5 Steps to Accepting Credit Cards at Your Law Firm

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Today's tech-savvy clients expect online payment options—especially the ability to pay by credit card—from the companies they do business with, whether they're buying a new sweater or hiring a lawyer. In fact, between 2000 and 2018, the use of credit cards grew 392%, while checks declined by 66%, according to the US Federal Reserve.

By offering clients the flexibility and convenience of paying with a credit card, your firm will enjoy multiple benefits, including:

- Getting paid faster.
- Simplifying your billing process.
- Improving collections rate and cash flow.
- Saving time by avoiding manual check and cash transactions.
- Creating a client-centered experience.

Accepting credit cards also opens up the world of automated payments to your firm. Given the typical size of a legal retainer, clients value the option of breaking up the retainer into several smaller payments. In fact, the *2021 Legal Trends Report* found that consumers ranked whether a law firm offered payment plans as one of the most important factors for hiring a law firm.

If you're new to the online payments for lawyers ecosystem, accepting credit cards is a good place to start. Adding a credit card option doesn't have to involve a huge organizational change. Follow these five steps, and you'll soon be reaping the benefits of accepting credit card payments.

Clio Payments give law firms the ability to offer a wide range of payment options to clients, including debit, credit, eChecks, tap-to-pay, and direct ACH payments—learn more!

1. Confirm that your firm or practice can accept credit cards

Before you start evaluating credit card processing providers, review your state bar rules and ethics guidelines to confirm that accepting credit cards is in line with the standards and regulations in place for your state.

Depending on the size and structure of your firm, you may require buy-in from partners and firm management. But considering that firms not accepting credit cards are creating a distinct competitive *dis*advantage for themselves, buy-in isn't likely to be a stumbling block.

2. Decide how you'll take credit card payments at your law firm

Credit card payments can be accepted online or in person. The online approach using cloud-based credit card processing software, such as Clio Payments, simplifies bill payment for your clients because they can pay from the comfort of their home, on their laptop, or on-the-go using their smartphone–and allow multiple people to pay the bill with split billing.

Accepting credit card payments online is also much faster and more efficient for your firm. You can add click-to-pay links to your website and in client communications, including invoices, providing greater flexibility and convenience for clients—and improving your collections rate and cash flow.

If you want to accept credit card payments in person, Clio Payments makes it easy. Using our mobile app on your Android or iPhone, you can take payments with just a tap—no payment terminal required.

3. Find a payment processing provider

Due to ethics rules, selecting a credit card processing provider involves an extra layer of complexity for lawyers. Law firms need a credit card processing solution that recognizes and accounts for the difference between trust accounts (for retainers) and operating accounts (for bill payments).

Critically, the card processing system must not allow chargebacks on trust accounts nor take processing fees from trust accounts.

Whether you're considering legal-specific processors or general credit card processors, make sure you're confident that your provider of choice will keep you compliant with IOLTA trust accounting rules.

Integration with your legal practice management system is also a key consideration that should inform your selection process. By integrating your credit card processing solution with your practice management system, you can ensure the collections process is fast, automated, and convenient—for both you and your clients.

For example, Clio Payments, built within the robust Clio Manage infrastructure, creates a client-centered payment experience by enabling clients to pay their bills via credit card, split the bill to allow for multiple payers, or set up automated payments on their card. Plus, you get paid faster, improve your collection rates, and boost efficiency within the firm. In addition, Clio helps you navigate chargebacks (if and when they arise).

4. Get your credit card processing solution up and running

With the right provider, setting up your credit card processing software (ideally integrated with your legal practice management software) should be a simple process. For peace of mind, be sure to select a solution provider that offers reliable customer support and training to assist you if you have any questions.

Once the software is up and running, you can send electronic invoices with "pay now" buttons. Additionally, activating click-to-pay links on your website and in client emails is a breeze. Sophisticated solutions like Clio Payments will automatically post clients' credit card transactions to the appropriate matter or account, and sync records with your law firm's accounting platform to eliminate errors and save time.

5. Inform your clients that your firm now accepts credit cards

Don't forget to spread the word that your firm is now accepting credit cards. Promote the news via your social media channels, update messaging on your website (be sure to highlight the "pay now" button), and add the credit card option to your invoice template.

Consider emailing your client list informing them that you've expanded payment options to include credit cards. Signage in the reception area of your office is also helpful for alerting clients that you now accept credit cards.

Accepting additional payment methods

The benefits of accepting credit cards extend to other online payment methods, such as debit cards, eChecks, or direct ACH payments. Accordingly, your ideal payment processing provider will be able to accept multiple payment methods.

Clients appreciate the flexibility and convenience of having multiple options for paying their bills online without having to visit your office. In addition to creating a customer-centered payment experience, you'll be able to reap the efficiency and cash flow rewards of secure digital payments, whether credit card, debit card, eCheck, direct ACH, or digital wallet.

Clio Payments: The best way for law firms to accept credit cards

By integrating Clio Payments with Clio Manage, we've created a secure, efficient, and client-centered billing and collections ecosystem that enables clients to pay with a credit card, debit card, eCheck, or direct ACH payments, while automating back-end processes at the firm, such as updating billing records and linking payments to clients within Clio.

With the ability to accept credit cards, you can set up flexible payment plans for your clients, set up one payer or multiple payers from the same matter with split billing, accept trust payments, and be confident that you're compliant with trust accounting rules.

At Clio, we've made things easy with convenient "pay now" buttons and simple, transparent pricing across all forms of payment. Unlike other providers, we've opted not to charge additional fees.

With our simple setup process, you can get started with Clio Payments in as little as six minutes! And if you have any questions, our 24/5 customer support team with dedicated payment specialists is ready to help.

Start accepting credit cards at your law firm today

Whether you're a lawyer in a solo practice or a large law firm, it's impossible to deny the benefits of accepting credit cards—for both you and your clients. And with the right law firm credit card processing provider, the setup doesn't have to be difficult. Get started with Clio Payments today!

Start accepting credit cards (and other payment methods) at your law firm today:

Book a Clio demo

Frequently asked questions

How to accept credit cards in a law firm?

Accepting credit cards at your law firm shouldn't be difficult. Consider investing in a legal payment processing system, such as Clio Payments, to simplify setup time and costs.

What happens when a law firm is called on behalf of credit card companies?

If a client pursues a chargeback, a law firm may either accept the chargeback or fight it through the process of representation. In representation, the firm submits evidence to the "issuing bank"—the bank that issued the credit card—that the transaction was valid and the chargeback claim should be overturned.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.