

Fast-Growing Law Firm Gains 35 Percent More Billable Time By Using Time Matters® Software

THE DIENER LAW OFFICE

Overview

Location:

Snow Hill, N.C.

Industry:

Legal services

Customer Profile:

Since 2004, The Diener Law Office has provided quality service in a variety of legal areas throughout North Carolina. The firm offers clients the same resources as many large firms, without sacrificing the personalized focus and attention that comes with a modest-sized staff. The Diener Law Office uses integrated legal technologies to streamline its efforts and provide optimal client service.

Business Situation:

When Richard “Bert” Diener decided to leave the law firm where he practiced and open his own firm, he knew it would be crucial to make effective use of leading-edge technologies in order to maximize his practice efficiency and minimize his staff overhead. He was especially focused on finding an integrated software system that had strong document management, calendaring and time-tracking capabilities.

Solution:

Diener selected the Time Matters® practice management software from LexisNexis. Time Matters helps law firms manage the complex flow of practice information and allows them to confidently manage the operations of the firm. Diener deployed Time Matters to streamline the management of clients, matters, all communications, time and expenses in one integrated and affordable software application.

Benefits:

- Increase in attorneys’ billable hours
- Centralized document management for clients and matters
- Accurate tracking of attorney time and client expenses
- Comprehensive management of all client communications

Product Summary

Practice Management:

- Time Matters

Richard “Bert” Diener is not your ordinary lawyer. Rather than moving from law school and straight into the profession, Diener’s professional life started with serving four years in the United States Marine Corps, including postings in Guantanamo Bay, Okinawa and Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. After earning his law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he went to work as an attorney at a civil law firm in the area, handling a wide range of personal injury, workers’ compensation and social security cases.

In 2004, Diener made the bold decision to hang out his own shingle in the streets of Snow Hill, N.C. His firm serves the legal needs of individuals and small businesses in a variety of core areas of practice: custody and divorce law; immigration; business and corporate law; personal injury; traffic and criminal law; real estate; and estate planning. In just four years, The Diener Law Office has grown from just a dream of Bert’s to a small firm that now has four lawyers handling 750 matters per year.

The Situation

After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps for four years, Diener earned his law degree and joined a highly regarded domestic law firm in North Carolina. He quickly decided that he wanted to take the plunge of going out on his own, though, and decided to open his own law firm in 2004 in the beautiful town of Snow Hill.

Before Diener even opened the doors of The Diener Law Office, he knew he needed to find ways to do things faster and smarter in order to run his law firm profitably and still compete with the more established law firms in the area. One of the things at the top of his list was to find an affordable practice management software system.

“I was already familiar with various other products from LexisNexis and was impressed with their commitment to excellence in customer service, so I immediately explored what practice management solutions they might offer that would be integrated with their other products,” said Diener. “But I also discovered that the practice management space is crowded with lots of options for small law firms, so I dug in and did my due diligence with a number of vendors.”

“After evaluating a number of products on the market, I was convinced that the TimeMatters product from LexisNexis was the best offering for organizing the input and maintenance of case documents, client billings and staff management.”

Richard Diener
Attorney, The Diener Law Office

Diener knew that he needed a practice management system to help achieve three crucial things: (1) Effective document management; (2) Efficient calendaring; and (3) Accurate tracking of billable time. There were a few offerings that seemed to offer all three functionalities, but in the end, Diener concluded that he couldn't risk something as crucial to his potential success as a practice management software system by going with a company that lacked the reputation and resources of a company such as LexisNexis.

“I knew that my ability to manage information coming into the firm would be directly connected to how successful I was going to be with managing dozens of matters at one time,” explained Diener. “After evaluating a number of products on the market, I was convinced that the Time Matters product from LexisNexis was the best offering for organizing the input and maintenance of case documents, client billings and staff management.”

The Solution

Diener's selection of Time Matters software was one of the first technology investments he made for his fledgling law firm. He implemented Time Matters to capture time and expense data and connect it to specific matter, cases and client records. He also uses it to view, track and manage information across the firm including centralized scheduling, management of documents, checking for conflicts, tracking work progress and more. Time Matters works from each lawyer's desktop and integrates with their BlackBerry® handheld devices.

