

SUMMARY VERSION

GREEN LAWYER - GOING GREEN WILL SAVE YOU GREEN!

I am a green lawyer that is interested in reducing waste, increasing workflow productivity while conserving our precious natural resources. Contrary to popular belief, all of the above can be accomplished through the implementation of innovative technology that already exists in the marketplace.

By writing this article, I hope to persuade other lawyers and law firms to transform their legal practice to a greener practice because it is economically sensible to cut costs where possible in this recession.

From a practical point of view, I designed my workflow process from client interview to client invoicing to be a paperless process thereby saving time, reducing costly office supplies and increasing productivity. My suggestion to other lawyers and law firms would be to adhere to the following Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) that I have implemented in my consumer bankruptcy practice to reduce costs in their current work flow processes.

1. During the first client interview - take electronic notes on a quite keyboard.
2. Between the first and second interview - direct the client to complete an online questionnaire on your website to supplement any answers to questions they were unable to completely answer during the first interview.
3. Ensure that any online form or questionnaire that is been completed by the client is on a secure fire-walled server with 128/256 encryption.
4. Download the online form or questionnaire from the secure server into your business/home office PC and merge the data to save time and increase productivity.
5. File the complaint or bankruptcy petition electronically.
6. Email the invoice to the client - which has the dual benefit of conserving paper and knowledge that the client received the invoice.
7. For due diligence, create a PDF of every document during the course of the legal representation and store on your home/office PC, external hard-drive and off-site secure server.
8. Feel good about been a green lawyer!

The above seven (7) steps can be applied to any practice area by using innovative technology that already exists in the marketplace. Implementing these proactive measures increases workflow productivity, reduces waste and conserves our precious resources.

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FULL ARTICLE

1. During the first client interview - take electronic notes on a quiet keyboard.

I recommend the Logitech Illuminated Keyboard (\$70) because the keys are very comfortable and the keyboard itself has a minimalist design that looks just as good as it performs. The Logitech Illuminated Keyboard is considered to provide an excellent typing experience for the wordsmith although you may also want to consider the Logitech diNovo Keyboard (\$80) and the Razer Tarantula (\$90) that are a little bit more expensive than other keyboards but their build quality and responsiveness are definitely worth it.

2. Between the first and second interview - direct the client to complete an online questionnaire on your website to supplement any answers to questions they were unable to completely answer during the first interview.

I direct my clients to visit the “Stop My Bills” tab on my home page where they complete a web based questionnaire, providing their general contact information, assets, debts, income, expenses, aliases, dependents, and other relevant case information. After a client completes the web based questionnaire, an email is automatically generated notifying me that the case is ready to be downloaded. At that time, I log onto the secure Rapid Import web site to import the data directly into my Bankruptcy Pro software. It is important to realize that the information collected on my website through the Rapid Import service can be customized to serve the needs of any practice area. The process that I have created can be used as a vehicle to collect information unique to the specific needs of any practice area.

3. Ensure that any online form or questionnaire that is been completed by the client is on a secure server with 256 bit encryption.

Although my online web based questionnaire appears to be part of my own website nothing is further from the truth. In reality, my clients enter their identification number on the “Stop My Bills” page and they are immediately transferred to a secure website where they complete the web based questionnaire on that secure website. In order to protect my clients, I purchased an SSL Certificate from a Certificate Authority which essentially establishes a private communication channel enabling encryption of the data during transmission. Furthermore, the information that is imputed on the online web based questionnaire is stored on a database located on a secure server in Redmond, Washington. It is important to realize that this data capturing process can be easily recreated by building a custom HTML template file, uploading corresponding image files, and adding a few lines of HTML to your web site.

4. Download the online form or questionnaire from the secure server into your business/home office PC and merge the data to save time and increase productivity.

The Rapid Import service provides the data in an XML format that is conveniently and automatically merged into my Bankruptcy Pro software with the push of one button. Additionally, my client’s answers are also provided to me in a PDF version so I am getting both the online questionnaire and its paper counterpart.

5. File the complaint or bankruptcy petition electronically.

I use the Adobe Acrobat 8.0 Professional although the vast majority of attorneys will find that the Adobe Acrobat standard version is fine. The Professional version includes a set of redaction tools, which can save you time, money, and prevent potential litigation issues. However, both versions will allow the user to create PDF documents, protect PDF documents with 256-bit encryption, examine documents for hidden information and convert documents to PDF/A for archiving with easy search and retrieval.

6. Email the invoice to the client - which has the dual benefit of conserving paper and knowledge that the client received the invoice.

I recommend DoingTIME billing-accounting software because it is a powerful timekeeping and billing program that links with the BankruptcyPro software so the client information is linked automatically. Additionally, the DoingTIME software can handle flat fee and time and expense billing of any practice area so it is not limited to bankruptcy. I recommend the DoingTIME billing software because it is a comprehensive, stand-alone, easy-to-use timekeeping and billing package.

7. For due diligence, create a PDF of every document during the course of the legal representation and store on your home/office PC, external hard-drive and off-site secure server.

For a Free PDF Editor and Writer download Open Office 3. OpenOffice.org 3 is the leading open-source office software suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics and databases that works on both Windows and Mac. It may not have all the PDF editing features of Acrobat but may still satisfy the needs of most users who only require basic editing. It is important to note that it is necessary to install the Sun PDF extension in order to edit PDF files. Steps:

- 1) Download the Openoffice 3.0 at www.openoffice.org
- 2) Install the Sun PDF Import Extension (<http://extensions.services.openoffice.org/project/pdfimport>)

For purposes of clarity, it is possible to import PDF files into Draw (PowerPoint), perform the edits and then export them as hybrid PDFs meaning that those documents can be edited as PDF files back again in OpenOffice.

8. Feel good about been a green lawyer!

The above seven (7) steps can be applied to any practice area by using innovative technology that already exists in the marketplace. Implementing these proactive measures not only increases workflow productivity but more importantly reduces waste and conserves our precious natural resources.

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