

Country Lawyer Develops Business Based on His Reputation and the Reputation of PCLaw™ Billing and Accounting Software

The Davenport Firm

Overview

Location: Alexandria, Louisiana

Industry: Legal services

Customer Profile:

The Davenport Firm provides a diverse portfolio of services and also makes time to give back to the community. Its small staff uses integrated legal technology to balance the practice of law and the business of law to save time and to serve customers effectively.

Business Situation:

When Thomas D. “Tommy” Davenport started his own practice, he realized very quickly that he needed more than just spreadsheets to manage billing and trust-accounting information for his clients. He needed a solution that would help him and his staff stay on top of each and every client’s case, knowing exactly what the status is, what the next step is, and when it’s due.

Benefits:

- Less time spent on billing, trust-accounting, time-reporting and collection processes and more time spent practicing law
- Quick access to case information—status, payables, time, expense, billing, trust activity, etc.
- Better service to clients—and increased client confidence in the firm
- A better bottom line for the firm

Product Summary

Practice Management:

PCLaw billing and accounting software

The Customer

The Davenport Firm is located in Alexandria, Louisiana, and is a solo shop with three full-time staff members. Its founder, Thomas (Tommy) D. Davenport, Jr., clerked for a federal judge in Baton Rouge directly after law school and then worked for a small law firm. On July 3, 2006, Tommy formed his own law firm, intentionally choosing the day before Independence Day to go solo as a way to symbolize his own personal, newly found independence. Bringing approximately two-thirds of his former clients with him to the new firm, Tommy quickly realized that along with independence comes the responsibility of balancing the practice of law with the management of the business of law.

The Problem

Although fortunate to be starting a practice with an established client base, The Davenport Firm was faced with an immediate need to document and audit billing and trust-accounting information for those same clients. Tommy realized that the job could not be done by simply relying on spreadsheets. It was too time-consuming and too difficult to understand what was due to whom and by when.

The Solution

Tommy began to search for a billing and accounting system that would meet his firm’s business challenge. Narrowing his options to include PCLaw™ billing and accounting software and a few other solutions, Tommy decided he needed some good-old independent, third-party advice and he contacted his firm’s Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Key on Tommy’s mind was ensuring that the

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software solution he selected provide all the accounting and tax support he needed for the law firm. When asked for a recommendation, Tommy’s CPA said, “PCLaw is a great program for attorneys.” Based on that personal recommendation, Tommy invested in the legal-specific accounting solution.

The Results

Tommy’s firm reaped immediate benefits from using PCLaw with major improvements in organization of account and client information, billing and trust integrity.

Improved Organization

“I absolutely can say that by using PCLaw and setting it up correctly over the life of a case, my time is reduced by 25 to 40 percent. If we have a simple case, and a client calls us about a status, we can get to the information quickly.” PCLaw provides a Quick Step navigator that groups tasks in a logical order for users to follow. Information for each matter, such as payables, time, expense, billing, phone calls, trust activity and more, can be viewed from a register. Everything pertaining to a client and matter can be accessed easily, and when viewing reports on your computer screen you can use the drill-down capability to review the details. Additionally, if a particular user in the firm wants a customized Quick Step view, it is as easy as right-clicking the mouse.

PCLaw not only helps The Davenport Firm organize information as it relates to the law practice but also as it relates to accounting. PCLaw allows Tommy to spend more time practicing law rather than doing administrative work such as reviewing billing and balances to make sure they are correct. “When we have 10 to 20 entries of time each day, PCLaw automatically puts each one in the right place and keeps us on the right path.” Tommy and his staff are sticklers for providing accurate and timely information for their clients, commenting, “Why would a client go to an attorney who cannot keep his or her affairs in order?”

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Simplified Billing

“When it comes to entering time and billing for the firm, it is really easy and no hassle at all,” states Tommy. The PCLaw timesheet lets you enter time directly to maximize time capture and supports multiple timers. “I like PCLaw because we can start a quick timer. It asks us what we are doing—like a telephone call or drafting, etc. Then when I’m done I just click a button and it’s a billing record,” states Tommy. Multiple timers are extremely important since attorneys work in a disruptive environment, taking a phone call one minute, writing a document another and meeting with a client the next. Additional efficiencies are gained by using the PCLaw calendaring function. You can take an appointment or task from your calendar and turn it into a billing record with a click of the mouse saving you time on data entry. Using PCLaw, the firm is also able to provide customized bill formats for all of the firms practice areas as well as handle multiple billing arrangements.

Trust Integrity

“When the firm was tracking trust accounts manually, it took a lot of time to reconcile and gain confidence with the numbers,” states Tommy. PCLaw handles taking a trust receipt, writing a check from trust, and automatically applying trust during billing easily. And you can use the trust account reconciliation process in PCLaw month’s end to ensure that clients’ trust accounts are accurate. “This is such a load off my mind. PCLaw enables me to sleep at night because I am not worried about my trust account.”

Overall

Tommy Davenport considers himself a country lawyer who earns a living based on his good reputation. He attributes his business growth on not only providing a diverse portfolio of services—i.e., tax, estate planning, and criminal, family and civil litigation—but also on his reputation among the people in the community where he lives and serves. Tommy has a successful law practice and gives back to the community. He leverages a network of retired and seasoned attorneys and in return helps young attorneys trying to branch out on their own. He can do this, in part, because he takes advantage of PCLaw accounting and billing technology to help him manage the firm more effectively and more efficiently.

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