Case Study:
Shulman, Rogers, Gandal, Pordy & Ecker P.A.

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How Omtool's AccuRoute Transformed Shulman Roger's Trusts and Estates Department from Cold Case to Instant Trust

By Robert Baumgarten, CIO (Shulman, Rogers, Gandal, Pordy, & Ecker P.A.)

Transformational technologies are few and far between at law firms – often taking years to identify, implement, and measure the impact in any meaningful way. It may be hard to believe that a records scanning initiative can dramatically improve the efficiency of a law practice, but at Shulman, Rogers, Gandal, Pordy & Ecker, P.A. ("Shulman Rogers"), it actually happened. One of the many impacts of the firm's scanning initiative was felt within the firm's Trust and Estates department, where the **client experience was quickly elevated in a surprisingly positive manner.**

The nature of any trusts and estates practice is that a legal team will work diligently to prepare wills and other estate planning documents on behalf of a client. Once executed, those documents may sit undisturbed for years - or even decades. For the client, the process of drawing up trusts and estates documents marks a notable occasion in their lives. Years may pass before another life event causes a client or surviving member of the client's family to contact the firm. The client or family member is fully expecting to speak with a lawyer intimately familiar with their matter. Of course, many years may have passed since the last interaction - and the documents related to the matter have likely long since been sent to a secure storage facility or stored in fireproof safes which are not immediately accessible to the attorneys. Even so, our firm strives to respond with trust, confidence and knowledge of our clients' situation. To properly serve our clients, we needed the trusts and estates files to be instantly accessible, not gathering dust in a cold archive. This was our challenge and records scanning was our solution.

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Records scanning is often considered a mundane, administrative "back-office" function. However, converting years' worth of paper into searchable, instantly accessible content has substantially transformed our trusts and estates practice. Our proactive records scanning project saved our lawyers and staff countless non-billable hours and has dramatically improved our service levels and overall client experience.

The firm purchased AccuRoute, a document capture software solution from Omtool, back in 2008. AccuRoute enabled us to scan documents directly from our copiers and electronically route them to specific Windows folders or email inboxes. AccuRoute itself worked well, but our destinations for the documents were problematic. At the time, the firm did not have a Document Management System ("DMS") and our users' email inboxes were ballooning from the influx of scanned documents. Whether the documents were being sent to a user's email inbox or to a Windows folder, they were not organized or searchable from any centralized location. So, even though we had invested time and treasure in setting up the scanning, locating relevant documents remained an inefficient process. We began searching for a better method for storing and organizing the scanned documents.

We installed Autonomy's iManage DMS and purchased AccuRoute's iManage DMS Connector from Omtool. The fully integrated AccuRoute-iManage solution allowed us to scan directly into the iManage client-matter folders. **The process is simple - our administrative assistants print out AccuRoute scan routing sheets barcoded with client and matter designations**. These scan routing sheets serve the same purpose as fax cover sheets – helping to route documents to the correct destination. Placed atop documents at any one of our Multi-Function Devices ("MFDs"), these scan routing sheets enable our users to easily scan documents directly to our AccuRoute server – which in turn interprets the barcode on each scan routing sheet and dutifully follows the embedded instructions. Typically, users opt to have the scanned documents converted into searchable PDFs and placed directly into a matter centric folder within iManage. iManage's search engine then automatically indexes the searchable PDFs and makes them universally accessible via simple full-text searching across a repository of nearly 20 million documents. AccuRoute - together with iManage - alleviates our most troubling document management problems and works seamlessly to put us on the right path toward greater efficiency.

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Our next step was to utilize the proven AccuRoute-iManage process to streamline the workflow within our trusts and estates practice. When clients or surviving family members contacted us years or decades after their documents were originally executed, the inquiries were typically routed to the chair of the Trusts and Estates Department, who first spoke with the client or family member and then tasked an assistant with locating the necessary files. Retrieving the files from storage typically took the assistant between 24-48 hours, at which point copies were made before sending the originals back to storage. The lawyer would review the documents to familiarize themselves with the case and answer any questions the client may have and email copies of any relevant documents to them. The whole process was taking between 48-72 hours from initial contact to closure - and all of our attorneys' and their assistants' time was unbillable. With the right tools, we knew we could better serve our clients' needs. With the AccuRoute-iManage process in place, this slow process of responding to clients' requests was replaced with a **streamlined workflow, giving our attorneys and staff instantaneous access to documents that were sometimes decades old**. All original trust and estates documents were pulled from our safes and scanned directly into matter-centric folders in iManage – 7,500 separate paper documents in all - averaging 30 pages each. We purchased a high-performance scanner and tasked a member of our facilities team with completing the job within a year. We completed the project in under 9 months – and are thrilled with the results.

Today, when clients call our Trusts and Estates Department, **our attorneys now have instantaneous access to the relevant documents** in iManage – regardless of how long ago they were created. Within a few short minutes, our attorneys are able to re-familiarize themselves with the details of the matter and provide meaningful information to the client. A happy client is more likely to consider the firm for future business and this level of service has, indeed, resulted in additional client engagements. Even in circumstances where the streamlined process has not immediately resulted in additional billable work, the ability to quickly complete these non-billable tasks enables our attorneys to spend more time focusing directly on revenue-generating matters.

Going paperLESS does not mean going paperFREE. Try as you might, you will never separate attorneys from their addiction to paper. Acknowledging this reality, we have implemented a firm-wide records policy to minimize the amount of paper being sent off-site when a matter closes. We encourage our users to leverage the AccuRoute-iManage solution to ensure all substantive documents are stored within our DMS. AccuRoute provides an easy tool to ensure that those externally generated documents find their way into a document repository alongside every internally generated document. We have accepted that most lawyers want a paper copy stored – and even if that means having some redundant recordkeeping, the system is still 100 percent better than it was before AccuRoute arrived.

The training we provide to support our process improvement accelerates user adoption and aids in change management. We offer personalized, one-on-one training at the individual desktop to introduce the lawyers and staff to the new technology. We also have "SCAN TO ACCUROUTE" quick buttons on our MFDs to make the process simple and top-of-mind.
AccuRoute has been so well-received and easy to use in our Trusts and Estates Department that we are pushing forward with similar scanning projects in other departments. Our next project is to help streamline our Accounting Department's invoicing system by enabling users to scan invoices directly into our PerfectLaw accounting system – matching up those digitized, searchable expense receipts at the client matter level and/or with check requests under the umbrella of an existing PerfectLaw workflow. Another project on our horizon is to use the AccuRoute-iManage solution to scan conventional mail when it arrives in our mailroom to deliver a digitized, searchable PDF copy of that mail directly to our attorneys' iManage workspaces and/or Outlook mailboxes.

Chief Information Officers in law firms face daunting challenges ranging from information security to long term strategic planning. Much of what we do occurs under the radar and goes unnoticed unless something goes horribly wrong. However, in the case of records scanning, we were able to implement technology that quickly became indispensable and made a substantial difference which directly benefitted our lawyers, staff and clients in a very visible way. We were able to help enhance our clients' "trust" in our Trusts and Estates Department.

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