THE CASE FOR ADDING DOCUMENT ASSEMBLY TECHNOLOGY TO YOUR TEMPLATES:

A. **Unmatched Speed and Accuracy**: A document assembly system is the proverbial magic bullet for document-intensive areas of practice. If you're in such a practice (estate planning, real estate, banking, contracts, employee benefits, etc.), nothing else you can do will have a greater impact on your efficiency than automating your document production.   It's one of the few technologies that can literally revolutionize the way you work.   For example, assume you have a complex document with hundreds of optional paragraphs (such as a complex Revocable Trust) which presently requires four hours to create from first to final draft. After converting the document into a HotDocs template, the same document generation should take approximately ten minutes. The time savings are that dramatic.

B. **Allows You To Safely Offer Flat Fees**: The time savings realized with document assembly systems are so significant that they require a move to flat fee or "value billing" instead of hourly billing. Of course, this doesn't mean that you should charge less for services rendered. It simply means that any uncertainty regarding the time necessary to generate the documents has been removed. Therefore, there is no risk in quoting a flat fee (at least for the document generation aspect of the service). The net effect is that fewer resources are consumed to produce better documents and clients are happier because they didn't have to worry about an unexpectedly high hourly fee.

C. **You Don't Have To Build It Yourself**: You can learn to automate templates yourself, but it takes a significant investment of time. If you don't have the time to invest or would rather practice law, then you can always hire someone to build the system for you (using your documents, of course). For example, Affinity Consulting Group can teach you how to automate documents yourself or we can automate them for you.

D. **Higher Accuracy**: Document assembly and word processor automation systems are much more accurate than Find, Rename & Modify because they only require the user to enter case-specific facts and the items that change (party names, etc.). The template does the work of including the appropriate paragraphs, excluding the irrelevant ones, verb conjugation, punctuating lists, calculating numbers and dates, correcting personal pronouns and replacing the items in need of

replacement. For many people witnessing this method of document generation for the first time, it is nothing short of an epiphany.

Documents generated from document assembly systems are more accurate though much less time is spent generating them; and training time for new employees is reduced since they must only be shown how to answer the questions.

E. **Higher Profitability**: If you're generating more accurate documents in far less time and consuming far fewer resources in the process, profitability naturally goes up. The return on investment is fast and furious; usually only a few months for most projects. For example, let's assume that an estate planning lawyer and it takes you about 10 hours for the initial meeting and the time necessary to draft an entire set of estate planning documents for the average client. Many transactional lawyers have switched to a flat-fee schedule so let's also assume that you charge a flat fee of $2,000 for the average plan. Dividing that fee by the time it takes you to produce the documents means you're realizing about $200 per hour. However, if you automated your document production, your total time spent could easily drop to 1.5 hours (including the initial meeting). That would raise your effective hourly rate to a whopping $1,333 per hour. Now that's not bad!

Let's take that a step further and look at your cost savings. Assume that your cost of production works out to about $100/hour (salary, benefits, materials consumed, etc.) for the time you used to spend. Therefore, if it was taking you 10 hours, then your cost of production was $1,000. With a drafting system, your cost of production drops to $150, or a savings of $850 per transaction. If you're averaging just 6 new estate planning clients a month, then your monthly savings is $5,100. You can use that figure to determine how much it would make sense to spend on automating your documents. You may have originally thought that a $10,000 price tag for automating was completely out of the ballpark. Now you realize that you'd recoup that investment inside of two months. Since most experts say that project with a payback period of 12 months or less should be implemented, the idea of automating your documents pretty quickly moves from "that's way too expensive" to "when do we get started?"
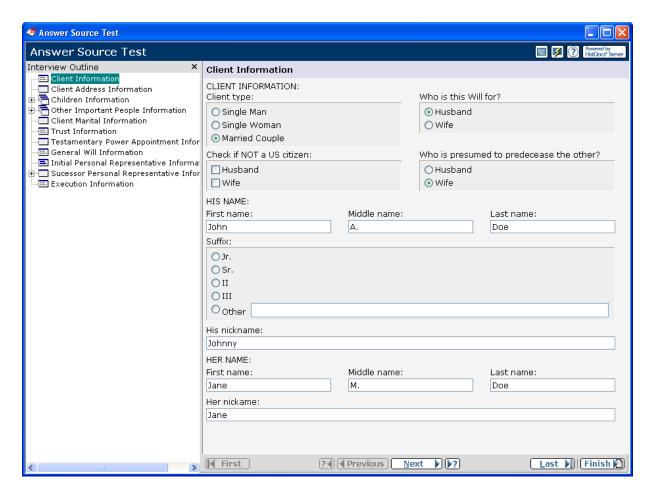
It should also be noted that document assembly can pay big dividends even with the most simple documents. Let's say, for example, that your firm produces 50 letters a week of various types. They could be anything from a "confirming our initial appointment and here's what you need to bring" letter to a fax cover sheet to a simple "enclosed please find..." letter. If those letters presently take 8 minutes on average to complete, then that's 6.67 hours per week. Now let's assume they're automated, and the time necessary to complete drops to an average of 1 minute (very realistic). You're now down to .83 hours per week. If you multiply that time savings by $100/hour, that's $584/week, $2,336 per month

