

PROLAW CASE STUDY LIGHTGABLER

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CLOUD-HOSTED SOLUTION

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"I wanted a practice management program that can do it all, and I think ProLaw is the leader in that regard."

Jody Toerner
Executive Director

Established in 2011 with seven staff, California-based employment law firm LightGabler has always been a very "tech-forward" firm—in fact, it has operated entirely paperlessly since its first day in operation. Today, it has 17 attorneys and a total team of 26 providing day-to-day employment advice and complex litigation counsel (in both federal and state courts) to businesses of all sizes and in all sectors. It has been using ProLaw®, the comprehensive business management solution from Thomson Reuters, since the firm's inception, hosting it in the cloud.

LightGabler's founders were already familiar with ProLaw, having used it successfully at the large firm where they previously worked. Running on relatively lean staff numbers, it was important to implement one solution that LightGabler could use for all of its practice management and matter management needs, including billing, timekeeping, accounting, reporting, contacts management, conflicts checks, and document control.

"ProLaw is an all-inclusive option, and that's key for us," says LightGabler's Executive Director Jody Toerner, who is responsible for all of the firm's IT and accounting as well as its general operations. "Whereas some firms are running several different programs at once for different things, we have everything in one place, making it easy to use and saving us time. We don't need anything else."

For example, LightGabler uses ProLaw to create a database of contacts which can be seamlessly linked into client matters. It uses it as a virtual filing cabinet for client documents and emails which is fully searchable and as a repository for master documents. All pre-bills are edited and

invoices tracked through ProLaw. Timekeeping reports can be run, detailing billable time and expenses. Accounting reports are converted into PDF format for review or into Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheets for data manipulation. The firm even cuts all of its checks through ProLaw.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCONNECTIVITY

Toerner appreciates this wide scope of features and functionality, but just as importantly, she likes how interconnected the different parts of the system are and how they work together as a whole.

"ProLaw has a ton of bells and whistles, and even as an extensive ProLaw user myself, there's still more to learn," says Toerner. "That said, it's so easy and efficient to maneuver around. One of the best things is the ability to "hot-key" directly into specific areas, without having to continually open new windows. So, if I'm in a matter and I want to know what a client owes us, I can just hit the ledger button and see the information instantly. Or a user can hit the timekeeping button and enter billable time from wherever they are in the system or in email. That's genius."

The integration between ProLaw and Microsoft Outlook® is one Toerner says is particularly valuable. She explains that attorneys like the ability to save emails into ProLaw, creating real-time visibility on matter status within the system, all the while enabling emails to stay "live" in Outlook so that those conversations with clients and contacts remain open.

With so much functionality available, it's useful to be able to customize what options are available to users in ProLaw. For instance, LightGabler finds it helpful to minimize the list of fields that attorneys can choose from when managing their matters, so they are only viewing the ones they may need. The firm also implements customized settings around who can access its accounting data for security reasons. Toerner makes the point that it is possible to experiment with customization without fear of inadvertently causing problems which could impair the smooth running of the system.

LIGHTGABLER

LightGabler advises businesses across California on employment issues, employment and business litigation (including complex class, collective, and representative actions), intellectual property, and unfair competition. Its offices are in Camarillo in Ventura County.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Operating a paperless office, LightGabler needed a holistic solution that could meet all of its practice management needs, but one that worked effectively and efficiently in the cloud, enabling anywhere, anytime accessibility.

WHY PROLAW

ProLaw delivers a comprehensive array of features and functionality all in one place. Critically, everything works together smoothly, with users able to "hot-key" quickly to different areas of the system. Its seamless integration with Microsoft Outlook and LevelCloud was another major plus.

BENEFITS

- All-in-one solution with extensive features and functionality
- Fast, efficient maneuverability around the program
- Makes processes like timekeeping and billing easy
- Interconnects with Microsoft Outlook and cloud-based service providers
- Remote accessibility, with no need for internal servers or IT support

“Being able to access such a comprehensive system from anywhere, on any device, is a huge benefit.”

Jody Toerner

TALKING IN THE CLOUD

Interconnectivity and integration also matter greatly when it comes to operating ProLaw in the cloud. Streamlined, remote accessibility allows attorneys to view documents and work on matters in ProLaw from anywhere, at any time, from any device. This “talking in the cloud,” as Toerner calls it, had always mattered to LightGabler, but it took on new meaning when the coronavirus pandemic hit, forcing firms to shift to remote working. Having ProLaw in the cloud meant that LightGabler was well-positioned when this happened: its attorneys were already working this way; now paralegals and support staff also started to access ProLaw remotely.

“We’ve been very busy since the start of Covid-19, but we’ve had no downtime at all in terms of our ability to provide services to clients, because we had ProLaw set up in the cloud,” says Toerner. “I know that some other firms that hadn’t taken the leap into the cloud have really struggled.”

When the firm moved its cloud hosting provision to LevelCloud, with whom ProLaw has partnered since 2019, Toerner describes this as a game-changing moment. Its seamless integration with ProLaw was the main motivation for LightGabler to move from its previous cloud-hosting provider to LevelCloud. “I was thrilled when ProLaw opened the gates to LevelCloud to enable their servers to work together. We switched to LevelCloud and haven’t looked back,” she says.

Another reason for LightGabler’s choice of LevelCloud was that it wanted a private cloud-hosting solution, rather than being on a shared server with other firms. Toerner feels totally secure with having all of the firm’s files in the cloud. She notes that other firms are likely to have to follow suit sooner or later, given that “this is the way the world is moving.”

As proof of the power of such a shift, Toerner points out that her firm comprises users aged between 25 and 81—and that the eldest is one of the solution’s biggest

proponents. “Younger staff are great at coming up with ideas and questions about what ProLaw can do, and our 81-year-old attorney raves about it,” says Toerner. She is well aware that technology can sometimes be a source of frustration in law firms if it fails to help attorneys operate more efficiently and effectively, but Toerner has no such concerns here. Overall, users seem very satisfied with ProLaw being hosted in LevelCloud.

COST EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT

Having ProLaw hosted in the cloud removes the need for costly in-house servers or IT support, saving the firm tens of thousands of dollars per year. “When you map out all the costs involved in having local servers and IT support—and in running a variety of programs for different needs, like timekeeping and contacts management—there are huge cost savings to be made from having one externally-maintained, all-inclusive program and one vendor,” says Toerner. ProLaw does all the software updates and maintenance, and Toerner has one direct contact at LevelCloud who liaises with ProLaw to troubleshoot any back-end issues that arise.

That takes a huge amount of pressure off Toerner personally in terms of ensuring the firm’s critical technologies are well-supported. As well as saving on costs and complexity, using an external hosting provider means that, rather than just having one internal member of support staff available to help a large group of users, the firm can have several specialists advising individuals all at the same time.

Training is relatively straightforward and is conducted internally by Toerner herself, who estimates that most people become fully comfortable with using it within a month. “It’s easy to teach people how to use ProLaw, and once they get going, they’re fine,” she says. “Most people wouldn’t want to go back to a paper-based system, and I certainly wouldn’t. We want to move with the times, and ProLaw enables us to do that. I’d recommend it for sure.”

LightGabler’s future plans for using ProLaw even more extensively include increasing the amount of report customization it undertakes and using the document assembly tool, which is the only component of ProLaw that the firm does not currently deploy. “Being able to click on a couple of buttons in ProLaw to create a template letter, for example, that can just be filled in—that would be a major time-saver for us,” says Toerner. “We do everything else in ProLaw, that’s all that’s left.”

For more information about ProLaw, please call **(800) 977-6529** or visit **www.prolaw.com**.

