



Tech tools for running your office

These simple suggestions can make you savvy in managing your practice

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Introduction

Many lawyers do not know how to run a business. Running a business or learning how to manage a law firm are not generally subjects taught in law school. Trust accounting, accurate time records, and calendaring deadlines are all common issues that attorneys have problems dealing with. The purpose of this article is to provide you with some inexpensive resources that will help you run your practice more effectively and minimize client complaints.

Software programs

• QuickBooks

QuickBooks (www.quickbooks.com/) is a powerful program. If you learn how to use the many features of the program, you will save a significant amount of money because you will avoid costly trust account errors. With QuickBooks, you can create "check registers" for all of your checking accounts, including your business and trust accounts, prepare invoices to clients, and keep track of client trust account expenditures. QuickBooks also allows you to create reports that will enable you to get an accurate financial picture of your law firm. And QuickBooks simplifies filing tax returns, since the program works with many tax filing software programs. Because it is the most popular accounting software, many other

software programs, including law-office-specific programs, interface with QuickBooks to share data and avoid rekeying.

However, to really maximize what you can get from this program, it is really worth investing in training. Companies like LearnIt (www.learnit.com/) offer QuickBooks training. If you don't have time to leave the office for software training, you may want to sign up for the many night, weekend or online software training classes offered by your local community college.

• Checkmagic

Checkmagic (www.checkmagic.com/) is a program that allows you to create your own checks. With this \$19.95 software program, you will save significantly because you will never have to order expensive, pre-printed checks from the bank. Checkmagic Version 5 is compatible with Windows™ XP and Windows™ 2000 and all versions of Quicken and QuickBooks. Another popular check printing program is VersaCheck (www.versacheck.com). For both of these programs, you purchase blank check paper and then print the check on your laser printer.

Keep track of billable time

Another area where lawyers lose money is by not accurately tracking all of the time that they have spent on a client. Even if you don't have clients you bill on an hourly basis, you will need to keep

track of this information for attorney fee motions. The Tucows Web site (www.tucows.com/) offers a number of freeware or shareware programs that will help you. To find the timer programs, just go to the "Search Solutions and Software" box, enter the word timer, and you will be directed to a page listing the timer programs, the necessary system requirements, and user ratings for each program.

Pick up your e-mail from anywhere

This Web site (www.mail2web.com/) offers a free web-based e-mail retrieval application that allows users from anywhere to anonymously pick up their e-mail from almost any POP3 and IMAP4 e-mail server. Unlike www.google.com/ or www.yahoo.com/, this application actually allows you to use your existing e-mail account to get your e-mail simply by entering your e-mail address and password. With this program, you can easily read, reply, forward, and delete messages when you are not in the office. This program is especially important for lawyers given the increasing use of e-filing and reliance on e-mail communications.

Helpful Web sites for lawyers

• Time

Since AT&T eliminated the "time lady" on September 19, 2007, to cut costs, we in Northern California can no longer dial POPCORN to learn what the



DECEMBER 2007

correct time is. However, the Web sites (www.time.gov and www.timeanddate.com) are available and will give you the correct time down to the second. Having accurate time is important, especially to lawyers who take a lot of videotaped depositions, where synching the time between the videographer and court reporter is necessary.

• **FedEx**

You can save time by shipping your item directly from the FedEx Web site (www.fedex.com/us/). All you have to do is go online and once you have entered the recipient's information, it is stored in your FedEx address book, ready to be accessed the next time you send a FedEx to that particular person. The online tracking feature is helpful because you will know when a package was delivered, who signed for it, and even print out a copy of the signature if you need it. And if you work late, check out www.overniteexpress.com. Once you sign up for an account, there are boxes where you can drop off as late as 9:00 pm for delivery the next morning throughout much of California.

• **Universal Currency Converter**

The Universal Currency Converter (www.xe.com/ucc/) is a simple way to determine the current exchange rate between major international currencies.

This Web site is especially helpful for lawyers who have to deal with overseas clients or who litigate against overseas companies.

• **Reaching customer service**

GetHuman is a fabulous resource that tells you exactly how to reach a live person when calling customer service. According to the Web site (www.gethuman.com/), the GetHuman movement has been an all-volunteer effort to improve the lamentable state of present-day telephone customer service. This free Web site is run by volunteers and is powered by over 1 million consumers who demand high quality phone support from the companies that they use.

• **Translation of legal terms to other languages**

The Sacramento County Superior Court has created a listing of legal glossaries translating English legal terms into other languages that can be downloaded in PDF format. This is a useful tool for anyone representing non-English speaking clients or witnesses. (www.saccourt.com/geninfo/legal_glossaries/legal_glossaries.asp).

• **ABA Law Practice Management Section**

You don't have to be a member of the ABA to access the useful articles featured on the American Bar Association's Law Practice Management Web site

(www.abanet.org/lpm/resources/management.shtml).

• **Small Business Administration**

Most lawyers need help learning how to run a business. If you go to the Small Business Administration's Web site (www.sbaonline.sba.gov/index.html), you can get information about starting, managing, and financing your business, take online classes, and learn how to market your services, among other things.

Conclusion

By incorporating a few simple software programs and helpful Web sites, you will be able to save money, work more efficiently, and reduce client complaints.



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