5 Essential Tips For Law Firms to Stay Efficient During COVID-19

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Amid COVID-19, many of us are facing not only practical challenges, such as moving to a remote work environment, but also a necessary shift in mindset to adapt to what is going to be a different world on the other side of this global pandemic.

Although technology is coming to our rescue in many ways—for example, by the increased use of video conferencing—it is also true to say that technology speeds many things up, especially the expectations of clients and the demands we place on ourselves. Never has it been more important for lawyers and their practices to harness technology in the right way to achieve a firm that remains efficient and well connected to its team and clients.

Although some firms may see these changes as temporary, I don't think that we will be going back to how things were before. Now is an opportunity to look at the processes and applications you've been meaning to update or get in place for ages, and make it happen. It's also important to really look at how you believe the legal market will evolve coming out of this crisis, so that you can stay one step ahead.

The starting point in any revamp of processes is to go back to basics. What do you actually *need*? Chances are, it is probably a lot less than you think and you don't need to implement everything in one go either.

Here are my five top tools to help your law firm to stay efficient during this global pandemic:

1. Invest in quality hardware

Your team must have quality PCs and laptops so they can complete their work quickly, and your firm must keep these computers regularly serviced and updated. Nothing is more frustrating or time-consuming than a slow computer. Ask for recommendations to a good local IT specialist who can advise on what hardware you need based on the programs that you run. Don't skimp on this—your team won't thank you and nor will your bottom line.

2. Try a remote receptionist

If your firm is now working from home, the chances are you have already outsourced your incoming phone calls. If not, consider using a remote receptionist to field calls to your staff. If a staff member isn't available to take a call, the remote receptionist will be

able to take a message as you'd expect and email or text it to the appropriate staff member so that the call can be returned. For example, at Roche Legal, we have set up a shared mailbox for incoming messages which can then be picked up by any team member.

3. Move to cloud storage

From my conversations with law firm owners over the years, getting documents and files into the cloud seems to be a sticking point for many. It is certainly a huge shift to switch from working with physical files to electronic ones, but the ease at which you'll then be able to work on matters electronically and collaboratively far outweighs the effort in managing a switch over. Don't forget, you don't have to put everything in the cloud straight away, you could start with new files and then consider outsourcing the scanning of archived files later.

4. Have a system for printing and scanning

If your team is now working from home, they may not have access to a printer or scanner. We have worked around this by taking it in turns to go into the office once a week to check and scan in the post (which we need to anyway as I don't want to redirect the post right now) and to print and send anything that we need to. I set up a new shared mailbox to send printing to, so that it can get picked up by whoever is in the office.

5. Invest in the right software for your firm

Now is a great opportunity to look at what software you use and consider whether it is really working for you. Personally, I would not be without Clio, Xero, Adobe Pro DC (which we also use for e-signatures), Microsoft To Do and Receipt Bank. I really do think there is a lot to be said for keeping things simple though and so if a spreadsheet works for you right now instead then great! I also advocate speaking to other solicitors about legal and accounting software though as I have found there to be such a variation in what is available and also what you'll need depending on the type of firm you run and how you work together as a team.

It's possible for your law firm to adapt in this environment—as I talk about in this podcast with Jack Newton, CEO of Clio. Certainly, there will be bumps in the road as your firm adjusts, but with a bit of determination, you can find the tools and systems that work for you.

For more information about how to run your law firm, look out for my book being co-authored with fellow solicitor Darren Sylvester—Setting up a Law Firm: A guide to offering legal services. This is due to be published in September 2020. You are also very welcome to drop me a line.

About Clio

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