

6 Guidelines for Shared Folders

Advisory teams require a digital folder or shared drive where all members can save, edit, access, and store information. Sometimes these are called 'G' drives or 'K' drives, or it may be Google Drive, or Drop Box, etc.

The bottom line is every team will have information that is not easily stored anywhere else and so it's important you have a well-defined system for collectively using the shared folders.



1

How to Set It Up

The first thing you want to do is set up the Master Filing system, which is comprised of the major categories for filing. This will vary from team to team, however there are examples provided for how to set up both the main folders as well as the sub-folders for some of the different areas.

2

Assign an Overseer

Like everything else in your practice, someone needs to be accountable for the Team Shared Drive. Assign someone to oversee and direct others on the guidelines so it is as streamlined and consistent as possible.

3

Access & Security

This drive contains a lot of proprietary and confidential information; therefore, access should only be granted to your trusted team members. In addition, all team members are required to comply with security protocols at their workspace and on their PC.

4

Clean & Purge Regularly

The Overseer of the shared drive can own and/or assign the 'annual spring clean' of the shared drive. It is inevitable there will be multiple files of the same thing, duplicates, or things no longer needed that are creating distraction and clutter from the important stuff. If you are worried about deleting something important create a master folder called ARCHIVE and move it there so it is out of site, but not gone.

5

Always Have a Back Up

Depending on the location of the shared drive, there may be different protocols related to the back-up procedure used to protect your information. It's important you know what those protocols are so you never get caught in a devastating situation where important information is permanently lost.

6

Create File Saving Protocols

We all think differently when it comes to when and how we save files, which is why so much time is wasted looking for things we know are there – but can't remember what we called them and/or don't know how someone else chose to label them. It's one thing to have the master folders and sub-folders mapped out efficiently, but an equally important aspect is to have some consistency with how things are labeled when they are saved.

For example, the team will need protocol around naming practice management files. This can be accomplished by a readily identifiable name and the date it was created or updated as a suffix:

- New Client 1st Appointment June 2020
- Team Introduction Kit May 2021

Including the date for each item saved gives the team an idea of the last time the item was updated and may also prompt action to update. Please note, if you are using these items with clients and sending them in digital form, you may want to remove the date or simply include a year and make sure it is current so the client doesn't ask why their Agenda says '2018.'

It is also helpful to include descriptors. For example, if it's a New Client Resource, it's prefixed with New Client so it is readily identifiable – you may have similar resources for Existing Clients or Strategic Partners.

Client-Specific Items

The team will need protocol around naming client files. For example, by last name and including the year they became a client as the suffix (ie. Smith_Mary 2008).

When saving items to client files, it is recommended you include what it is, who it is for, and a date:

- Tax Planning Documents_Jones_February 2021
- Financial Plan_Jones_January 2021
- NAAF_Jones Bill_September 2020