With a single point of access to all key information, any authorized person in Diener's firm can give clients the status of a case or matter, updates on upcoming events—such as court dates, real estate closing appointments and statutes of limitation—as well as notes on who is assigned and what needs to happen next.

With Time Matters, Diener's staff members are able to schedule appointments on time, finish documents in a timely manner, schedule dates in advance and ensure that nothing falls through the cracks. The system is used to take all the cases handled by the firm to completion faster and more efficiently, resulting in quicker results and payment for both the client and the lawyers.

Moreover, by tracking all matter-related activities as they happen—from communication to documents—Time Matters software helps Diener capture time more effectively and increase billable hours for each individual in the entire law firm.

“I have made Time Matters the centerpiece of my firm’s technology infrastructure in order to help me achieve that objective.”

Richard Diener
Attorney, The Diener Law Office

“The bottom line for me is that I need to be highly efficient in every aspect of my practice, especially when it comes to the non-billable administrative work I simply have to do in order to make the firm run profitably,” said Diener. “I have made Time Matters the centerpiece of my firm’s technology infrastructure in order to help me achieve that objective.”

The Results

Diener attributes much of the growth of his law firm to his ability to efficiently manage the business with the assistance of Time Matters. He has monitored his firm’s progress carefully and points to four major benefits from his deployment of Time Matters:

Increase in attorneys’ billable hours

Diener’s law firm is able to absorb more client work because he and his other lawyers are able to spend more time on actual client work, rather than the unprofitable administrative chores that would otherwise consume their time.

“By relying on Time Matters as my practice management software, my administrative work is so automated now that my lawyers are able to spend at least 35 percent more time on billable client work, as opposed to chasing paper and manually dealing with other administrative tasks,” said Diener.

Centralized document management for clients and matters

According to Diener, the most important aspect of his firm’s use of Time Matters is actually the document management functionality. Diener’s law office is almost entirely paperless, with the lawyers and staff members relying on Time Matters to serve as its single, integrated document management repository. This centralized system saves everyone in the law firm significant time handling and finding documents.

Accurate tracking of attorney time and client expenses

Diener’s staff is able to reduce billing cycle times because Time Matters provides them with the ability to easily track the attorneys’ billable time and out-of-pocket expenses. Time Matters® software’s accurate time and expense reporting, at both the client and matter levels, gives Diener the confidence that his firm is maximizing revenue.

Comprehensive management of all client communications

With Time Matters, The Diener Law Office manages all aspects of its communications with clients, including e-mails, phone calls and other correspondence. All of these communications are accessible in one location to all authorized users, enabling the lawyers to obtain a real-time update on every “touch” the firm has had with the client throughout its representation.

“I simply would not have been able to manage this growth in client files and billings without Time Matters as our law firm practice management software.”

Richard Diener
Attorney, The Diener Law Office

Of course, Diener’s law firm would not have experienced such rapid growth and success in North Carolina if it weren’t for the talented lawyers and professional staff members who provide the actual client service and legal counsel. Still, Diener sings lofty praises of his practice management technology.

“I started this law firm in 2004 with just me, a laptop and a dream,” observed Diener. “Four years later, we have four attorneys working out of three offices and handling roughly 750 matters per year. I simply would not have been able to manage this growth in client files and billings without Time Matters as our law firm practice management software.”

For More Information

Call 800.328.2898, option 2,
or view our product pages at www.timematters.com

About LexisNexis

LexisNexis® (www.lexisnexis.com) is a leading global provider of content-enabled workflow solutions designed specifically for professionals in the legal, risk management, corporate, government, law enforcement, accounting and academic markets. LexisNexis originally pioneered online information with its Lexis® and Nexis® services. A member of Reed Elsevier [NYSE: ENL; NYSE: RUK] (www.reedelsevier.com), LexisNexis serves customers in more than 100 countries with 18,000 employees worldwide.

LexisNexis, Lexis, Nexis and the Knowledge Burst logo are registered trademarks of Reed Elsevier Properties Inc., used under license. Time Matters is a registered trademark of LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. BlackBerry® is a registered trademark of Research In Motion Limited.
© 2009 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. LP19738-0 0309