The Top Time and Billing Software for Law Firms: Reviewed

Written by Louise Donnery

Legal professionals at solo and small law firms wear multiple hats. Backed by fewer resources, many devote a large part of their day to tedious and time-consuming tasks, from painstakingly tracking their billable hours in a spreadsheet to sifting through bills to spot outstanding payments. The result? Legal professionals aren't spending nearly enough time helping their clients with legal matters—and it shows when it comes to their bottom line.

That's now changing, thanks to time and billing software for small law firms. By automating routine work and seamlessly keeping track of time and invoicing, these solutions help lawyers focus on what truly matters. Read on as we shine a spotlight on the top time and billing software solutions for small law firms.

What is time and billing software?

Legal time and billing software is technology that enables lawyers to track their billable hours, invoice for services, and receive payments—in a way that's easier, faster, and more accurate. By using these solutions, lawyers spend less time saddled with administrative burdens and more of it focused on practicing the law.

Why do small law firms need time and billing software?

Time and billing software for law firms can deliver a world of benefits to legal professionals. As small law firms have fewer resources, more support is needed to complete daily tasks. Time and billing software achieves that by automating mundane, tedious work, allowing lawyers to work smarter. Considering that Clio's *Legal Trends Report* found that lawyers spend only 2.5 hours each day on billable work, that's a massive advantage.

Moreover, time and billing software can help law firms scale. That's because it empowers teams to focus on more strategic aspects of their firm, such as reaching new clients and taking on important cases. By automating the billing process, these solutions also contribute to a reliable income flow and ultimately boost revenue in a firm.

What should I prioritise when looking for time and billing software?

The key to realising these benefits—and more—is to pick the right tool for your firm. So, what are the top considerations when selecting time and billing software for small law firms? A solution that specialises in the legal industry is a must, as it understands the unique needs of lawyers, from legal billing and trust accounting capabilities to stringent security measures.

You'll also want an all-in-one-solution that integrates time and billing capabilities on a single platform. This helps prevent human errors caused from having to manually enter information, and allows you to effortlessly generate invoices from the time that has been tracked. Similarly, seamless integrations with other third-party applications are helpful, as this allows you to instantly connect and sync your data.

With a myriad of options, it can be intimidating to know where to start. That's why reviews can be incredibly useful as you make your selection. After all, switching to a time and billing solution is a big move for any small law firm—so it's important to ensure you're making the right decision for your needs.

Time and billing software for small law firms: our reviews

To help get you started, we've rounded up the best time and billing software for law firms—covering the advantages (along with the drawbacks) that you should consider.

Clio

Founded in 2008, Clio brought the first cloud-based practice legal management software for law firms. To this day, the company continues to be the leader in legal tech innovation with a mission to transform the legal experience for all.

Pros

- Payments are a breeze. Clio Manage allows lawyers to collect payments in a number of ways—including secure click-to-pay links, QR codes, and "pay now" buttons on bills. Clients also have the luxury of choice, since Clio Payments accepts secure online payments via debt, credit, and eCheck. Additionally, Clio allows users to send automated bill reminders, which helps improve cash flow.

- Capture time with ease. Knowing that clients have unique preferences when it comes to tracking their time, Clio gives lawyers the flexibility to choose a method that's best for them. They can add entries from calendar events, tasks, communication logs, notes, and documents. In addition, they can track time from their inbox, while they're on the road with Clio's mobile app, and record entries in real-time using a running-clock timer.
- On-the-go billing. Clio lets lawyers create and send bills from anywhere—helping them get paid faster than ever and with greater ease. That's what Robert Jewett found when using the solution. "I'm earning about 40% more revenue per month, based on the same amount of time and effort," he says. "A lot of that has to do with my ability to seamlessly flow clients from intake through to resolving their case."

There's a reason why Clio is partnered with the Law Society of England and Wales and an approved supplier for the Law Society of Scotland and 400,000+ global users count on it to manage their law firm. As Jodi Donato adds, "My accounts receivable is the lowest it's ever been in my 27 years of practice, and I haven't had to institute collections against any clients this year."

Cons

- Geographic restrictions. Clio Payments and some integrations are only available in certain countries.

MyCase

MyCase is a cloud-based practice management and payments software solution designed to help law firms run their practices more efficiently. An all-in-one solution, it offers client intake and lead management, case management, billing and payments, client communication features, and more.

Pros

- Flexible payments. MyCase offers a number of billing options, including hourly, contingency, flat fee, a mix of flat fee and hourly, and pro bono.
- Create multiple invoices at once. MyCase's batch billing feature helps expedite the billing process to save lawyers time.

Cons

- Separate platforms. Having two different platforms for practice management and payment translates into a less efficient experience for lawyers.
- Lack of integrations. MyCase lacks a number of essential third-party integrations, such as Zoom, Zapier, and Microsoft Onedrive, which makes it a less-than-ideal choice for firms that want to scale

- Higher payment processing fees. MyCase charges 3% for all major credit cards, resulting in higher total costs for users.

PracticePanther

PracticePanther is a cloud-based law practice management software that offers case management, billing, time tracking, and automation features.

Pros

- Easy time and expense tracking. Automated time tracking helps lawyers capture more billable hours and improve cash flow.
- Intuitive, easy-to-use interface. Reviews highlight PracticePanther's user-friendly design as a key feature in helping them operate more effectively.

Cons

- Lack of automation. While some features in PracticePanther are automated, it is lacking overall in these capabilities, such as client intake.
- Limited integrations. Notably, PracticePanther has fewer than 30 integrations on its platform.
- Higher costs for an efficient solution. Basic features like flat-fee billing and the ability to integrate with other software is limited to PracticePanther's top-tier business plan.

Smokeball

Smokeball is a "hybrid cloud"-based practice management software offering automatic time and activity tracking, document automation, and Word and Outlook integrations.

Pros

- Automated time tracking. Smokeball's AutoTime feature tracks time spent on cases in the background, whether that's done in Smokeball, Word, or Outlook.
- Integration with LawPay and Quickbooks. Smokeball integrates with solutions like LawPay and Quickbooks to save time, reduce errors, and help lawyers get paid faster.

Cons

- Not a true cloud-based program. As a "hybrid cloud" program, lawyers aren't able to do much while they're on the road and lack the flexibility that true cloud-based programs afford.

Zola Suite

Zola Suite is a cloud-based legal practice management solution that gives firms the tools they need to work more efficiently and productively.

Pros

- Multiple time tracking methods. Zola Suite offers more than 11 ways to track time entries, through everything from calendar events to activity logs.
- LEDES billing. Zolo Suite offers LEDES compliant invoices with Uniform Task-Based Management System (UTBMS) Codes.

Cons

- A challenging system. By trying to do too much, the Zola Suite platform has become underdeveloped and underutilized by users.
- Requires Quickbooks for payroll. As a result, law firms still need to rely on a tool like Quickbooks for payroll, which leads to a clunky experience and no shortage of manual work.

What is the best legal billing software?

By making time tracking and billing more efficient—and simply, better—time and billing software has ushered in a new era for small law firms. Whether you're new to legal software or a seasoned pro, consider solutions that offer capabilities designed specifically for the unique needs of lawyers, from a diverse range of app integrations and fair pricing, to competitive time and billing features.

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.