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Efficiency in the Digital Age: Best Communication Tools for Law Firms

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One of the biggest takeaways from 2020 as a whole has been adjusting to the entirely remote atmosphere of day-to-day operations. Although [77 percent of attorneys regularly work from home](#) according to an American Bar Association survey, there's no doubt this rapid change of in-office vs. a remote environment has affected the ways things are done at law firms. Specifically, how communication happens. Now, moving forward, it's time to take charge and find ways to use law firm communication tools that prioritize security and efficiency for everyone involved – including clients.

This [operational efficiency](#) will serve everyone better in fostering a client-centered firm that maintains clear, iterative communication, [positioning](#) your firm's reputation better than the competition.

How Remote Work is Changing Internal and Client Communication

Both internal communication and client communication are forever changed. While the outskirts of remote work and the digital age have been creeping in the periphery for a while, it's the coronavirus that's ushered in the necessity for fully digital communication and remote work. This has changed mainly for in-office workers such as paralegals and legal assistants. Instead of a quick walk over to your coworker's desk for a question, you're now forced to send a message or phone call. This extra effort leads to more barriers that can prevent alignment across the team.

For clients, without a central office phone number to call, it's going to create extra worry about how to get updates on their case. Without clear communication and guidance, your firm's reputation could suffer. After all, poor communication is among the top reason clients end relationships with law firms. When comparing one bad experience to more than one in terms of communication, the percentage of a client switching to a competitor [jumps from 50 to 80 percent](#).

You really can't afford to let clients leave on the basis of bad communication – especially since there are so many solutions that can help remedy this prevalent communication problem.

Important Law Firm Communication Tools for Optimizing Efficiency

Stay on task and on schedule with frequent communication tools that ease the burden of sifting through multiple windows and programs. One prominent example, which fans of kanban project management will rejoice at, is [Centerbase's TaskFrame™](#) inclusion. It's a convenient visual board that lets you drag and drop important tasks and notify people in real-time.



There are plenty of other law firm communication tools that simplify and prioritize what needs to be done in a secure way. Let's review them based on category:

Video Conferencing Tools

- **Zoom:** The boon of Zoom is everywhere this year – and for good reason. With a free option for 40-minute calls at a time, you can manage meetings effectively while also creating a private space for you and your clients to talk. Some [security concerns](#) have emerged to take into account, but their 5.0 update supports end-to-end encryption as of May 2020. It's a great platform widely understood and accessible, so it's a good place to start.
- **Skype:** If you've ever video chatted before, chances are, you've heard of Skype. Another free option for video, the backing from Microsoft provides features such as unlimited video calls and unlimited users able to join meetings. However, Skype does not offer end to end encryption, so if ensuring client privacy is a concern, Microsoft Teams may be a better option (albeit, more expensive).
- **Legaler:** A newer video chat software specifically geared toward law firms, Legaler is definitely worth mentioning if you haven't heard of it. Its in-browser video feature prioritizes security without any annoying download requirements for your participants. Plus, all your videos can be archived and connected to your matters for easy retrieval later. The best part? They have a starter version that's free to use, with a more premium version for storage at \$19 a month.

Instant Messaging Tools

Creating one spot to facilitate quick communication helps drive efficiency in the digital, remote world we're now in. It's easy to keep a tab open as your staff are checking their inboxes or reading a matter to reply back to a quick inquiry.

