

The law firm of the future: **New approaches to resource optimization**

Largely due to the evolution of technology in day-to-day life, there are demands across both business and consumer sectors for getting things done faster and faster than ever before. In the legal field, which has been typically characterized by extensive process and administration, this accelerated pace has proved challenging. While technology affords legal professionals more flexibility and convenience, it has also increased client expectations for quick-turn, on-demand responses, which can be disruptive as legal staff also work to stay abreast of other billable projects.

There are, however, ways that attorneys and other legal professionals can optimize their resources to streamline workflows, minimize time and resources spent on administrative tasks, and stay competitive by meeting expanding client needs. From procedural best practices to automation to purpose-built technologies and more, here we explore some practical and impactful approaches to resource optimization:

- Make progress through process**
Putting time and effort into creating, implementing, and putting governance around processes is one investment that reaps the biggest returns when it comes to resource management. Having clear, consistent – and repeatable – guidelines for all staffers to follow creates valuable efficiencies when handling the volumes of day-to-day tasks within a firm, such as opening cases, document routing, reporting, and more. These efficiencies make it easier to respond to time-sensitive requests and devote more time to higher-impact work.
- Challenge the concept of the office**
The 9-to-5 schedule in a traditional office environment is a notion of the past, both in terms of attorneys adopting unconventional working hours enabled by ubiquitous technologies, and in terms of flexibility in the workday and workspaces. Working remotely with tools such as speech-to-text solutions, today's legal professionals can build a schedule that meets their clients' needs as well as their lifestyles, collaborate with team members and consultants regardless of geography, and use pockets of time throughout the day to get work done while they're on the go. This is not only more efficient, but also helps firms reduce overhead costs.



- Leverage industry-specific technologies**
Enhanced productivity is another area where next-generation dictation capabilities can make one of the most substantial and immediately visible impacts on the use of time and resources. WiFi-enabled handheld recorders – built for the distinct requirements of the legal industry – enable instant file sharing, routing dictations for transcription, and document creation with speed and accuracy. Smartphones can similarly be utilized by integrating specialized dictation apps, so existing devices can organize notes, route dictations, and automate document creation. Using either of these capabilities empowers attorneys with an “assistant” to help accelerate time- or labor-intensive tasks.

- Get a handle on knowledge management**
Clients expect law firms to provide consultation and services at faster speeds than ever before – without sacrificing quality and excellence. This necessitates best practices in knowledge management, whether that means centralizing and continuously updating shared expertise, operationalizing regulatory compliance and risk mitigation, or streamlining information sharing with clients. Automation technologies including AI-powered document management and data warehousing and mining are but a few examples that illustrate the potential of technology to help firms compete in an evolving landscape.

- Pave the way to becoming an AI-enabled firm:**
In a world that is increasingly defined by technology, firms must use it to their best advantage for sustained success. Many firms are already using e-discovery to perform the requisite information gathering, reviews, and organization that legal professionals rely upon for cases and other projects. The growing mainstream adoption of e-discovery represents a sea of change in the industry concerning the role of AI in day-to-day workflows. This is the foundation for more advanced usage in the future, with machine learning capabilities moving beyond the automation of routine tasks to deeper analysis, prediction, and decision making. Growing sophistication in AI will continue driving ease and seamlessness in workflows, benefitting both clients and their attorneys.

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