

Attorney Bottlenecks and Legal Technology: Solving the Pain Points of Practicing Law

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Bottlenecks commonly occur within the law firm environment, but certain pain points are specific to attorneys as they provide legal services to firm clients. A single client matter can encompass numerous steps, from developing a strategy and managing client expectations to implementing the plan and bringing the matter to a close. At every stage of that process lies an opportunity for obstacles, especially when lawyers lack the technology they need to handle their cases efficiently and effectively. Add in the unique challenges of [remote work arrangements](#), and the potential for [bottlenecks](#) looms even larger.

The following bottlenecks represent some of the challenges that attorneys face in the regular course of serving law firm clients:



Document Access Delays

Paperwork and the practice of law go hand in hand, so attorneys need immediate access to necessary case documents. Bottlenecks in this aspect of legal practice can occur for a number of reasons. For example, editing delays can leave an entire team of lawyers waiting for one party to make changes to a contract or other document. This can be especially problematic if the editing is being completed by more than one person.

Fortunately, several legal software options streamline the editing process, making it easier and far less time-consuming. With these technologies, all credentialed parties can work within one file instead of repeatedly emailing the latest edited versions of documents back and forth between one another. Some of these tech options also allow for comments and controls on who can edit documents and when.

Remote working arrangements also affect document accessibility. Let's say a group of four lawyers

are working on a client matter, but each of these lawyers works from a different location. Creating multiple paper copies of the client file is not an efficient and effective option. In addition, what happens if one of the attorneys forgets to bring an important document when they come together and work in person?

With a cloud-based [document management](#) system, every member of that team has access to all of the case file documents from any place they choose to work, and at any time of the day or night.

These convenient options allow lawyers to store files and documents in a secure cloud-based environment. They also have easy-to-use search options, so time isn't wasted combing through pages and pages of documents. Some also offer version management, so that attorneys can easily see what changes have been made since they last accessed the file.

Document management is an essential part of collaboration. Attorneys need the ability to access, edit, and store files without the bottlenecks that can get in the way and impede the progress of a client matter.

Internal Communication Strains

When working within an office setting, it's easy for attorneys to simply walk into a colleague's office and confer about a case. Whether asking a simple question, soliciting advice, or collaborating on a project, the camaraderie that an in-person work environment provides can prove extremely beneficial to attorney productivity.

But for firms that operate among different locations, whether by choice or in response to the pandemic, the benefits of regular communication can become lost without the right strategies and systems in place.

It is not uncommon for attorneys in different physical locations to work on firm matters collaboratively as part of a team. When the communication between team members becomes strained, various problems can result, including miscommunications and [missed deadlines](#).

For attorneys working remotely, feelings of isolation may result from their inability to have those valuable impromptu conversations with their fellow attorneys as the need arises. In addition, they may find it challenging to reach support staff when needed, which can also lead to incomplete tasks and process inefficiencies.

In today's remote working environment, lawyers need communication plans that include useful tech innovations. Regularly scheduled team meetings and check-ins help firm members ask questions, solicit help, and feel connected to the firm as a whole. Additionally, having the ability to [chat directly within a matter](#) and track your conversations and directed references will not only keep you organized, but it will also reduce the number of emails flooding your inbox. Bring your internal conversations to chat from wherever you are regarding whatever matter you may be working on.

Tools like Zoom and Cisco WebEx can also help facilitate these regular meetings, while resources like Slack make quick interactions easier to manage and document.

Client Management Challenges

The practice of law is largely about the [management of client relationships](#). After all, attorneys work

to further their clients' interests when taking on a matter, so it follows that managing the client relationships must be an integral part of the process.

As attorneys establish and maintain their positive reputations, they need to build [positive relationships](#) with their clients. They can achieve this goal by doing the following:

- Understanding the client's needs by asking questions and actually taking the time to listen to their responses. Attorneys need to be active listeners in and out of the courtroom. When an attorney fully understands the client's needs, they can better manage expectations and prevent miscommunications.
- Demonstrating empathy for clients. Clients want to feel that they are not just a number or a vehicle for a law firm's billable hours. A little compassion can go a long way in gaining a client's trust.
- [Consistent communication](#) also helps to build and strengthen the trust that a client has for their attorney. Clients need to know that work is being completed on their matter, otherwise, they start to question their attorney's ethics and legal abilities. The best way to meet this need is to provide regular communications and updates. Even if no new developments have occurred, a brief status report can calm fears and worries.
- Attorneys should be truthful and transparent about fees and costs right from the very first meeting. Nothing ruins an attorney-client relationship faster than unexpected costs in the middle of a case. Lawyers need to keep clients updated about their financial responsibilities, and even if something unexpected does arise, clients should be notified as quickly as possible.
- Client expectations can be managed by setting boundaries and knowing when it's time to say "no." Attorneys are the legal professionals in an attorney-client relationship, so they should always rely on their skills and judgment. They should not be swayed to set unrealistic goals or unattainable outcomes. Honesty is the only option when it comes to the merits of a case.

Legal technology, like CRM, also helps attorneys establish and maintain client relationships. With CRM, lawyers can securely store client contact information and document previous interactions. It offers a quick and easy reference when specific client information is needed. Some CRM software options can also be programmed to provide reminders for client follow-ups and important deadlines.

[Client portals](#) also promote positive client relationships. With these tools, attorneys can quickly provide clients with updates on their matters, as well as timely invoices. Clients can independently log into their secure accounts to view notes and review their firm bills. With a client portal, attorneys can efficiently keep clients informed.

Happy clients become repeat clients who refer new clients. By placing the focus on client relations, attorneys can avoid the bottlenecks that arise from unrealistic expectations and poor client relationships.

Legal Case Management Software is the Best Solution to Alleviate Attorney Bottlenecks

Legal case management software offers viable solutions to many of the bottlenecks that attorneys contend with on a daily basis. These platforms often include tools that promote internal communications among members of the firm while also keeping clients adequately informed and up to date.

Case management software may also offer some document management features so that attorneys can quickly and easily edit, access, and store client files in a secure environment. For attorneys that

find themselves interrupted by the pain points of practicing law, the right case management software can be the solution to their bottleneck problem.