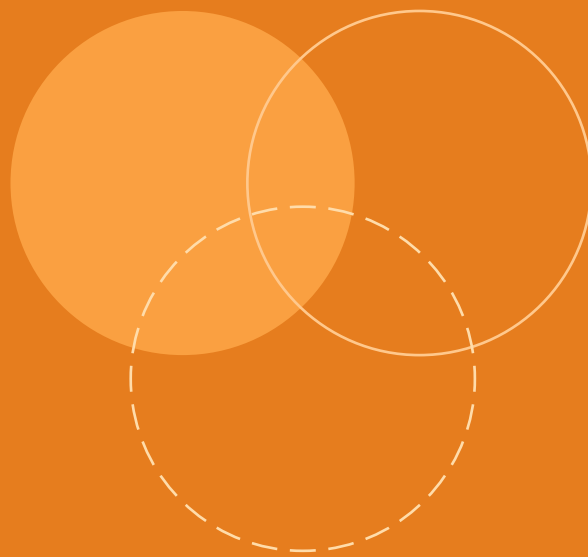


How Collaboration Will Aid Legal Professionals in a *Post-Pandemic* World



The legal field is undergoing a shock to the system because of COVID-19 and the quarantine orders that have come with it. This unprecedented situation has lawyers pivoting to conducting virtual meetings, hearings, and even court appearances. Federal and state courts have closed and sent employees home to work, creating delays and backlogs that will continue even after they return to office and trials resume. And for the first time in its 231-year history, the U.S. Supreme Court is broadcasting oral arguments and live-streaming them on the internet.

Moving to a work-from-home environment is clearly a disruption for organizations, but spans far beyond just working from home amid a pandemic. Macro trends in the industry, specifically fewer individual practitioners working independently, spell a new reality. The American Bar Association's 2019 report, "A Profile of the Legal Profession," showed that solo practitioners are becoming a dying breed. Nearly half of graduating attorneys in 2018 landed at law firms, and only 1% went to work on their own, compared to 40% who joined law firms and 2% who became solo practitioners in 2012.

The coronavirus simply accelerated what we already knew needed to happen:



legal teams need and deserve better technology to collaborate and the flexibility to conduct their legal work anywhere.



The Increased Importance of Collaboration

While autonomy is still an essential part of the legal profession, it's decreasing in importance as more attorneys work in team environments that offer a diversity of experience and expertise and rely on open communication. Heidi Gardner, Distinguished Fellow at Harvard Law School and author of "Smart Collaboration," found that the more disciplines involved in client engagement at professional services firms, the greater the client's average annual revenue. Her research shows that as more practice groups at a global law firm collaborate to serve a client, the client's average annual revenue increases over and above what each practice would have earned from selling discrete services.

Law is inherently collaborative and needs to be even more so in today's technology-driven environment. Law firms, state attorneys general, and massive global multinational corporate legal teams all face increasing complexity and collaborative work during the pandemic. Litigation risk requires recruiting deeply skilled specialists who are at the top of their practice areas, such as trial lawyers, appellate lawyers, regulatory specialists, and international specialists.

Cloud-Based Tools Make Remote Collaboration Possible

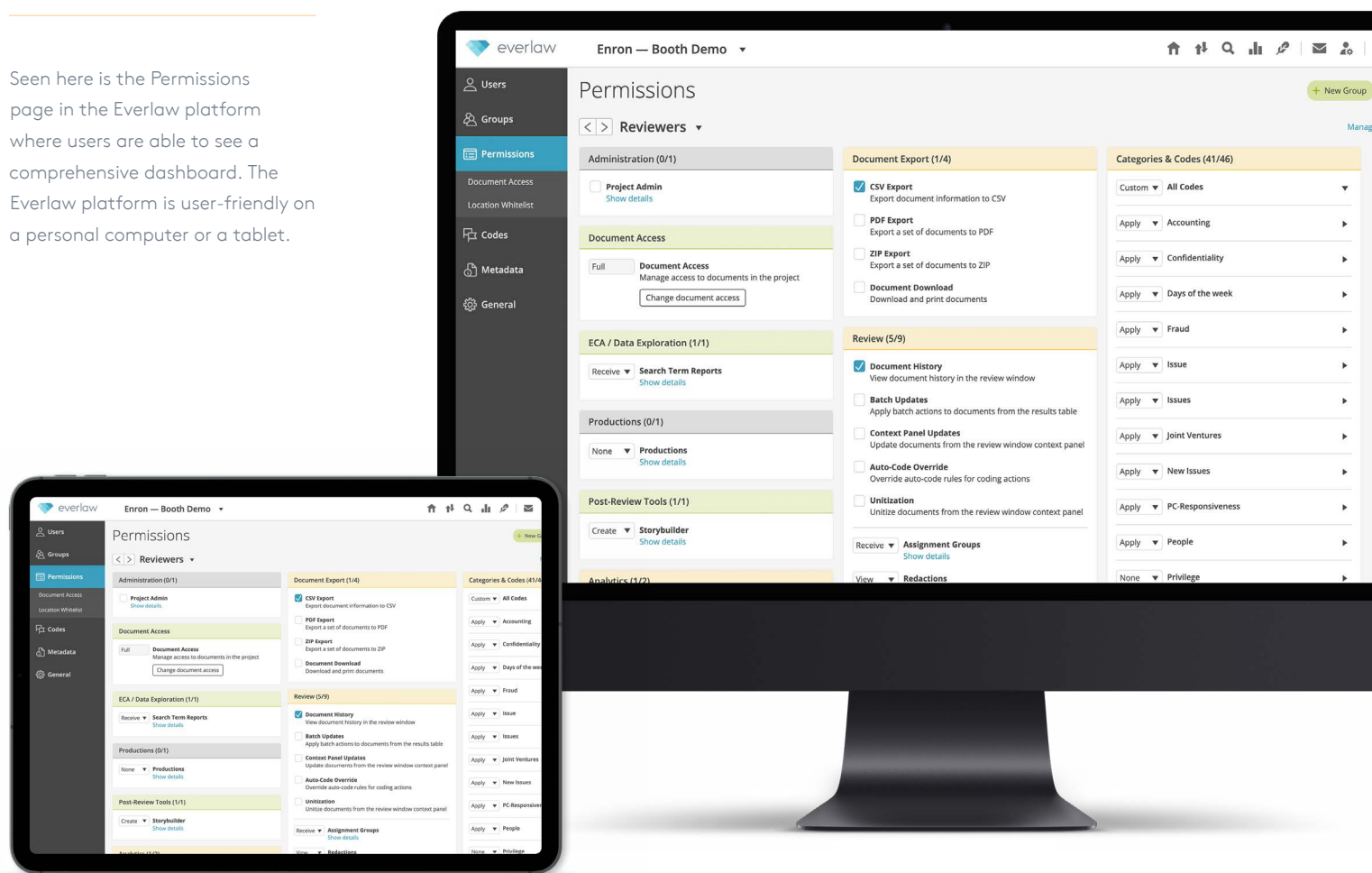
Large, complex multi-party litigation involves a massive number of counsel due to the need for both local expertise and highly-trained specialists. We've noticed this firsthand on our ediscovery platform, where we've seen an instance of litigation with more than 800 collaborators. Teams today are working entirely remotely, relying on cloud tools to keep them connected and productive.