and $28,032 per year. Regardless of the dollar savings, an extra 5.84 hours per week is nothing to sneeze at.

F.   **Faster and More Sophisticated Template Development**: Automation options native to Word and WordPerfect are very capable. However, to build sophisticated systems using only the tools within the word processor (Word, in particular) can be exceedingly difficult and slow. For example, I worked with a firm that had a Visual Basic programmer on staff who was working to automate several departments within the law firm using Microsoft Word's native functionality. Once they saw how efficient HotDocs could perform this task at a higher level, they immediately abandoned their Visual Basic coding. According to the gentleman who was doing the programming, he could create templates 3 times as fast using HotDocs (compared to Visual Basic) and had more advanced tools to work with.

G.   **Data Sharing**: For practice areas which typically require the production of several related documents, the entire set of documents can be automated so they share common information and may be generated simultaneously.

H.   **Form Consolidation**: For example, let's say an estate planning attorney has 8 different form templates for a revocable trust. The differences between them could be fact pattern variations (for example, one might be a joint trust, one might be a single grantor trust; there may be different templates for a Marital outright, a QTIP or a General Power of Appointment). However, those templates would certainly share a lot of language not least of which was boilerplate text. Document assembly software would allow that lawyer to create a single Revocable Trust template which could produce any of the 8 original varieties based upon how the questions were answered in the interview. As such, there is only one template to edit and maintain; and if common language is edited once, it automatically affects all possible documents derived from that template.

I.   **Database Integration and Third Party Program Integration**:   Another great benefit of document assembly is that most applications can integrate with existing ODBC-compliant databases. For example, HotDocs integrates with Outlook, Access and many other common database programs. HotDocs also links with major case/practice management programs such as Amicus Attorney, Time Matters, Abacus Law, Practice Master, ProLaw and many others. Even accounting programs like PCLaw offer integration with HotDocs. Many of these programs come with included integration features which minimize the effort on your part to make it happen. It is also fairly easy to integrate with your own custom and other out-of-the box databases you may use in your practice.

The most obvious benefit of integration is that you already capture data about clients and matters in your existing practice management software. Using the integration tools and techniques allow you to pass that information along to your

automated documents with little effort on your part. In addition, because the data does not need to be reentered the risk of inaccurate or incorrect data is greatly reduced. For example, a classic integration example is taking information entered into the practice management system and automatically generating an engagement letter. Another example is a large firm which does commercial loan work and has created a database which holds all of the pertinent loan information throughout the life of the loan. At any time, with a few mouse clicks, a lawyer will generate any or all (in this case about 30) available documents in a matter of five or six seconds. Before the integration was set up this process could take hours and the loan data was being reentered several times throughout the process.

J.   **Complete PDF Forms**: If you have PDF forms to complete as part of your document assembly initiative, make sure the program you've chosen can fill in the fields in those documents as well. In the perfect world, you could fill out PDF forms as easily as you generate Word or WordPerfect documents. HotDocs, for one, is capable of this.

K.   **True Document Assembly Not Always Necessary**: In spite of the foregoing, sometimes true document assembly is overkill. For example, if you're only generating documents with simple fill in fields and you don't really need to calculate anything or gather lists or do anything really "fancy," then you can probably get by with the automation tools already present in Word or WordPerfect. Word makes this task a bit more difficult than WordPerfect, but it's a fast, easy alternative for simple, straight-forward drafting.

L.   **Document Automation on the Web**: Many of the document automation programs today provide the ability to deliver automated documents through a web browser. The interview is presented to the user in a web form and the documents are generated on a web server and made available for downloading. This example shows the same interview in the example above but presented through Internet Explorer.

There are very few differences in the look and functionality of the interview. Using web technologies greatly enhances the flexibility of deploying automated document templates and customizing how those templates are used in legal practice.