



Guide

5 Practice Tips from a Small Firm Lawyer's Perspective



As a small firm practitioner since 2005, take it from me, I have tried it all from different practice management software, billing programs, bookkeepers, credit card merchants, banks, assistants etc. Being a small firm attorney is not easy, especially if you don't want to rely on administrative staff. Like any business owner, my focus is on making sure that I can run my law practice efficiently and with the lowest expense possible and in a way that fits my life. I don't want to spend my time managing employees, dealing with administrative tasks, or being a slave tied to my desk, and have built my practice to minimize that unpleasantness.

Here are 5 key tips to think about when running your law practice to make sure that your practice doesn't run you:

1. Automation:

Spend as little time as possible re-inventing the wheel. This means that you need to implement processes which allow your employees to take on tasks interchangeably. Finding a great software program that automates your closing process for real estate transactions or helps prepare case information statements in family law matters will ensure that you minimize down-time; if one staff member is out sick, another one can take over and pick up easily. There are lots of software programs which help you automate forms and processes, depending on your practice area, and ensure that you don't have to rely heavily on administrative staff. Easysoft's legal software is an affordable and easy-to-use solution that helps with complex calculations in real estate and family law matters.

2. Streamlining:



Make sure that you have a law practice management program where all client time and expense billing is recorded, invoiced and payments are tracked. This is essential for any practice taking escrowed fees as you are ethically obligated to maintain detailed invoicing and accounting records tracking these funds. And since you are likely in this business to earn a living, making sure that you are properly tracking and billing client time is essential to making sure you get paid for the work you are doing. A simple excel spreadsheet really isn't efficient as you will still spend administrative time creating detailed invoices; make sure you have a software program that does this for you, shows your client their escrow balances and even allows them to pay you through a credit card link contained within the invoice. I find that my clients using the credit card link pay their bills sooner than those who write checks. The efficiency is a win/win for everyone.

3. Building Your Team

As a small firm, you want to minimize your overhead and work smarter. This about what your highest and best use is, as an attorney billing time and doing legal work. You are not working smart if you are overwhelmed by administrative tasks, distracting you from practicing law. Consider using an off-site service to answer calls and take messages. I also use off-site paralegals as independent contracts rather than onsite employees. This helps me save on the cost of real estate space, payroll taxes and reduces my time spent managing employees. I found my paralegal through the NJ State Bar's paralegal section and though people that I have met through networking. Another essential member of your team is a bookkeeper to make sure that your trust and operating accounts are regularly reconciled and that you are ready for a random audit at any given time. And finally, consider a marketing/social media service. In today's world, we need to make sure that our firms are delivering timely



content to ensure visibility. You can delegate social media and other online marketing while you directly handle business development such as networking and building personal connections to referral sources.

4. Technology

Make sure that your technology/devices are up to date and work for

you. In addition to my desktop computer, I used to lug around a laptop to work at home in the evenings. A shoulder injury and some physical therapy later, I switched to an Ipad which is much lighter and allows me access to all the software programs being used in the office. I am able to take notes on the Ipad during client meetings using Notability, upload those notes to the client file and access them without needing to carry around the physical paper file. My remote assistant and paralegal are also able to securely access all file documents without being in my physical office.

5. Efficiency

And finally, the most important piece of the puzzle as your practice

grows is to make sure that your ducks are in a row. I use a project management program called Asana. Asana has a free version which works perfectly well for what I needed. I set up each of my cases as a project, scheduling tasks for myself and my staff to make sure that we aren't missing something and that a task request didn't get lost in a mountain of emails. I get notifications when tasks are completed and can schedule follow-ups and ancillary tasks as well. The beauty of using a project management program is that I can make sure that we are taking care of my cases without



overloading my staff as I can look at all of my “projects” in one place.

When I started my law practice, I modeled it after the old established practice that I had come from, hiring staff, buying leather bound books for a “library”, and having volumes of paper files stored in large filing cabinets that lined my walls. Taking a vacation meant bringing a paper file with me or not taking one at all. Now, my practice is leaner and meaner and I am spending less time on unnecessary administrative tasks, allowing me more time to bill for legal work, making this practice work for me rather than the other way around. The marketplace has the technology to allow us to run our law firms without being chained to our desks, bogged down and overwhelmed by distasteful tasks. Instead, now we can actually focus on what we love doing-practicing law!

Ayesha Krishnan Hamilton, Esq.
HAMILTON LAW FIRM PC
Princeton, NJ

To learn more about
how Easysoft can help
your firm work more
efficiently contact a
Product Consultant
today at
800-905-7638



800-905-7638
info@easysoft-usa.com
www.easysoft-usa.com