

CASE STUDY

**From Risk to Resilience:
How FirstRand Bank Centralized
Legal Workflows and Improved
Collaboration**



FirstRand Bank

Industry:

Financial Services

Headquarters:

Sandton, Gauteng, South Africa

FirstRand Bank (FRB) is one of Africa's largest financial institutions, operating across multiple brands including FNB, RMB, WesBank, Ashburton, and DirectAxis. With a legal function spanning South Africa, Mauritius, India, and subsidiaries across Africa, FRB's Group Legal team faced the challenge of unifying dispersed lawyers, support staff, and processes into a single, reliable system.

Key stats at a glance:

- 15–30% productivity gains in Centres of Expertise
- Audit prep time cut from days to minutes
- High-risk litigation instantly visible across teams
- Expanded adoption beyond legal into multiple business units

Why it matters?

FRB centralized dispersed legal workflows into a single, reliable system. With everything from litigation to recoveries visible and controlled, the bank reduced risk, improved reporting, and created a foundation for smarter collaboration across the enterprise.

The Problem

Prior to the implementation of Co-Flo and iManage, FRB's legal teams worked in silos using an array of inconsistent tools from RSA Archer and SharePoint to S-Drives, OneDrive, and manual Excel trackers. Documents and emails often lived on personal desktops, creating major risks when employees left.

Reporting was incomplete, collaboration between teams was patchy, and critical matters like litigation could be spread across multiple systems, making it difficult to ensure visibility and control. Physical files were sometimes the only fail-safe.

Key challenges:

- No central repository for legal matters or documents
- High risk of data loss when employees left
- Inconsistent processes and tools across geographies and brands
- Poor visibility and reporting, especially for high-value litigation
- Manual, time-consuming responses to audits and risk committee requests



We had litigation matters sitting in multiple places; shared drives, inboxes, personal desktops. If someone left, their emails were gone into the ether.

Judy Naidoo, Legal Support Specialist, Group Legal Team



The Turning Point

A legal operating model overhaul, including the creation of Centres of Expertise (COEs) for litigation, regulatory, IP, procurement, and other functions, created the perfect moment to adopt a unified legal operations platform.

Co-Flo and iManage stood out for their:

- Seamless integration with Microsoft Outlook, Word, and Excel
- Centralized matter management with a familiar, user-friendly interface
- Customizable taxonomy to support diverse legal workstreams
- Integrated e-signature capabilities (SigningHub)
- Scalability across legal and non-legal teams

The Solution

Working with Cooperative Computing, FRB rolled out Co-Flo and iManage over 18 months during COVID, and entirely remotely. The rollout involved designing nine tailored taxonomies, applying an 80/20 approach to standardization vs. specialization, and appointing super users in each COE to drive adoption.

Key solution elements:

- Centralized, secure matter management for all legal workstreams
- Structured collaboration within and between COEs
- Integrated digital signing directly from Co-Flo workspaces
- Governance via a Change Advisory Board to control taxonomy changes
- Phased onboarding for non-legal teams such as Africa Recoveries, Commercial Recoveries, IBD, and Financial Crime



If Co-Flo isn't available, productivity stops. It's become invaluable because we know exactly who's working on what, and everything has a home.

Judy Naidoo, Legal Support Specialist, Group Legal Team



The Impact

Today, FRB's legal team describes Co-Flo and iManage as "critical to daily work." For COEs like Litigation and Enablement, productivity gains are estimated at 15–30%. Audit and reporting processes that once took days are now completed in minutes.

Before Co-Flo:

- Litigation information fragmented across systems
- Manual, inconsistent reporting for finance, insurance, and risk committees
- Limited visibility across teams and regions

After Co-Flo:

- All matters centralized with high-value litigation instantly visible to all relevant parties
- Monthly litigation reports generated in minutes, tailored to PwC's audit requirements
- Audit responses significantly faster and less stressful
- COEs able to hand over work seamlessly, with full matter history accessible
- Growing adoption in non-legal teams, driven by built-in signing capabilities

Why It Worked

Co-Flo and iManage succeeded because they aligned with how FRB's lawyers already worked. Familiar Microsoft integration minimized disruption, while strong governance and super-user support ensured adoption stuck. The platform's flexibility allowed FRB to centralize its legal operations without forcing a "one-size-fits-all" model, giving teams both structure and the freedom to work efficiently.

Now, FRB is looking to take the next step; leveraging dashboards, advanced reporting, and streamlined taxonomies to gain even deeper insights and further enhance collaboration across the bank.



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