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MARKET FOCUS
DATA INTEGRITY SERVICES

FLAGSHIP PRODUCT
ABSOLUTEPROOF®

SOLUTIONS
PROTECT INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY RIGHTS

PRESERVE AUTHENTICITY
OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS
OVER TIME

DEFEND EVIDENCE IN
COURT OR PROCEEDINGS

COMPLY WITH
REGULATORY MANDATES

SURETY CASE STUDY: REALLEGAL®

REALLEGAL PROVIDES TAMPER-PROOF SECURITY FOR ELECTRONIC COURT
TRANSCRIPTS WITH SURETY'S DATA INTEGRITY SOLUTION



BY PARTNERING WITH SURETY, REALLEGAL HELPS BRING COURT REPORTING AND LEGAL PROFESSIONALS INTO THE DIGITAL AGE WITH THE CONFIDENCE AND EASE OF BUILT-IN SECURITY.

OVERVIEW: MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF ELECTRONIC COURT TRANSCRIPTS

As the legal community relies increasingly on electronic documents, court reporters and other professionals are exposed to the doubled-edged nature of the digital age. The web-based, virtual world means new levels of convenience and speed, but it can also open doors to dangers including altered documents, compromised information and stolen identities.

Corporations have been grappling with this problem for many years. To guard their trade secrets and other intellectual property, businesses must have the power to prove that electronic records have never been manipulated, from the moment they were generated to the time they are challenged. Companies turn to third-party services that provide secure, independent proof of electronic record integrity to protect themselves, their clients, and their futures.

RealLegal®, the market leader in technology to secure and transmit electronic transcripts, is keenly aware that court reporters need the same protection. Clearly, a transcript discovered to have been tampered with or inadvertently altered could have serious repercussions for a court case and for the reporters and other legal professionals involved. So when RealLegal designed its solutions for tamper-proof electronic court transcripts, it sought a partner that could help ensure the security of the information entrusted to court reporters.

In 2000, RealLegal chose to partner with Surety, LLC, the leading provider of data integrity services to protect electronic records. Surety was experienced with e-discovery, enabling its customers to prove that their contracts, legal documents, and other records have the same if not better, legal defensibility as their paper counterparts. Surety's AbsoluteProof® service became the security foundation of RealLegal E-Transcript Signatures™, allowing court reporters to digitally time-stamp their electronic transcripts to objectively demonstrate their time and content integrity.

Today, E-Transcript Signatures are used by thousands of official court reporters, freelance court reporters, and court reporting firms nationwide, and the integration with AbsoluteProof enables them to meet the growing demand for electronic transcripts while avoiding the risks. Using RealLegal E-Transcript Signatures with E-Transcript Manager™ or Reporter Edition™, court reporters can create transcripts, digitally sign them to assert their accuracy, authenticate their origins, and prevent future tampering.

RealLegal E-Transcript technology assists attorneys in addition to court reporters. For example, many attorneys who prefer to receive transcripts electronically are familiar with receiving ASCII transcript files on diskette or by email. However, ASCII transcripts have security dangers, because the text can be changed. As an alternative, court reporters can provide the E-Transcript format and seal it with an E-Transcript Signature that leverages AbsoluteProof. The accuracy and security of the transcript is forever protected.

SOLUTION: SOFTWARE DESIGNED FOR COURT REPORTERS WITH ABSOLUTEPROOF PROTECTION

For members of the legal community, RealLegal offers a comprehensive suite of software applications. Designed especially for the needs of the legal industry, RealLegal stands apart from generalized word processing and document creation software.

By partnering with Surety, RealLegal helps bring court reporting and legal professionals into the digital age with the confidence and ease of built-in security. When court reporters use RealLegal software to prepare and submit depositions, they can apply their signatures to verified documents with a single click of the computer mouse, simply and easily gaining the security advantages of AbsoluteProof.

“Unlike some file creation programs that refer to ‘signatures,’ RealLegal E-Transcript Signatures provide actual third-party validation of the date and time a document was created or changed. At any point in its lifecycle, the content signed with an E-Transcript Signature can be validated to confirm that it has not been altered or tampered with in any way,” said Jason Primuth, General Manager, RealLegal. “As a result, attorneys can be confident that the contents are more trustworthy than their traditional paper transcripts.”

In cryptography, a public key infrastructure (PKI) is an arrangement that provides for third-party vetting of, and vouching for, user identities and document integrity. Electronic signatures using PKI techniques have a number of technical limitations over the long-term and can add to the cost for a court reporting firm. Since the court reporter’s identity is known, RealLegal chose instead to use non-PKI based electronic signatures. And, by integrating Surety’s AbsoluteProof into the E-Transcript, all parties can be assured of the document’s integrity.

“Stated simply, PKI-based approaches are not ‘forever,’ while with RealLegal E-Signatures, the Seal on the transcript will never be compromised or go out of date,” noted Primuth.

RESULTS: REDUCING RISK, SATISFYING CLIENTS, AND SAVING PAPER

E-Transcript files offer a wide range of advantages that ASCII and PDF transcripts cannot, including guaranteed page and line accuracy to simplify the attorney’s review process, comprehensive features for viewing and searching, helpful tools for password-protecting and printing transcripts, and direct import into the software applications frequently used by attorneys, such as LiveNote®, CT Summation®, and Binder™. Among the more serious limitations of non E-Transcript formats is ASCII’s susceptibility to conforming to the user’s word processing program (sacrificing page and line integrity) and the fact that attorneys’ transcript management software does not import Adobe® Portable Document Files as transcripts.

E-Transcript files are further enhanced by the application of an E-Transcript Signature with Absolute Proof. When court reporters seal and certify the E-Transcript with a RealLegal Signature, the transcript date, time, content, and author identity are documented and protected from any tampering at any time, and the signature and time stamp carry over to the attorney.

When a paper copy is required, E-Transcript files can be printed individually or in batch, in condensed or full format, with word indices for single or multiple transcripts. RealLegal E-Transcript Reporter Edition™ is designed to simplify and accelerate transcript production, and the integration of Surety solutions supports the remote creation of signed transcripts and the secure transmission of electronic transcripts to production software.

FUTURE: AS POLICIES CHANGE, REALLEGAL IS READY TO HELP

Just as electronic documents have become an essential part of business processes, electronic transcripts are entering the mainstream of the legal profession. With RealLegal E-Transcript Signatures, court reporters are ready to meet clients’ requests for digitally signed electronic transcripts. For their clients who may not yet be aware of the vital security issues, court reporters and reporting firms can differentiate—and protect—themselves by providing Surety-based E-Transcript Signatures automatically.

In 2006, new provisions to the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) Code of professional ethics addressed electronic signatures. The revised Public Advisory Opinion

40 specifically states, "It would be extremely desirable for technology companies that have electronic filing and signature products to develop a feature that would allow firms to appropriately handle (format, print, distribute, store, manage) a transcript that a reporter has submitted electronically and upon which he/she has digitally applied his/her signature, without violating the integrity of the document or the reporter's digital signature." RealLegal E-Transcript Manager, Reporter Edition, and E-Transcript Signatures address this precise need.

Meanwhile, individual states are starting to endorse the use of encrypted digital signatures to certify transcripts. The Court Reporter Certification Board of the state of Texas, for example, has eliminated faxed signatures and Power of Attorney as acceptable methods for first certification of a transcript. Thousands of court reporters and hundreds of reporting firms have already turned to RealLegal and the Surety data integrity solution.

Looking ahead, as other states' policies change, E-Transcript Signatures, powered by Surety's AbsoluteProof, will be ready to help court reporters meet mandates, comply with guidelines, and protect the information entrusted to them ■