



DINIZULU'S FIRM  
REALIZED THE  
BENEFITS OF TECH  
UPGRADES.

#### TECH STRATEGIES

## Law and Order

Attorney Yao Dinizulu gets practical with tech to stay competitive

**MANY LAW FIRMS STILL RELY ON** paper, books, faxes, and other traditional methods that prevent them from taking the leap into the new century. However, the Dinizulu Law Group Ltd. is different. Since its inception in 2005, the Chicago-based trial litigation firm has been using technology to work smarter, better, and faster.

After watching jurors' eyes glaze over with boredom one too many times, principal Yao Dinizulu, 36, contracted Legal Visual Services of Chicago to help him create more dynamic courtroom presentations. This includes taking Dinizulu's "raw evidence" files (images, audio, video, and documents he uses to present his cases) and converting them to a digital format, which can then be categorized, indexed, and easily searched.

"Just like John Madden draws out the football plays during the Sunday games, I can engage the jury with a high-tech presentation and even animation," says Dinizulu, whose five-employee firm posted revenues of \$900,000 in 2007.

A practicing attorney since 2000, Dinizulu relies on a staple of technology tools to run his business. Amicus Legal Management software helps him manage everything—from caseloads and dockets

to schedules and time sheets—and allows Dinizulu quick access to information, such as word-for-word documentation from conversations he uses to both substantiate and dispute claims.

He also uses the system to store notes and prove that certain agreements were made at specific times. "Recently, a lawyer who I was talking to did not recall the agreement we made," recalls Dinizulu, "so I pulled up my dated notes from our phone call and e-mailed them over to him."

Dinizulu also uses Constant Contact to help streamline operations. After using information e-mail blasts for years, in 2005 he invested in Constant Contact and uses it to produce and distribute a quarterly newsletter that not only keeps clients informed about law updates but also serves as a lead generator.

Dinizulu also invests about \$5,000 a year in Westlaw, a software program that allows him to conduct research for a flat fee, rather than paying upward of \$150 per hour (for a research subscription), and enables him to compete with larger firms that spend thousands of dollars on research systems. Westlaw also allows Dinizulu to produce documentation from past jury verdicts or arbitration



agreements. Dinizulu has reaped more than just cost savings as a result of his technology investment. "Opposing parties are consistently impressed with the clarity and believability of my presentations via legal briefs, trials, and settlement conferences, which in turn have resulted in better settlements and better verdicts."

Laura Dominiak, vice president at Legal Vision Services, says Dinizulu's willingness to put technology to the test both in and out of the courtroom is hard to come by in the legal field. "Most attorneys know that the technology is out there, but they want to stick to the 'safe' way of blowing up pictures and pasting them on cardboard to get their points across in court," says Dominiak. "Yao is different. Anytime there's something available that will keep the jury's attention, he's quick to try it."

—Bridget McCrea