

## MEMORANDUM

**From:** Brian Lawlor  
**To:** Team Gizmo  
**Date:** September 18, 2008  
**Re:** “Best Practices” and Protocols for GSA documents

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At the macro level, there are two groups of documents and other files for GSA targeting that we need to resolve: (1) existing files and (2) newly created files or additions. At this juncture I think we have a good handle on the identity and location of existing files that we will target initially with the GSA. This memo serves to distill our prior discussions about proposed best practices and more formal protocols for handling documents and other files to be added as GSA targets in the future.

### 1. The Big Picture

Whatever practices or protocols are adopted, they will not exist for their own sake. It is essential that all LSNC staff understand the purpose of the various document “repositories” or GSA “targets.” And I think we could get too caught up in the abstractions of tech-oriented nomenclature, like “knowledge content” and “knowledge management.”

Such terms are abstract expressions of a practical need: Advocates and other staff need basic systems for creating, depositing and later locating documents and other files (the so called, “knowledge content”) they would use to do their jobs and assist clients. In the end, it is all about “findability,” to that larger, practical purpose. However, we also need to be mindful that “practices and protocols” themselves, however well thought out, cannot solve or resolve what is less a system issue and more a cultural issue: Cultivating and promoting staff to share documents and other files that have tangible value to others as well, whether it be a legal memorandum or an office policy or an administrative form or a training manual, whatever.

### 2. Proposed Practices and Protocols

- Each local core office has its own shared local F: Drive that serves as the common location for all office-specific files. This local F: Drive is networked so that it can communicate with other parts of the larger LSNC network infrastructure, including the program-wide S: Drive and the GSA. All core office F: Drives and the centralized S: Drive will be accessible and viewable by all individual desktops within LSNC.

- All core offices have access to and can view the contents of the shared network S: Drive. As explained below, the S: Drive is the primary document repository and target for the GSA. The directory and subdirectory structures on the S: Drive, organized into familiar substantive and administrative categories, are configured to work optimally with the GSA. While users in all core offices are able to add or delete files located on the S: Drive, the organizational structure of the directories on the S: Drive is locked down and cannot be altered by anyone other than IT staff.
- The only organization requirement for use of local office F: Drives is that user-specific directories be listed with full names separated by an underscore. For example:

F:\Bill\_Kennedy  
F:\Cathy\_Ferrell  
F:\Mona\_Tawatao  
...

- Below the user-specific top-level directory on the F: Drive, users are free to organize their subdirectories and files in any way they choose. That said, LSNC staff are encouraged to organize their documents and other files into logical and commonsensical subdirectories, e.g., with subdirectories for cases, other advocacy projects, special substantive areas, training materials, forms, and so on.
- Other than the required standardized format for user-specific top-level directories, local offices are otherwise free to create and organize their directories and subdirectories and files in any way they choose.
- As individual users create new documents, they should in the normal course save their work in their particular user-specific directory on the shared local office F: Drive.

- To make the same document “findable” by others, it needs to be added to one of the GSA repositories or targets. These include:
  - subject folders on the shared network S: Drive
  - designated special folders on the shared local office F: Drive
  - file attachments to Pika case records
  - designated Google Sites
  - designated content areas of the Secured Private Network
  - designated public website locations
  
- Documents and other files can be added to the shared network S: Drive in one of three ways:
  - via a “Save” or “Save As...” file dialog box to the S: Drive
  - by copying and pasting the file over to the S: Drive
  - via the Shared Repository web interface
  
- Advocates should add final versions of documents or other files that they want to share with others. There are no hard or fast rules in this regard, but examples would include final versions of case pleadings, memoranda and correspondence on significant cases; final versions of training materials and PowerPoint presentations; final versions of administrative manuals and forms, and so on.
  
- Staff should use file naming conventions that make it intuitive to understand what the file contains, in a broad sense. This also adds to its “findability” by the GSA. Staff should also use underscores rather than spaces when naming files. And staff should be sure to use proper file extensions, i.e., \*.wpd for WordPerfect files, \*.doc for Word files, \*.pdf for PDF files, \*.ppt for PowerPoint files, and so on. At a minimum, the file name should concisely reference the client or project it relates to and its basic character of its content. (See the related memo regarding “best practices” for naming files.)
  
- LSNC advocates and other staff should add findable content at appropriate junctures, i.e., at the point in time when a significant juncture or point of completion has been reached, such as resolution of trial proceedings, completion of briefing on appeals, after conducting a training event, finalizing an administrative manual or form, and so on. In general, “drafts” of documents should not be added to shared content target areas.

- When adding findable content, LSNC staff should focus on adding the file to “a” logical subdirectory, not “the” logical subdirectory. It is very common for a file to logically fit more than one file subdirectory category. For example, an appellate brief in a housing case may involve any number of issues, logically fitting the category of “federal public housing” but also presenting “disability rights” and “evidence” issues. Whether it be the local-office F: Drive or the Shared Repository S: Drive, for purposes of how it all works with the GSA the key is to physically locate the file in “a” logical subdirectory. Do not worry about placing it in “the” correct subdirectory.
- That said, to make the file – wherever it is located – more “findable,” you will have the option to add “metadata.” While users can always add metadata to any file via the file’s document properties, the best practice is for LSNC staff to use standardized metadata fields available via the Shared Depository web interface.
- A hard-copy document to be added as a GSA target should be converted initially to a PDF image file via scanning, then passed through an OCR text conversion via Adobe Acrobat. The file should then be assigned an appropriate name with a PDF extension, metadata added as warranted, and then saved to an appropriate repository location.
- Attaching a file to the Documents page in Pika automatically adds it as a GSA target.
- Alternate protocols for maintaining special content at Google Sites and public website content. (TBD)
- Alternate protocols for determining expiration date of files and removing them. (TBD)