White paper

Selecting a Practice Management System

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Streamline your practice

Determine the functions that you need and then find a solution that fits your requirements and empowers everyone in your firm to work more productively.

"Where did the time go?"
"Where did that file go?"
"Is my contact list current?"
"Does this client present a conflict?"

If you're having a hard time getting answers to questions like these, it's time to find a new—or replace a broken—practice management system.

Practice management is not a new concept. In fact, this information sharing software has been around for about 20 years. You can expect any good system to provide you with the same basic capabilities:

- A calendar function that tracks billable time and simplifies scheduling
- Document management that provides shared access to the same files which are stored in one place on Windows
- Contact lists that let multiple users share the same, up-to-date information
- A shared database that makes it fast and easy to identify potential client conflicts

Go beyond the core functionality

Given that most practice management systems do the same basic things, how can you find the best solution for your firm?

First, think about how you will do those things. Will you integrate the software with applications that you're already using, or do you want one comprehensive, stand-alone solution that does it all? Will you check for conflicts using Outlook and your firm's database or research every outside source available? Do you want front-office and back-office solutions that talk to each other or to separate systems for security reasons? Consider all the ways you'll use the system and build a wish list based on your specific needs before you go shopping.

Insist on seeing all your options in action

Never buy software before you've taken it for a test drive. Most vendors will be happy to demo their software for you. Use this opportunity to "look under the hood." Ask specific questions that will help you understand how the various product features will adapt to meet your requirements. For example, instead of asking to see the calendaring function, ask the sales rep more specifically to show you how you can view two people's calendars at the same time. Don't forget that a demo is a sales opportunity and that the person who is showing the software to you may have his or her own agenda. Keep the focus on what you need, not on what the vendor wants to sell you.

Maximise your investment with professional support

A sales rep may tell you about all the nifty product features, but a trusted partner will help you put those features to work. Look for a consultant who is knowledgeable, resourceful, and interested in you. Your vendor should be able to provide a list of consultants who know their products inside and out.

Thanks to the Internet, there are no limits to finding training and consulting—and virtual handholding—24x7. It's a good rule of thumb to spend at least as much on training and support as you did on the software. Recent studies have proven that people who attend a structured training class are 50% more productive during the introductory period of learning something new than those who don't.

Get buy-in from the top down
The best consultant in the world can't help you unless everyone in your firm accepts and utilises the new technology. People at the top can be the worst offenders. You can win hearts and minds by demonstrating the return on investment if the software is used to its full potential.

Get the right partner
LexisNexis understands that many lawyers want to focus on practicing law and not worry about running a business. Our deep knowledge of the needs of small to mid-size firms allows us to provide a comprehensive solution suitable for each individual firm. We offer a broad range of products, services, and support options to put the best practice management solution in place.

PCLaw Plus is the practice management software of choice for over 6,000 users in the Australian legal market. Designed specifically for small practices, this fully integrated time, billing and accounting software package is easy to use right out of the box. It will help your firm expedite billing and manage your trust, financial, and client accounting tasks. The total cost of ownership is lower than most competitive products, because the software requires less training and combines with a comprehensive precedents library and online research.

Larger firms will prefer **Lexis® Affinity Library,** a single, complete system for streamlined document production, marketing, email, time recording, workflow and accounting management. Some law firms have reported that Lexis Affinity Library software lets them take on 30% more work with exactly the same resources. Paperless, integrated matter management saves you the time that you would otherwise spend filing and finding documents. Document automation eliminates the need to retype information and reduces human errors. Powerful reporting functions drill down your firm's performance. Easy-to-customise diary and tasks tools make sure you hit every deadline right on time.

LexisNexis Practice Management
Transforming the Business of Law
We take the headache out of the business of law. Our innovative Practice Management products, content and services enable you to improve efficiency, increase profitability and boost client satisfaction.

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