Affinity Consulting Group.

THE CHALLENGE

Swift Currie's relationship with Affinity began with a practice analysis engagement. Substantial growth in 2017 and early 2018 had revealed the need for changes to the firm's existing IT infrastructure, and IT group co-chairs Brad Wolff and Wally Saunders determined that the time was right to bring in some external expertise.

"It was becoming very evident that our infrastructure was a little 'long in the tooth' and a bit strained," explains Saunders, "so it was a good time to step back and take a fresh look at where we were as a firm, where we were with technology, and where we wanted to go."

In addition to the limitations of the firm's legacy systems, its new workforce—younger, tech-native attorneys and staff—had different needs and requirements than some of the firm's more senior members. Further, the firm's existing practice management system was lacking key functionality and, because of a recent acquisition, was no longer being supported.

"Our systems weren't robust enough for the additional remote work demands, which would prove very important later on," says Saunders. "We didn't have the collaboration tools we needed and an increasing focus on cyber-security made the choice to upgrade an easy one."

Wolff had recently met Affinity partner Steven Best at an American Bar Association event. Best, a former practicing attorney, demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the practical challenges and personalities involved in the practice of law, and Affinity's organizational culture seemed well aligned with Swift Currie's.



"We appreciated Affinity's unbiased approach," Saunders explained. "It was clear that they viewed their role as making sure Swift Currie was successful. That level of comfort is what led us to hire Affinity."

**“IT WAS A LOT OF WORK,
BUT AFFINITY REALLY DID
A MARVELOUS JOB.”**



THE SOLUTION

Affinity's comprehensive firm analysis, led by Best, yielded several recommendations, starting with a move from on-premises software to cloud-based solutions. This move, facilitated by ProCircus Technologies, would enable Swift Currie to gain the advantages of increased flexibility, compatibility across devices, improved service continuity, off-premises backups, and lower cost of ownership while maintaining strong compliance, security, and performance. Affinity also recommended a shift from the firm's existing practice management system to a more flexible, scalable solution. After reviewing several candidates, the Swift Currie team selected Orion.

A move to the cloud necessitated tough decisions around document management. Would the firm maintain a hosted version of its legacy document management system or migrate to NetDocuments, a platform built exclusively for the cloud?

“Several factors were involved in that decision,” says Saunders. “Several folks internally had used NetDocuments at other firms, were comfortable with it, and touted its abilities and how easy it was to use. And there was frustration related to ways documents were being annotated and saved—and how difficult it was to find documents—in our existing system.” Discussions with the Orion team about integration possibilities further tipped the scales in NetDocuments' favor.



Implementations of Affinity's recommendations were handled thoughtfully, with phased rollouts occurring over several months. When the time came for Swift Currie's NetDocuments implementation in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic added unexpected complexity, forcing both the firm's and Affinity's teams to coordinate the rollout and data migration from their home offices.

“Both teams had to be nimble and pivot to a completely remote roll-out,” recounts Beth Thompson, Affinity's Director of Client Engagement. “Everyone involved from the firm and Affinity stepped up and the project was a big success.”

The situation, Saunders agrees, was not optimal given the firm's lack of control over their staff members' home office environments and equipment. “It was a lot of work, but Affinity really did a marvelous job,” he says.

“IT WAS A BIG MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB,
BUT IT WORKED OUT AND THE
RESULTS ARE WORTH IT.”



THE RESULTS

While the pandemic was an unpleasant surprise, its limited impacts on Swift Currie’s ability to conduct business highlighted the rewards of the firm’s move from on-premises software to the cloud. Not only was the firm’s infrastructure flexible enough to accommodate the shift to a work-at-home model, but its relationships with Affinity and ProCircus meant quick problem-solving and easy access to support as employees learned to work remotely.

“Affinity’s recommendation of ProCircus has proven incredibly valuable,” Saunders says. “They bore the brunt of our transition to working at home, and all of our folks had glowing feedback about their experiences with the ProCircus team.”

In addition to the many benefits of moving to the cloud, Swift Currie’s implementation of NetDocuments has allowed for substantially more collaboration between the firm’s practice groups. Documents are organized in an intuitive way and accessible—securely—from home as well as from the firm’s offices. The firm is also enjoying the benefits of state-of-the-art hardware and the ability to conduct business anywhere, anytime, from any device. The Swift Currie team also feels confident about the firm’s ability to handle the unexpected in the future.

“Our security is tighter now,” Saunders says. “Our disaster recovery and business continuity infrastructure has been stabilized. It’s been a win across the board.”

His advice to firms still struggling with outdated infrastructure and resistance to change? “Do your homework. Get the right people involved. It was a big mountain to climb, but it worked out and the results are worth it.”

ABOUT AFFINITY CONSULTING GROUP

At Affinity Consulting Group, we inspire, enable, and empower legal teams of all sizes to work smarter. Our holistic approach incorporates people, process, and technology. Our passionate, well-connected industry experts work hand in hand with you to help you better understand and optimize your business—from software to growth strategy, and everything in between. Our vast network of partners and deep industry expertise ensure that we can deliver cost-effective, custom-tailored solutions to even your toughest business challenges. If we don’t do it, we know someone who does. Please visit our website to learn **more: www.affinityconsulting.com**