Cloud-based software enables individuals and groups to edit documents simultaneously, brainstorm via video conference and exchange notes and ideas, all from the location of their choice. Law researchers in different regions can read, compile evidence and timelines, and see each other's work immediately to annotate and draft work products together. Additionally, lawyers can review and share new information in real-time instead of waiting weeks to see what others on the team have found.

Establishing a Culture of Collaboration

What separates a great collaborative environment from a mediocre one? MIT professor Michael Schrage argues that successful collaborators don't just work with each other; they work together through a shared space, whether physical or virtual. **If there's no shared space, there's no opportunity for collaboration.**

Seen here is the Permissions page in the Everlaw platform where users are able to see a comprehensive dashboard. The Everlaw platform is user-friendly on a personal computer or a tablet.



Keys to Creating a Modern Shared Space

The right technology can provide a shared space for the legal industry as professionals navigate the new reality of remote work, but the benefits extend far beyond that. With the right shared space, customarily reactive legal processes like discovery can become proactive, as folks on the same team work more closely together and feedback loops tighten. **Up next are five key components of a modern shared space for collaboration.**

A close-up, grayscale photograph of a hand with the index finger pointing towards a laptop screen. The laptop keyboard is visible in the lower-left corner. The background is dark and out of focus.

5 Key Components of a Modern Shared Space for Collaboration

1. SPEED

Business and life move faster than ever, and as a result, communication has to keep up.

A true shared space must allow for rapid discussion that diminishes the wait time between responses. This goes for both real-time collaboration on work products using web-based productivity software, as well as mail and messages with communication tools.

2. EFFICIENCY

A good shared space reduces friction by ensuring that stakeholders always have immediate access to a project.

An example of high friction is having to execute multiple steps, like exporting and attaching a document, before even sending it to a recipient. Low friction, convenient collaboration is working together in the same document simultaneously to decrease the need for back and forth communication.

3. SECURITY

Security is essential, especially in the legal industry.

With the rise in hacks and exploits, participants need to feel comfortable that collaborative shared spaces are secure. Increasing efficiency also increases security — a multi-step process is more susceptible to unwanted access than work in one collaborative document.



4. BREADTH

If the opportunities for collaboration are too narrow, the shared space isn't really a space; it's a lane or a channel.

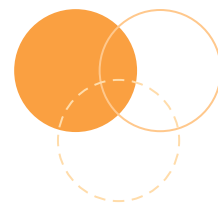
An ediscovery platform, for example, is a major step forward toward accessibility to all work products and workflows. When someone wants to share a keyword search, timeline, or a draft of a motion, it is more efficient if done in a true shared space.

5. INCLUSIVITY

It's essential in shared spaces to be able to control who can and can't enter the space.

In the security world, this is called "access control," which means that only people who receive access to specific documents can see and review them. While security is necessary, there is a more expansive way to think about it, too. In a true shared space, people are using combined knowledge to do their jobs better and help others do the same as well. This is not a violation of document access rules; this is just an inversion of the normal "need to know" paradigm common in law. The best shared spaces are inclusive; they allow teams to use all the appropriate information to work better together.

Imagine a document reviewer — a JD, with domain expertise and thousands of reviewed documents under their belt — being able to understand an overall case strategy and adjusting their review analysis to match. Or imagine an in-house and outside counsel collaborating together on a single timeline instead of duplicating each other's work. A great shared space can provide all of this. Teams that work toward inclusivity rather than exclusivity will have a shared mission, and be more agile and effective.



FINAL THOUGHTS

With lawyers forced to work from home during COVID-19, online collaboration is more critical and transformational than ever. If we can enable swift collaboration in complex legal matters, then we will ultimately be upholding a key pillar of democracy and contributing toward a more just society.

Contact us

US

2101 Webster St.
Suite 1500
Oakland, CA 94612
[844.everlaw](tel:844.everlaw)

UK

70 Wilson St.
London, EC2A 2DB
[0800.068.9249](tel:0800.068.9249)

everlaw.com