

HOW DO 20 PEOPLE MANAGE 15,000 CASES?



This Customer Success white paper is intended for businesses experiencing or planning on expansion. Small, medium, and large law firms that want to increase their case count and settlement dollars will have similar growing pains. Whether you are trying to break into a new market or ramp up your niche practice areas, this story is for you.



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SITUATION

- The firm has invested in marketing, opening the door to new case types and plaintiff demographics
- Cases begin coming in at an increased pace
- You have 20 people on staff, and you are looking at 8,000 cases, then 10,000, then 15,000
- The firm has a reputation for personal service and has never handled this many cases; both staff and existing clients start to feel the repercussions. Phone calls are taking longer to return and deadlines are getting down to the wire
- It's becoming clear that more resources are needed, but you aren't sure which ones will have the greatest impacts

Handling a firm's growth comes with several options. The final solution is often a combination of these options rather than just picking one path.

TAKE STOCK

It's easy to start thinking about what you need to add to your arsenal to handle an onslaught of more work, but it's just as important to take stock of what you already have. Here are some things to get started.

ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE: WHO'S IN CHARGE, HERE?

With any business, there needs to be a transparent hierarchy of job responsibilities. Law firms are no different. Having a clear owner for each department and project is crucial to making things happen, especially when you're working on deadlines. If you take action before identifying who needs to do what, you'll end up with frustrated staff and poor results.

Many firms already have an organizational structure, even if they haven't taken the time to draw it out. Take a minute to create an accountability tree and analyze any holes in reporting structure. These can be simple org charts that show who reports to who, or you can take it a step further to list out each repetitive task or category that needs to be handled in each department and trace the downstream and upstream flows of the work product. Here are some popular models to consider:

- **RASCI** (Responsible, Accountable, Supporting, Consulting, Informed): popular for more complex projects where multiple departments or people need to collaborate, the RASCI model will force you to identify holes in your existing process.
- **RAD** (Responsible, Approve, Deliver): a more concise cousin to the RASCI model. This can be better when you need to remove some of the inherent



ambiguity of the RASCI model. This model gives more authority to the “Responsible” person to decide who needs to be Informed or Consulted for a given category, rather than a stringent process where multiple people need to be involved to move something forward.

- **ARPA** (Accountable, Responsible, Participant, Advisor): Another cousin to RASCI, this model will help to clearly account for people who are doing the actual work and what level of decision making they own.

Whatever model you pick, however simple or complex, remember that this is a living, breathing document. You need to be willing and ready to analyze the results and play your team to their strengths.

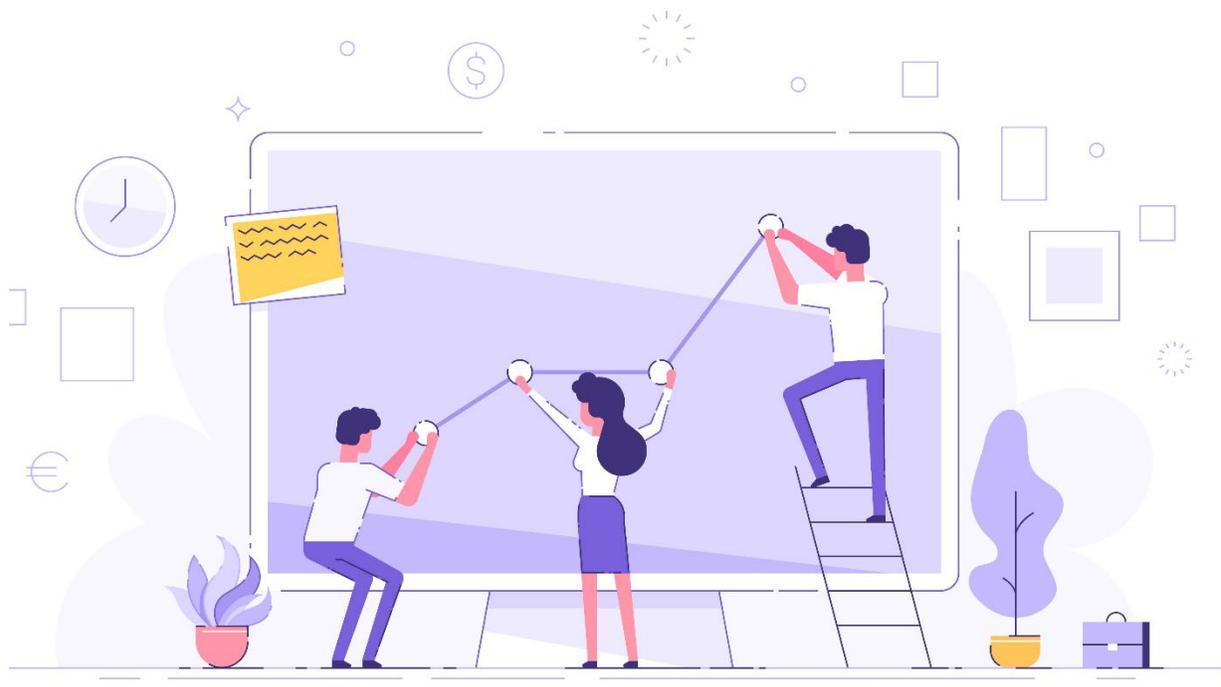
Most importantly, the people with decision making power need to understand their responsibility and boundaries. You’re going to need a project manager (or maybe more than one) to steer the ship as you take on more resources and work. The project manager(s) need to know they can make choices without fear of reprisal, and that they have authority to enforce processes. The leadership team needs to set clear expectations for the whole firm, back-up the project managers they put in charge, and ultimately decide if the right people are in the right seats.

