

Customer Case Study



Fortkort & Houston, P.C.: Making a Case for Dependable File Sharing

“With Syncplicity, by the time I’ve sent my team an email to say ‘I’ve made changes,’ it’s already synchronized!”

John A. Fortkort, Founding Partner, Fortkort & Houston, P.C.

Fortkort & Houston P.C. is an intellectual property law firm specializing in patents, trademarks and copyrights. Comprised of two attorneys and one paralegal, Fortkort & Houston’s Austin, TX-based team works together closely and quickly. Due to the nature of their business, they need to collaborate around-the-clock in real-time, sharing time-sensitive, legal documents and files.

Founding partner John Fortkort describes a typical scenario: “I’m busy working until late in the evening on a document that has to be filed with the Patent Office prior to midnight. At 10 P.M., our paralegal, who is at home at this point, will have to get on her laptop, pull up the document, make some changes, and file it online with the Patent Office.” This doesn’t leave much time for working within a clunky, inefficient system—and it doesn’t leave any room to risk the possibility of acting on outdated documentation.

In fact, the stakes get higher when meeting with clients. “Once, before we had Syncplicity, I sat

down with a client to talk about their patent application,” Fortkort relates. “I opened my laptop to look at the file, but our server was down. This wasted everyone’s time because I didn’t have access to the document I needed for the meeting!” Fortkort’s team simply couldn’t depend on server access to their data - it was putting their professional integrity in peril.

“Before implementing Syncplicity, all of our documents were hosted on a server,” Fortkort explains. “Accessing it remotely through VPN was tricky. I was hostage to whatever connection speed I had, and that was often very slow.” As a patent attorney, Fortkort works with technical subject matter and his documents can be very large, long, and complex. “The server could be trying to replicate a full 20 to 100 MBs each time we made a change.”

In addition to time and connectivity issues, maintaining the server was a tremendous difficulty and expense for Fortkort. “Sometimes there were hardware malfunctions, and there are often big costs associated with upgrades,

Challenges:

- Business need to collaborate with team members in real-time
- Slow file-syncing with VPN method, especially with large documents
- Costly to maintain server and sporadic IT support

Results:

- Anytime, anywhere collaboration
- Cost-effective alternative to file servers
- Robust file synchronization
- Reduced overhead
- Minimal IT support

not to mention the expense associated with having an IT person come out to fix problems. For an organization like ours,” he continues, “I’m looking at bills at the end of the year and seeing we’re spending a lot on IT services—the kind of money you’d expect a much larger organization to spend. We needed a different solution.”

Seeking Dependable Synchronization

Fortkort’s challenge was coming up with a cost-efficient solution that would replace their server, replicate their data and allow them to collaborate on projects. “I started looking around to see what could help us share documents and files the way we wanted to,” he remembers, “and it was a revelation that you could do all of this in the cloud. I didn’t know

that anything like Syncplicity existed.”

While there were other companies under consideration, Syncplicity quickly met all of the requirements on Fortkort’s checklist: a track record of success, functionality, and affordability. And, unlike the sizable and sporadic costs associated with a new server and IT support, “With Syncplicity,” Fortkort marvels, “you know what it’s going to cost.”

Effortless Back Up

“Because we are in the legal industry and have significant recordkeeping obligations, data backup with Syncplicity was also huge for us.” Fortkort explains that even though the data on their server was mirrored to a local drive, it was not protected in the case that their office was damaged or destroyed. “I priced out remote data backup services and software,” he recalls, “but all of the options available to us were either prohibitively expensive or unworkable. My assistant had to do a manual backup of our files each week to a portable drive, and then remember to bring the drive home with her.” That solution was inefficient, did not protect any data generated between backups, required his assistant to remember to do the backup, and exposed their data to a greater risk of theft. “With Syncplicity,” he says, “secure, real-time data backup is all part of the package.”

Describing the day he unplugged the server and took it apart as “momentous,” Fortkort recalls his associates having a slight fear of the unknown. “It all worked out OK. I told them they’ll have better and faster experience with Syncplicity.” A better and faster experience is indeed what they got.

Real-time Results

With Syncplicity, the Fortkort team can work on

projects concurrently. “I might say to my paralegal, ‘please draft a response for the patent office.’ She’ll make a rough draft, I’ll go in and make changes, and we’ll go back and forth. It’s important that our docs are synced quickly.” Not only are all of their files available at their fingertips any place at any time, they have insight into each others’ workflow. “My paralegal has Syncplicity notifications turned on so she’ll know what I’m working on. This helps her prioritize her own work and know what documents to ask me for and when.”

Fortkort appreciates that he can work offline without Internet-collision issues. “Syncplicity keeps track of data, documents, and changes so if I lose connectivity—like at an airport—I can keep working. It doesn’t happen very often, but I can call my paralegal and ask her not to make changes to the document I’m working on. I can work offline and everything will be synchronized when I’m connected again.” For the all-important client meetings, Fortkort notes, “all of my folders and files are available on my machine, so even if I don’t have an Internet connection, I can move forward with the meeting. That’s huge for me.”

The solution has made it easier for Fortkort, as the most computer-savvy in the firm, to manage any technical issues. “What I appreciate about Syncplicity,” he says, “is that when problems come up—for example, like an accidental deletion—I can look at my centralized IT Administration Console, go to the trash folder and see it’s a restore issue.” In contrast to troubleshooting on the server, deciphering what the user is seeing on their screen or calling in an IT resource to investigate it, resolving end-user problems with Syncplicity is less of an ordeal.

Since using Syncplicity, Fortkort was no longer tied to working from a specific location. “I would never have dreamed of working out of the house when we worked with a server,” he says. “We aren’t tied to a physical server so my assistant can work at an office closer to her home or at her home. She could be working on the moon! Syncplicity is working to keep our data synced so we can work from anywhere!”

A significant business advantage of using Syncplicity is that it has enabled Fortkort & Houston to compete with the “big” firms who can afford to invest in more cost-prohibitive technology like servers. “Syncplicity is a dream come true for patent attorneys,” he claims. “We can have file sharing with reduced overhead.” Because their files are in the cloud—and not housed on a server—and are replicated on each machine, Fortkort says “it actually puts a small business at an advantage because we can work around some downtime.”

At the end of the day—which may commence with patent paperwork getting filed shortly before midnight—Syncplicity meets Fortkort Houston’s particular needs. “It has been great for us because it provides a versatile, cost effective and hassle-free solution for real-time file sharing and backup that is ideal for coordinating the work of employees across diverse locations and platforms.”

Fortkort says the ability to share, collaborate, and keep synced in a real time manner is what makes Syncplicity valuable for them. Still, he’s always surprised at how fast Syncplicity synchronizes data. “Even the really big files don’t take a long time,” he says. “I never expected files to sync so fast. It’s pure magic to me!”