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PRODUCT REVIEW | LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Homebase: The New Abacus Practice Area Suites Deliver a Totally Unique Law Firm Experience

By Jared Correia

Location, Location, Location

Real estate value turns heavily on where you live or where you want to live. But what about the real estate your law practice management software takes up in your law firm? That footprint is significant. And, if you're doing it right, your case management software is probably the most important tool you're using, since it aggregates all of your practice data around specific matters in one convenient space.

With so many software choices available in the legal vertical, a legitimate question to ask is: How specifically does your law practice management program meet your needs? With a plethora of options available, law firm consumers can and should be

aggressive about finding case management software tailored to their firms. Selecting generic practice management software should not be the default operating principle.

If you're really picky about a home search (walking away when there's no garage, or if the jacuzzi isn't large enough), it makes sense that you would be just as choosy about your practice management software — where lawyers and legal professionals “live” for most of the time they spend working.

Brand X: Generic Solutions Fail Law Firms

Perhaps it's obvious and self-referential to state that generic solutions are not legal solutions. But, it bears mentioning when law firms continue to use generic software to manage their businesses, including productivity software and affiliated applications, like email and spreadsheets. Generic business management tools do not work for law firms because attorneys need to tweak those programs or apply cumbersome work-arounds to accommodate law firms' unique needs:

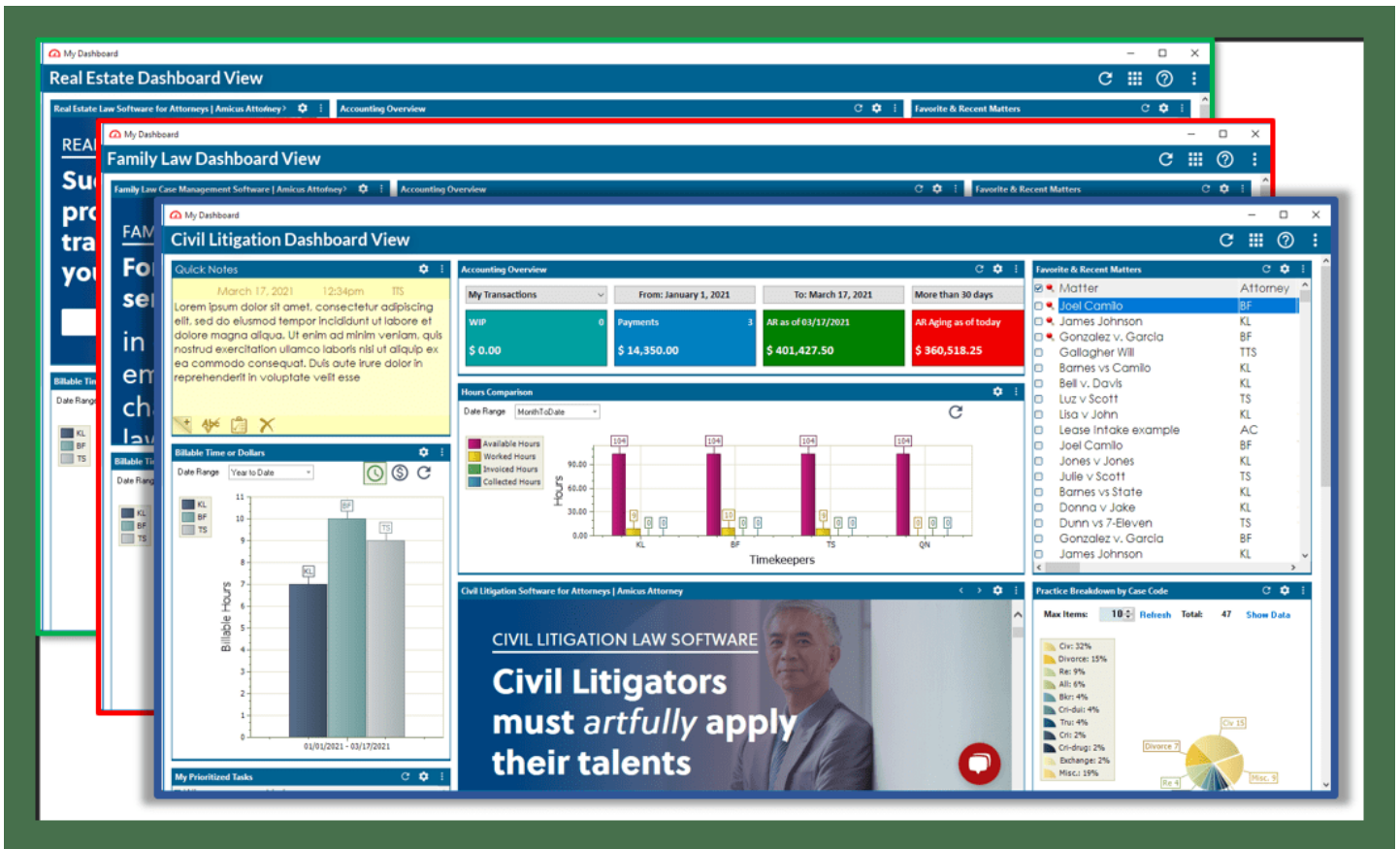
- If an accounting software can't manage to generate required IOLTA reporting, you have to set it up so that it will.
- If a calendaring system does not recognize court- and jurisdiction-specific requirements, that's more legwork on your part.
- If a system does not meet your data security requirements, you have to work to build it up to code or live with the gap.