METRICS: WHAT GETS MEASURED, GETS DONE.

Maybe your firm has already defined their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), but if not, now’s the time to do it. **It can’t be overstated how important data is to success.** High level views of what’s going on with the docket and staff, checked regularly and with precision, are crucial to a strong law firm. This may mean building a new muscle if you aren’t in the habit of creating regular scorecards, so here are some topics that will help you take stock before investing more dollars:

- Average marketing dollars needed to bring in a case
- Average time from prospect’s first contact to signed retainer
- Average case count per paralegal and per attorney
- Average time from case intake to settlement, per case phase and case type
- Average settlement amount by case type
- Average time spent on client correspondence, per staff member and case type

Figuring out what’s most important so you can cut out the clutter is usually an iterative process, so start big and then focus in as you gather data.



Remember to leverage every system you have in place to put the pieces together. Most software comes with auditing and analytics, even if you haven't seen it yet. Email systems like Outlook and Google have built-in reporting that show each user's inbound and outbound traffic, read and deleted stats, and more. Do you use a cloud-based phone system? Use it to see how much time your team spends on the phone, how many calls roll to voicemail, how long it takes to return those calls. If you've never taken these steps before, be cognizant of how your staff feels about the investigating stage. Sometimes a system audit can feel like a personal attack, so be upfront about why you're looking into things.

Once you put your metrics in place, don't be shy about sharing them with the entire staff. These will be your benchmarks and give your team insight into what your expectations are. Get their buy-in; do they agree with the numbers? Are they inputting the data in a way that makes sense for what you need to see? Get feedback and iterate through the options until you achieve something that makes sense to the key players.

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS: HIDDEN GEMS.

A Subject Matter Expert (SME) is a person with knowledge and authority in a specific topic. You probably already know which of your attorneys is the best with summaries, and which paralegal you trust with notices of intent. There's probably a stand-out person in accounting that you know will get the disbursement paperwork right the first time, and a receptionist who never overbooks the conference rooms. **These are your SME's, and you need them.**



They've already figured out how to do things, and getting them involved in process overhauls just makes sense. Interview them about how they do things and identify what makes their work product better than the rest. Figure out how to replicate what they do for others that are responsible for the same type of tasks. Does that attorney have a bank of case law stashed on his desktop to copy into summary templates? Get a copy. Maybe your accountant found a feature in the banking software that helps him create settlement statements faster - roll it out the rest of the team.

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION: A NECESSARY EVIL.

