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7 Benefits of Consolidating Your Legal Tech Stack

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Much like supermarket fruits, there are many law management software options of all shapes and sizes out there – but to make the most of your staff’s efficiency, there are some basic functionalities needed to claim that highly coveted time back in everyone’s day. These integral features include: word processing, email, practice management tools, billing, accounting, and document management. For some of you, the first two on the list often live in the form of Microsoft Office or G-Suite. While these certainly have the potential for efficiency on their own, it’s important whatever software you choose has the capability to share information in real-time between programs.

Although integrating with existing apps is one option, you’ll reap the biggest rewards by consolidating your practice management, billing, and accounting software all in one place. Why? No incredible, life-altering reason – simply that it’s easier and more convenient this way. It’s a decision that requires careful consideration, since a software investment can be quite costly upfront, and individual “best of breed” solutions may seem more appealing when comparing them.

To help your decision, we’re going to explore the advantages to consolidating your legal technology:

Advantages to legal tech consolidation

1. Easier training and onboarding

One software platform to train employees on all their day-to-day duties simplifies onboarding for everyone. Depending on the work a staff member may do, having to [train them](#) with multiple interfaces and programs means more time until they’re up and running on their own without asking for help. With three separate programs, for example, that means three systems users will need to learn and navigate. Learning only one system saves time and empowers people to be more productive quicker.

2. One Access Point for logins

There’s no dancing around it: multiple programs are more difficult to manage. Along with training, providing access and logins to new employees can be a big pain when you have to do it three to five times across all your programs. This means not only giving them a user ID and password, but also setting up permissions on what they can and cannot see. For small to midsize firms, this can be laborious when people come and go – constantly removing access and ensuring your data is secure and only seen by those currently still in your firm. This difficulty increases when you have to adjust permission types for sensitive data.

Read our tips on [how to begin using legal practice management software](#) for a deeper dive on getting everyone working efficiently together with new software.

3. Data accuracy

Data accuracy is the biggest benefit to using one program for billing, accounting, and practice management. One-time entry for a client versus multiple minimizes the chances of human error. It's happened before – entering information in your practice management system for client communication separately from your billing system. These differences, even if one number of an email address is mistyped, can cause problems later when you need to mail important correspondence or contact the client.

Those errors cost valuable time figuring out where the discrepancy lies. Even if these different systems claim to “communicate” with each other, temporary disconnects and ascertaining which software is prioritized or “wins” in information adds more complicated variables to the confusion.

4. One place for upgrades

Regardless whether you have on-premise or cloud software, it's important to note that your firm is always responsible for scheduled diagnostics to ensure separate systems communicate properly. An update in one program may not be compatible with another program, leaving you with the difficult choices of having to disconnect and operate separately, not upgrade, or invest time with the vendors to find and address issues.

When working with multiple programs and an issue emerges, the onus is unfortunately on the firm to troubleshoot and determine the root cause. If it's something between two programs, the firm will need to invest time and resources to work with the vendors, resulting in them pointing at each other if neither vendor accepts responsibility. While this is not ideal, it happens more often than we might like to think.

With a single program for billing, accounting, and practice management, you don't have to worry about who's responsible. There's one place to contact for support and maintenance issues. This can save the firm time in troubleshooting and help bolster efficiency.

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5. Time tracking

A single system also makes it easier to [track time](#). Whether you bill time or not, there are valuable insights in knowing where your staff spends most of their time on areas of improvement. That way, you can eliminate roadblocks and create an open dialogue that helps empower your staff to feel they have all the tools needed to help clients.

Plus, having one system to remind you in your calendar and automatically generate invoices for tasks creates less friction for accounting and record-keeping.

6. Accurate billing, every day

Have you ever generated a client bill and received a call saying “we paid that balance already last month?” That embarrassment can be caused by separate billing and accounting systems. When you have to record the payment in two places, it’s easy – almost inevitable, even – for something to be missed. Someone must siphon time from other money-making tasks to ensure everything is correct in both places.

When it comes to billing and accounting, these reconciliations include not only payments, but trust deposits, withdrawals from trust to outsiders, as well as the firm and expense disbursements. Given the critical nature of [trust accounting](#) makes this even more important.

Failure to bill clients for expense disbursements in a timely manner can have a significant impact on firm profitability, especially if the firm is paying the vendor before receipt of payment from the client. This impacts cash flow considerably over time. When disbursements must be entered in one system for billing and a separate system for general ledger accounting, the risks of missing something increase.

7. Remove the guesswork from reporting

When information is in one place reporting becomes simpler. If data is in multiple places you may have to export data from the programs and combine into a single report using something like Excel. This is additional time as well as adding the possibility of errors. And, if something is discovered as missing, you have to redo the reports.

A single source is always more efficient and accurate here.

Consolidating practice management software has its benefits

While you probably can’t find one program that does everything, there are benefits to consolidating where possible without losing functionality. Focus on your firm’s needs and consider your choices while keeping in mind the benefits of consolidating your legal tech stack. Software can be expensive – but the amount of time and peace of mind you’ll save can be well worth the investment if it fulfills all your needs, and updates with the needs of your business over time.

If you're curious about what kind of practice management software your firm should pursue, check out our blog, [3 Types of Legal Practice Management Software to Consider for Your Law Firm](#).

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