In terms of messaging, here are some convenient options that can boost your team's communication:

- **Microsoft Teams:** Good for firms with a Microsoft 365 subscription, Teams is the beefier, more secure version of Skype. More costly per user versus the other free options, you get a bevy of features such as instant messaging, recording meetings, and screen sharing. This functions more effectively when you already use all Microsoft products, and works to flesh out your existing 365 system, so if you're not using it, this cost may not be worthwhile.
- **Slack:** Great for those wanting a browser-based solution for IMing, Slack has convenient customization options, including notifications and the ability to sync with Google Drive and other common file-sharing software. Divided between threads and conversations with teammates, you can easily add channels and compartmentalize so only the people needed on certain channels are included and notified. Plus, it now offers video calls if you're looking for a way to connect with teammates face to face. For small and medium-sized businesses, it's priced at \$6.67 per user a year, and \$8 per user a month.
- **Centerbase Mobile App:** While Teams and Slack both offer apps, our Centerbase mobile app is all-inclusive with our client portal, letting you communicate directly with clients in accordance with their matters. Not only that, but all interactions are tracked through the native software and attributed to the matter history, so anyone looking at the file in the future will be caught up on what's been said. The convenience that keeps you caught up – without extra, duplicative

work. And not to mention, Centerbase's [Automatic Time Capture](#) feature that allows attorneys to send and receive texts and calls to a separate, private number. Whether you're texting a client about an upcoming meeting, sending documents over email, or answering a call after hours, every second is automatically captured and converted into a time entry.

Secure Client Portal

Whether you need to send matter deadlines or an update via text message, having a simple [client portal](#) where it's all laid out gives considerable peace of mind to clients. This as a law firm communication tool has value when it comes to tracking and divvying direct communication that helps reassure them you're on top of status updates and important dates to be mindful of.

24/7 Client Portals Improve Communication

A 24/7 portal fosters an open door policy and can help clients maintain trust with you during the entirety of their case. Plus, instead of calling, clients can send a message instead about any questions they have – alerting you, and empowering staff to get them answers quicker than playing phone tag.

Client Intake Management

Onboarding is always a pain point for firms – to get all the paperwork loaded into the system quickly and accurately is timely and takes away from other revenue-generating tasks. Rather than manually entering all a client's information once they fill out a form, with Centerbase, their information is automatically populated the instant the form is completed. These [intake features](#) boost productivity and efficiency on matters.

Why Client Communication is Important for Your Practice

The better your communication, the more alignment your team will have to stay efficient and keep clients happy. As mentioned earlier, one bad interaction can be the difference between a client going to another firm – so it's a matter of maintaining a good reputation in order to retain clients. You can have a stellar team of attorneys, but without proper client communication, it will create uncertainty and a lack of trust in the client-attorney relationship. With the advent of digitized and remote teams, your firm must adapt, or you may suffer from a lack of client retention.

How to Improve Adoption of New Communication Technology

So you know the importance of law firm communication tools; now is the implementation step that can feel daunting and overwhelming. Take time to research and plan which of the above services will best suit your firm's needs, and work on a plan to put it into action if you haven't already. This will require a virtual or in-person meeting with your team to emphasize the requirements, and why it's needed. Such a transition can be the difference between your firm flourishing and simply skating by.

- Offer incentives for your team to communicate such as once a month early release to let them know you're noticing the initiative and commitment
- Actively listen. Provide a space for your team to reflect on what their difficulties are with using messaging and video chat software. Where can you help alleviate some of their anxieties and concerns?
- Reward anyone who takes initiative to help others learn and let them know they're appreciated for helping drive efficiency

What Law Firm Communication Tools Will You Use?

Remote work efficiency is going to take a different form when it comes to office communication. Be sure to be mindful of roadblocks – as this transitional period from a fully staffed office to a hybrid or even fully remote environment can take time to get used to long-term. These video and instant messaging tools can help bridge the gap and get answers and efficiency better than constant calls or text messages on personal devices. Division between work and home is going to be pivotal to helping your team not feel overwhelmed.

What tools jumped out at you? Be sure to let us know what's best for your team in the comments. If you have any questions about how a mobile app can help your firm and sync with software securely, send us a message, and let's chat about how Centerbase can simplify everyday tasks and put more time back in your billing and day-to-day operations.

Thanks for tuning in! If you have some time, check out our blog on [Everything You Need to Know About Communicating With Your Clients Via Text: The Good and the Bad](#)

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