

How to Efficiently Manage Your Practice When You're Out of the Office

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How to Efficiently Manage Your Practice When You're Out of the Office

In the office ... Out of the office ... Back to the office ... Out again.

Whether traveling long distances or short, the typical attorney's day often involves time away from the office. Working only in the office during any given week has become the exception rather than the rule.

In today's ever-changing, global legal environment, it's more important than ever for law firms to use a practice management system with advanced mobile functionality and licensing flexibility so that you know what's happening with your practice regardless of your location.

Unfortunately, not all practice management software measures up. The differences can be stark. Without such functionality, office chaos becomes chronic, malpractice risks increase, billable time is lost, and efficiency remains a goal rather than a reality.

This white paper explores the three most common out-of-office scenarios, and explains how your practice management software should function in these situations.

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1. Working From Home or a Satellite Office

Nowadays, virtually everyone has a home office even if they also have a real office. Some virtual lawyers and staff work from home full-time. And some lawyers shuttle back and forth between two or more offices. Whatever the scenario, practice

management software can make it easier than ever to set up and efficiently manage such options.

While working on your vacation is unfortunate, it does happen. You want all the necessary tools immediately at hand to get the job done promptly.

When choosing a practice management system, first confirm that your office network allows secure remote connections. If not, your network administrator or IT services provider can make the necessary adjustments for you. Then, use this checklist:

- Make sure the practice management software you choose offers a secondary license that you can install on your home and/or satellite computers.
- Once installed, the secondary license should be able to simultaneously sync with the main version of your software on your office network via the Internet as if you were there. Alternatively, you may prefer to sync your changes over your local area network when you return to the office.

2. Working Remotely Without Internet Access

Whether on vacation in a remote location or taking a deposition in Timbuktu, Internet access is not always available. While working on your vacation is unfortunate, it does happen. You want all the necessary tools immediately at hand to get the job done promptly. Productivity need not decline nor stress levels heighten when there's no Internet access.

Look for practice management software with the following capabilities:

- Before leaving the office, it should automatically sync your practice information onto the secondary license on your laptop — including all files and related documents, contact information, calendars,



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to do lists, time and billing data, your library of research and much more.

- In offline mode, the practice management software enables you to continue working on anything that you could if in your office.
- When you reconnect with the Internet or return to your office, the changes you made and new documents, notes, and other data you created will be synchronized with all the work generated by your co-workers during your absence.

If your professional goals include efficiency, profitability, flexibility, organization, endless growth options, reduced stress and excellent client servicing and communications, practice management software with advanced mobile tools can help you reach them — whether in or out of the office.

3. Working From Your Smartphone or PDA

Practice management software used in conjunction with cellular networks and WiFi hotspots offers the option of accessing your office network with your smartphone or PDA. Information entered by your co-workers in other locations appears on your smartphone in real time via push sync services. Likewise, your entries are synced with your office's network. Except for your smartphone's smaller screen and keyboard, it's like working at your main computer.

Here's what you need to do:

- Find out if the practice management software you're considering offers a mobile version for your smartphone's operating system. Popular mobile operating systems include BlackBerry, Windows Mobile, Palm, and iPhone. If not, you may be relegated to syncing through Outlook, which will not have the same depth of information available in your practice management system.
- Just as importantly, make sure the mobile practice management software offers over the air push synchronization. Otherwise, you'll have to physically connect your smartphone to your computer to sync data. Run a trial test to ensure synchronization works.

Conclusion

On any given day you may find yourself running from your office to the courthouse and/or depositions, in a mediation, keeping appointments, attending CLE programs – and if at all possible a stress-relieving workout at the gym. At other times you may find yourself traveling, recovering from an illness, caring for an elderly or sick family member or, on a brighter note, perhaps finally enjoying a long overdue vacation.

The mobile nature of a lawyer's work and busy life is indeed the norm in today's world. If your professional goals include efficiency, profitability, flexibility, organization, endless growth options, reduced stress and excellent client servicing and communications, practice management software with advanced mobile tools can help you reach them — whether in or out of the office.



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