Keeping competitive in a tough and changing legal market is a challenge for even the most competitive and progressive legal firms. One that's keeping ahead of the pack, is Dickinson Dees LLP. Founded 200 years ago in Newcastle, today the company has a presence across major towns and cities in the UK including London, Newcastle, Teesside and Leeds. Specialising in the provision of legal services for companies and organisations in fields as diverse as care services, education, financial services, the public sector, healthcare and real estate, Dickinson Dees' investment in technology has underpinned its ability to response quickly to industry and market changes and deliver even better value and service to its clients.

Values that stand the test of time

"Over the past few years, Dickinson Dees has worked hard to look at ways to differentiate in tough economic conditions," explains David Bullock, Information Technology Manager at Dickinson Dees. "Although the company has City-quality experts, it provides the personal service clients expect from local lawyers. We've found that this approach resonates with those who want excellence, but without excessive costs."

Nuance Imaging central to document efficiency

A key component in the control of those costs – and central to Dickinson Dees' digital workflow - are document capture, print management services and PDF solutions from Nuance, including eCopy ShareScan, eCopy PDF Pro Office, and Nuance Equitrac. Combined, they are helping Dickinson Dees to use less paper and print less, even though the legal industry remains paper and document intensive. Nuance's solutions are enabling Dickinson Dees to increase its document workflow efficiency by moving to an electronic document model, to offset many of the processes, inefficiency and environmental disadvantages of working mainly with printed matter.

Nuance eCopy ShareScan is a document capture solution. It enables multifunction printer users to engage their business applications and processes at the point of capture, through a simple, engaging, and interactive interface. In this application, Nuance eCopy ShareScan uses an eCopy Connector for Autonomy iManage Worksite. This enables users to convert hard copy documents into electronic images that can be stored in the desired workspaces and folders within iManage WorkSite. eCopy ShareScan works in conjunction with the company's 63 multifunction devices, which typically scan approximately 2,000 documents a month.

Where the use of eCopy ShareScan is concerned, David explains that within the company, today "...everybody uses it, and that Scan-to-me and Scan-to-email are proving very popular, while other features such as Scan-to-fax and Scan-to-iManage are also useful tools to have." David believes that eCopy ShareScan has delivered real value back to the business because it "...enables us to react more effectively to clients' needs. It gives users the option and hence the flexibility to do almost everything at the device, quickly and efficiently." And the efficiency it delivers is a core benefit to Dickinson Dees, because capturing documents electronically, accelerates the drive toward a paperless office, while creating an electronic paper trail that adheres to the Financial Services Authorities' guidelines on compliance.

Saving time, money and adding value

Of course, implementing any new solution that alters former processes and ways of doing things, requires an element of change management. David explains how the team at Dickinson Dees initially responded to eCopy ShareScan's introduction: "We had our early adopters driving the uptake, supported by a change management process." It wasn't long though before the practical benefits of eCopy started to resonate, as David explains: "Usage is now up compared to six months ago, with approximately 90% of staff enjoying the benefits of using eCopy ShareScan."

Of course, capturing documents electronically has many benefits, but these advantages are all but lost if data remains 'locked in' to scanned documents, or proves cumbersome to manipulate or share. To ensure that its team is able to turn PDFs into workable documents, Dickinson Dees settled on Nuance eCopy PDF Pro Office, favouring it over rival products. David illustrates that even before its other benefits are considered, eCopy PDF Pro Office has a price advantage and value proposition that competitor products can't match. "The procurement budget we had for a PDF solution, would have only stretched to ten licences of a competitor product. That would not be enough for our PDF needs. With eCopy PDF Pro Office, we found a solution priced in the real world, with no apparent compromise in quality, flexibility or performance. PDF Pro Office plays the value and performance card exceptionally well."

Benefits for all to see, and all to appreciate

David has particular praise reserved for PDF Pro Office's document handling and assembly function, which he describes as "excellent", illustrating his enthusiasm for it by explaining that creating one report from six pages from six reports took no training, and was accomplished in minutes, rather than hours. In another case, the increased productivity delivered by PDF Pro Office within one of the legal teams at Dickinson Dees, enabled that team to save approximately £5,000 in fee-earner time alone.

It's not just David that's enjoying the benefits, but Dickinson Dees' secretarial team too. They have come to depend on the 'excellent' accuracy of the OCR engine, which makes converting documents to PDFs very easy. According to David, "...thanks to eCopy PDF Pro Office, the secretaries no longer have to start documents from scratch – or annotate on paper - which greatly reduces document error rates." Now deployed across all the company's PCs, David also suggests that eCopy PDF Pro Office's intuitive and user friendly nature, encourages users to exploit even more of the product's rich feature set, and even do things they weren't able to do before. David believes that "all users now look at how they can do things themselves. Even if this saves them a few minutes per job, over time there's a cumulative saving for all parties."

A better route to cost recovery

To ensure that the benefits of this time saving isn't lost through ineffective billing, for cost recovery Dickinson Dees is now reliant on the cost recovery component of Nuance Equitrac print management service. David explains that "Equitrac is very intuitive to use and has been integrated onto our MFD devices. Equitrac is an established and recognised name, so it

has been a safe bet as far as cost recovery solutions go. It also gives us a really good insight into who's printing what, and how much they're printing."

Looking to the future

As Dickinson Dees testifies, 200 years of success hasn't been achieved by dwelling on the past. Instead, it has an eye to the future, and invests in class leading products from Nuance that are set to guarantee its ongoing growth, and help it secure further achievements in the field of legal services.