Ultimately, then, using legal-specific software built for your type of law practice saves time and effort, and increases your efficiency — and that's the real key to building revenue.

What's wild is that, according to internal survey data from Abacus, 50% of law firms have not adopted a “true solution” — that is, a technology tool for business management built specifically for a law firm. That's borderline amazing at this point. Of course, over the course of the pandemic, many traditional objections by attorneys against cloud-based software have been eliminated, in a haze of work-from-home requirements, where that sort of flexible technology model really shines. So, the good news is law firms have been adopting cloud-based technology at a record pace, which should continue to eat into that 50% statistic in a major way.

But, not only are law firms adopting better, more specific applications — lawyers are also looking to reduce the spread of the technology they're using.

If the [recent merger activity](#) in the space has shown anything, it's that single-provider legal products are agents of change with respect to how law firms access technology. In many ways, it's easier to adopt a set of technology solutions from one provider and unify support for those systems under one umbrella.



Bundle Up: Practice Area Suites Are a Unique Alternative to the Integration Model

AbacusNext's continued development of Practice Area Suites for law firms perfectly suits the requirement that law firms use management software specific to their businesses while advancing the depth at which those solutions can address specific law firm needs.

There's nothing like finding a great salad place, where they make your salad right in front of you. You know the drill. You walk in, look through the plastic shield, choose your greens, proteins, add-ons, and dressing. Within minutes, you're walking out with the perfect salad for you. Maybe I'm weird, but that's a great feeling. Contrast that with leaving an airport kiosk with a pre-mixed salad. In a matter of moments, you're grumbling about having to pick out the tomatoes and wilted lettuce, and before you know it, you've thrown half of the thing away.

“The Abacus Practice Area Suites are like a great salad that you’ve built yourself, largely generating the same visceral feeling of enjoyment and comfort.”

Beyond the need for specific law firm software, it's clear that one size of case management software does not fit all law firms. So, introducing the ability to mix-and-match

and swap in and out of features within the construct of one legal provider's suite is cheaper and more effective than adding on multitudes of applications from various providers because it unifies your experience and flattens your expenses.

With Abacus Practice Area Suites, you can essentially build your own technology product, yoked directly to your practice-area-specific workflow.

Abacus Practice Area Suites can accommodate IOLTA account reporting, jurisdiction and practice-area-specific calendaring, data security fitted to the law firm environment, and more.

In many ways, Abacus is the right provider for delivering such a unique service in the current environment.

With options for practice area case management modules, a fully-integrated document assembly program (HotDocs), cloud hosting options, unified technical support and layered data backup, this is a powerful legal suite — for running your law practice, and not just any old law firm.

Into the Deep: Taking It (Down) to the Next Level

All politics are local, but so are all law firms, especially considering jurisdictional limitations on lawyers' ability to practice. Yet, most law practice management technology will stop at delivering law practice-specific software. The new Abacus Practice Area Suites is taking things a step further by offering both practice area-specific and location-specific solutions. Your practice is fundamentally different if you are a family lawyer in Sacramento versus a personal injury attorney in Chicago versus a litigator in Miami. With Abacus's tools, the needs of each practice can be met, in-depth.

With the Practice Area Suites, you can walk into that full-service salad bar in the cloud and select your practice area suite, your billing model, your court rules for calendaring and available court forms, all exclusive to your business. And, [with available dashboard options, your practice-specific workflow will lay out precisely the way you want it.](#)

The Abacus [Practice Area Suite](#) functionally allows you to generate a toolset unique to your practice area and practice location. Now, that's [legal tech built with purpose.](#)

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