White Paper

The future of file comparison

Compare Everywhere

Workshare
Change matters

What's inside?

A guided tour:

Workshare®
Change matters

The future is designed by users

In this white paper, we analyze and outline what we understand the 'Future of File Comparison' to be for the legal teams that compare thousands of documents each day.

Workshare has been in the business of document comparison for more than 15 years, since the advent of DeltaView. We know comparison is both one of our core strengths and an essential staple of the legal desktop.

The future of file comparison, however, must be dictated by the people who use it and implement it each day, otherwise it has no future.

Innovation around, what we're terming, this 'beautiful basic' must be a comparison engine that makes the lives of legal teams easier. It has to be centered on the working practices of its users and the advancement of the legal desktop.

To find out what the frustrations and hopes of our legal audience are, Workshare conducted a research program with client's, our competitors' clients and our own customer service and support teams. The aim of the research was to gain insight, so our own innovation in this area would both excite and deliver what's needed.

> **Covering three continents and one-to-one interviews with more than 70 clients, we would like to thank all those who invested their time in helping secure the Future of File Comparison.**

The evolution of comparison

As matters move ever faster and legal documents get more complex, the classic 'legal desktop' is under strain. It's become weighed down by point-solutions that have to be navigated between in order to complete even a simple task.

This network of solutions, originally designed to help legal teams, can in fact disrupt the drive for efficiency and mobility that most law firms are engaged in, because they can make things more complicated.

Legal teams, especially fee-earners, increasingly need mobility and a more agile desktop. As they are time-poor, having a slow desktop, applications that don't work on other devices, or needing to switch between applications to complete a task, like file comparison, isn't viable.

For users, the technology itself isn't the critical factor. The crucial factor is what the technology produces; what it gives them i.e. the redline. User wants to see the changes between two versions of a document they're working on displayed quickly and with complete accuracy. It doesn't matter how this happens.

The way a redline is technically generated isn't important, what's important is that time is valuable, so it can't be wasted, and mistakes can be costly, so accuracy is of primary concern.

This means change is needed to move away from point solutions to create a more modern, streamlined infrastructure of 'beautiful basics' for legal teams.

The solution needs to give users greater mobility and continuously improve speed and accuracy.

The answer?

1. Create the fastest, most accurate redline when comparing two documents. And, make this possible wherever and however a user is working, i.e. embedded within the devices and platforms they use each day.

2. Ensure the desktop is streamlined and protected by consolidating the number of applications it has to support. Embed solutions within each other, rather than relying on integration.

It's all about the redlines

Our research told us that comparison solutions are a utility for legal professionals. They want a solution to do its job and drop into the background. The best compliment is that the comparison solution isn't noticed at all.

This means production of redlines needs to be fast, accurate and embedded wherever and however a user is working.

Part of making a redline accurate is making it simple to read, so any change to a file can be easily seen, reviewed and interpreted. As many legal teams deal with large and complex documents, they don't have the time or capacity to hunt through page after page of an enormous document to get to the details they're interested in or that are most significant.

It's important to be able to find any changes that have occurred in a document, or even that a user suspects may have occurred, within seconds. Seeing what's altered during a review process and delivering that back in a new version has to be instantaneous and intuitive to read.

An effective comparison solution anticipates how different people expect to see edits or amendments displayed in their file. If the comparison isn't a seamless part of the workflow, any misstep or item interpreted as being inaccurate creates a feeling of mistrust in the entire redline (and with the solution used to produce it).

This is unacceptable.

As professionals now routinely use Word, PDF and PowerPoint to prepare documents on their laptop, desktop or mobile, redlines needs to be robust across each device and file type. Users expect to view changes to any file in a consistency way; in a way that's flexible and logical – not just in Word, but everywhere.

> **I've worked on deals that have had over 1,000 compares generated in them – it's just part of the process. It's a function – a utility.**

Discoverability and engagement

Many of the people we spoke to during our research were unaware of the full set of features available to them in their comparison solution. Whether using Workshare or one of our competitor's solutions, there was an issue of 'discoverability'.

The important learning is – if features in the solution aren't obvious or completely intuitive to use, they won't get used at all.

As previously acknowledged, the legal professionals that need document comparison technology need it because they're busy and it's there to help them save time. It's counter-intuitive, therefore, to expect the same person to take time out to participate in training.

Any special or helpful features in a comparison solution need to be immediately discoverable, so users can engage with them. That means keeping it simple and true to the core of what's required, while creating consistency in the way the tool is used.

Engagement is another factor. It's easy to display the changes applied to text copy in a Word document, however, it's historically been an issue to display changes to the content in complex tables embedded within the same document. Users don't view the two things differently, they want to engage with the content in exactly the same way. The comparison must be as accurate in the table as it is in the rest of the document.

The conclusion of our research shows us speed and performance are the crucial factors for users and the IT teams that support them.

> **If I have to get trained on something, it probably means I'm not going to use it.**

Compare Everywhere

In conclusion, the future of file comparison is to have a fast, accurate comparison engine that's embedded in the platforms legal teams use each day, but which still delivers a full and consistent comparison experience across all files and platforms.

A beautiful basic
Whether users are in the office or on the move; whether they're accessing documents from the desktop, mobile or a tablet; whether in email, an extranet, a data room or a Document Management System; on a Mac or in a browser; users should be able to access a full document comparison instantly. And, the redline should be available on the platforms they use, wherever they're using them. Redlines should be easy to interpret, with changes shown by category and displayed in seconds.

Easy to deploy. Easy to manage.
The solutions of the future need to be available on-premise or hosted to give users fast accurate document comparison on any device, without the need to deploy to the desktop. This also removes the risk of sensitive matter files being transferred to third party cloud infrastructures.

Embedded not just integrated
Going beyond traditional integration and point-solutions, the future of file comparison will be to embed tools to work within other legal platforms and the 'user experiences' of other leading legal technology providers. In this way, vendors, developers and IT teams can get comparison inside the core applications we know legal professionals already engage with.

> **Less clicking and flipping between applications means less time lost and a more stable desktop.**

About Workshare

Workshare is dedicated to helping professionals compare, protect and share their high stakes documents. Since 1999, Workshare has developed and released intelligent technology for business services firms Now, more than two million professionals use Workshare around the world.

YOU AND WORKSHARE COMPARE EVERYWHERE

There are some 'beautiful basics' every legal team needs to do their job. They need document comparison to be fast, accurate and simple. We've mastered the basics because we know that change matters.

Taking two documents into an application to run a comparison isn't the most efficient way anymore. It slows down user and the legal desktop. Workshare has developed Compare Everywhere, powered by the world's first and best comparison technology for legal professionals – DeltaView.

If you're a technology provider or in-house developer and would like to discuss embedding Compare Everywhere in your applications, please contact us today – we'd be delighted to hear from you.

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