

Could Your Firm Benefit from Legal Practice Management Technology?

Clients in today's legal world are sophisticated and empowered, demanding more value for their spend. At the same time, advancements in legal technology have dramatically increased the number of available solutions, making it difficult for lawyers to understand and select the best solutions for their firms.

The necessity of reconciling these two trends has pushed the legal industry to a pivotal point, with lawyers recognizing that the status quo is no longer good enough and will certainly not guarantee future viability. The following is a brief summary of three red flags that could indicate the need for a practice management solution. If one or more of these red flags resonates with you, it is probably time to reevaluate your current processes and learn more about how [legal practice management software](#) can benefit your firm. Let's take a closer look at each of them.

1. Lack of Mobility and Flexibility

If you are away from your office, are you still able to conduct most of your daily work tasks? If you answered no, then you may want to review your firm's setup, especially as clients continue to demand more for less, because taking too long to respond to their inquiries can negatively impact client satisfaction. In this global era where business can be won and lost in an instant, having the flexibility to securely access important information from anywhere and through any device (smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.) is key. And in a highly competitive market, such inflexibility can negatively impact your reputation, the number of client referrals you receive, and your firm's bottom line.

2. Insufficient Security

The ABA Model Rules state that lawyers are required to make reasonable efforts to prevent inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure of or access to information

relating to the representation of a client. In terms of client communication, the ABA Model Rules outline that lawyers need to ensure the security of their client communications and must exercise reasonable care when using technology to communicate about client matters, as unencrypted email is not always a reliable option. If you're still harboring a fear of cloud-based services, even as consumer demand compels technology adoption, it's time to reevaluate. Paper-based law offices and onsite servers no longer cut it as secure options. Moreover, law firms positioning themselves as providers of secure data repositories retain a potentially significant advantage over their competitors. Both you and your clients will gain peace of mind by adopting a cloud-based solution that meets the most stringent security standards for the legal industry.

3. Manual Process Burdens

Is your firm still using old and inefficient methods? If you still use paper file storage, scribble your time entries on paper or enter them into spreadsheets, manually calculate legal deadlines, and manually proofread and format your legal documents, then the answer is "Yes." The next question is "Why?" Your success hinges on producing high-quality legal work and receiving payment for your billable activities. Why continue dedicating valuable time to manual processes in your firm? Couldn't that time be better spent on billable activities, client development, or your own work-life balance? Law firms of all sizes are already simplifying and even automating nonbillable administrative work with technology. Most firms will eventually have to make this change to be successful in the long term. Continuing to delay improvements now will only make the change more difficult later.

Where Can Practice Management Technology Help?

Legal practice management technology can automate many of the time-consuming nonbillable administrative tasks that fall upon you and your staff. Automating these tasks frees up time that your lawyers can devote to more valuable billable activities. You could be leaving money on the table by continuing to do things the way they've always been done. According to the 2019 Altman Weil Law Firms in Transition survey, for example, while law firm leaders agree almost unanimously (96 percent) that a focus on improved practice efficiency is a permanent trend in the profession, only about half of survey respondents (48 percent) reported using technology tools to increase the efficiency of legal service delivery. A [legal practice management solution](#) can immediately help your firm in these areas:

I. Time Capture

A legal practice management solution with a built-in timer makes it easy for lawyers to capture all the time they spend on matters. With hours worked automatically captured by the system, your firm's billing staff can much more easily and efficiently create and send professional, accurate invoices to the clients on whose behalf your firm's lawyers have been toiling. Your firm will spend less time on billing yet will get paid faster.

II. Matter Organization

A legal practice management solution also makes it possible to keep highly organized electronic client and matter files. Though it may take extra time to set up electronic files at first, courts are increasingly transitioning into paperless environments—meaning that you'll need to have your documents in an electronic form one way or another. In addition, many clients prefer to communicate electronically.

To take full advantage of electronic client files, look for a practice management solution that indexes every word within the saved document. This will make file and document retrieval easier than you may have ever believed possible. Every time you search a keyword or phrase, the results will include documents with that keyword or phrase in its title or body. Eliminating the fishing expedition of finding a missing document or client file in a sea of papers and file folders will save countless hours.

III. Deadline Tracking

Legal practice management software can virtually eliminate both the administrative burden and malpractice risk associated with manually calculating legal deadlines. Practice management solutions with a built-in legal calculator can automate this activity based on your jurisdiction's rules, send automatic updates when there are changes to these rules, and sync the deadlines with your Microsoft® Outlook® calendar for an organized view of upcoming deadlines. You can rest easier knowing your legal practice management solution automatically calculates accurate deadlines.

Conclusion

By taking an objective look at your firm's current practice management processes and making an honest assessment of where inefficiencies exist, you can take meaningful action toward making adjustments, including investing in solutions that can help to streamline routine tasks and stay focused on higher-value activities.

For more information, please visit [ProLaw.com](https://www.prolaw.com).