

# Agility and Peace of Mind: Sessums Black Caballero Ficarrotta's Journey into the Cloud



**Sessums Black Caballero Ficarrotta PA (SBCF)** has been practicing marital and family law in Tampa Bay, Florida since 1982. The highly specialized, one-office firm comprises six attorneys, four paralegals, and six support staff. SBCF prides itself on providing discreet, compassionate and attentive service to its clients, combined with the highest-quality legal services.

When firm administrator Paul Kanjorski was tasked with bringing the firm's outdated technology and infrastructure into the 21st century, SBCF turned to **Affinity Consulting Group** for support with software selection and technology implementation.

## THE CHALLENGES

Kanjorski joined SBCF in 2018, at a time during which the firm was transitioning much of its work to what Kanjorski terms its "second generation" of attorneys and staff. The firm's founder, Stephen Sessums, was nearing retirement, much of the firm's technology was nearing the end of its useful life, and systems could only be accessed from inside the firm's physical office.

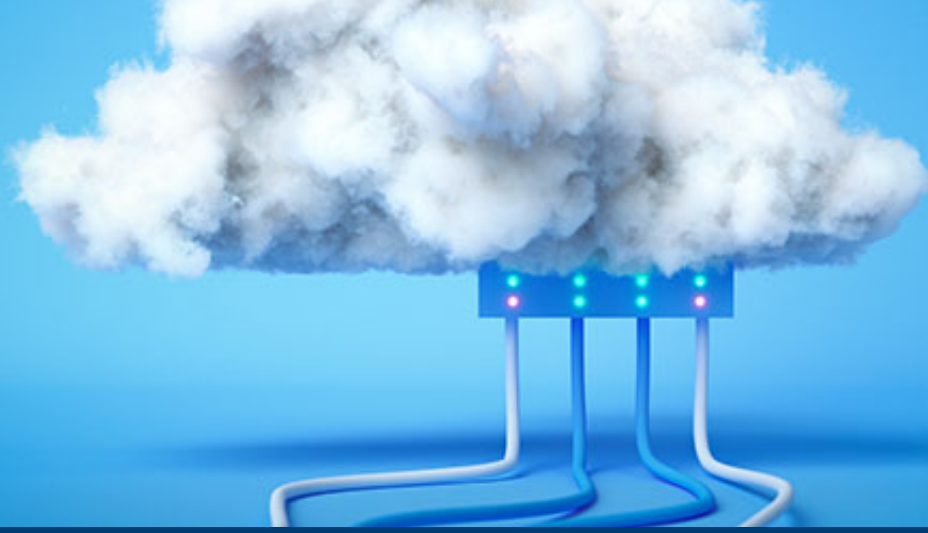
"The technology had stagnated, and the partners knew it," explains Kanjorski. "The firm was not yet in the cloud in any way, and while they'd done a good job of going paperless over the previous 10 years, their technology was not keeping up with the industry and the firm's infrastructure was crumbling."

Kanjorski was faced with two distinct challenges: 1) addressing the vulnerability of the firm's hardware, which was housed in hurricane-vulnerable Tampa Bay, and 2) updating the firm's nearly obsolete case management and accounting systems, ensuring along the way that employees could work securely and efficiently from anywhere.

As he began exploring technology options, Kanjorski joined—and became quite active in—the Association for Legal Administrators (ALA) at both the national and local levels. where he discovered Affinity. Affinity, a longtime ALA business partner, has been supporting the Suncoast and other chapters for over 20 years.



**"I recognized right away that I needed help to identify the right applications," Kanjorski says. Conversations at ALA events with Affinity managing partner Debbie Foster and referrals from other ALA members convinced him that Affinity had the right resources and expertise to help guide SBCF on its journey toward modernization."**



## THE SOLUTIONS

"I knew that I wanted to go into the cloud for our case management and accounting systems," he says, "but I needed to determine exactly how to do it." Working with the Affinity team, Kanjorski demoed a number of products, eventually settling on the combination of two cloud-based platforms: NetDocuments for document management and Centerbase for time, billing, and accounting.

The choice of NetDocuments would give SBCF the freedom to securely manage and share documents both internally and externally, regardless of device or location. Utilizing Centerbase for time, billing, and accounting would enable the firm to fully integrate front-office and back-office functions, improving efficiency. To ease the firm's transitions to the new platforms, a phased rollout, beginning with NetDocuments, was planned.



**"It was clear from the beginning that—for a firm of our size and limited resources—it was essential to bring in a partner to support the NetDocuments implementation," explains Kanjorski. "Affinity handled that for us, which involved educating our team on what the platform could do, putting together a pilot team to design our implementation, and then training the rest of our staff."**

Plans for the firm's Centerbase rollout changed when the COVID-19 pandemic forced SBCF into a remote working model overnight. As a result, unlike the NetDocuments deployment, which was completed on site, SBCF's Centerbase deployment was completed virtually.

In addition to leveraging Affinity for the firm's NetDocuments and Centerbase implementations, SBCF also opted into the Affinity Complete Care program. This innovative subscription program, launched in 2020, was designed to help clients maximize their technology investments through extended post-implementation support and comprehensive, ongoing end-user software training.

**“THE SOONER YOU GET STARTED,  
THE SOONER YOU’LL EXPERIENCE  
THE VALUE.”**



## THE RESULTS



SBCF’s primary goal of ensuring secure, remote access to its systems has been achieved. Its critical technology infrastructure is no longer vulnerable to natural disasters, and employees are able to conduct business securely from anywhere, from any device.

The firm’s new systems made it much easier to weather the ups and downs of the pandemic, even though the rollout was only partially complete when the first stay-at-home orders were issued. Seeing this immediate benefit helped to bolster buy-in and adoption across the firm.

“It’s important to remember, however,” says Kanjorski, “that software implementation is a journey, not a destination. When people didn’t have certain tools before, they don’t necessarily embrace a system’s new abilities right away. While folks who are starting at the firm now don’t know anything different than Centerbase and NetDocs, others have been here for 20 years, and the transition has been harder for them.”

For this reason, ongoing training and coaching—in addition to the training provided during the implementation process—has been critical. SBCF’s membership in Affinity Complete Care ensures that the firm has easy access to Affinity’s team of experts on an ongoing basis. The firm has hosted multiple lunch-and-learn sessions with Affinity trainers, and Affinity’s support team has been readily available for questions and system configuration changes as the SBCF team has settled into its new way of working.

“I’m definitely seeing value from our Complete Care membership,” Kanjorski says, “especially now, while we’re still adapting and adjusting to the new systems.”

His advice to other firm administrators faced with a changing marketplace and an outdated technology stack? “Be patient and set realistic expectations. These systems solve a lot of problems, but no technology is perfect, and getting the benefits you want can be a long process. The reality is that moving to the cloud is not optional anymore—the sooner you get started, the sooner you’ll experience the value.”

## ABOUT AFFINITY CONSULTING GROUP

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