Now that you've identified your SMEs, it's time to put pen to paper. **Think of this as a discovery period in a case; you need to gather all the witnesses and evidence and summarize it to maximize the value.**

Create a list of each departments' processes. Some processes will be done every day, multiple times a day. Other processes might only be relevant to very select situations or case types, or be background admin routines you never thought about. Start with a broad-strokes list so each department can further expand and paint the whole picture.

Identify who is in charge of documenting the processes. This can be a single point person who is chasing down the information and utilizing the various SMEs to get the best feedback. Having one person put it all together will make for more consistent format and readability. You could also choose a taskforce of SMEs that take the lead for their respective departments, and collaborate to bring it all together.

Once the gathering stage is done, you'll be able to get a better idea of what types of resources you might be lacking to scale up. Look at what your SMEs put together with an open perspective so you can find your bottlenecks. Maybe there was an attorney who demanded handwritten post-its with statute reminders to be placed on all client files, so the paralegals just kept doing it like they were trained to. Do you really need that step, or should you retire it and mandate they use the built-in reminders in your case management software?

By trimming the fat from existing processes and rethinking routine tasks, you might find you have a lot more bandwidth than you knew.

OK, NOW WHAT?

Now that you know what tools you already have, it's time to decide what's missing from the stockpile. But we can't forget a crucial step.

Pick a project manager.

It can be safely said that many law firms have a few "alpha" personalities on the team, and there can be a natural push and pull at play in other parts of your business. This is great when



debating a case or deciding how to present a good argument, but there's no place for ego in project management. Agreeing who gets final say upfront can help prevent unnecessary tension later. Make sure you pick a project manager for each distinct project you take on. Whether it's hiring and onboarding or implementing new software, this person is the one who stands between you and chaos.



So, where do you get a good project manager? Lots of people in the legal field are cut from the same cloth; they're analytical, thinking through complex issues and maneuvering the facts through a maze of red tape and inconsistent process to achieve results. While it may not be a universal trait, many paralegals and attorneys have a natural inclination to project management.

Consider looking internally to fill the project management roles, but also be open to hiring someone new. Firms that grow to the point of needing a middle management level are also probably in need of a controller. Recognize when you are beyond the skills of your legal staff and consider hiring from fields that have dedicated project management credentials built in.



OPTION 1: HIRE MORE STAFF



Adding people to the team can seem like an obvious and necessary choice. What do you need to consider to make sure it's the best choice for your firm?

THE MORE, THE MERRIER?

Generally speaking, a law firm will have similar departmental structures: Intake, Paralegals/Attorneys, Administration, Accounting, IT, and Marketing. Often, staff members will wear multiple hats. When people are able to do more than one job with an acceptable level of skill, it can be hard to figure out where to spend the recruitment dollars.

Most firms will gravitate to bulking up their intake resources. The fear of losing out on great cases because you don't have the manpower to answer phones or respond promptly to intake requests can drive this decision. But it's important to plan further than just getting the cases in the door. What implications will great marketing and intake have on the other departments?

It's not difficult math; more cases equals more work. But for whom? How much? And when?

Some of your staff is going to feel the pain right away. New clients are often the more demanding demographic. They just gave you their business, so their expectations for immediate answers and clarification on what they can expect in the future are high. The pre-litigation paralegals and attorneys are going to have to work hard up front to set the tone. As the cases evolve, the litigation teams are going to have to hand-hold clients that need reassurance during the filing and discovery process. And that's just the client communication, not to mention the tracking of deadlines, submission processes to defendants and courts, and the hundreds of other loose ends that need to be tied up.

This is the time to put the metrics you've been collecting to use. If you know how much time it takes from initial contact to signed retainer, and how much upfront plaintiff communication it takes until the case is filed, etc., you can determine what the funnel looks like. By knowing where the work effort ebbs and flows, you're able to zero in on where hiring money needs to go.



Gathering the right metrics will allow you to make educated decisions about how you spend your money. Choose systems that allow you to get at the right data.



WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

You've put your data to the test and need to figure out if you made the right call in upping the staff count. It's crucial to remember that just making the decision to hire isn't enough to assuage the demands of new cases, and you won't see immediate positive results. The average time from interviewing to onboarding is 1-4 months, and even longer before your new team member is a full and ingrained participant in your firm.

Consider fitting new hires to specific roles and identifying skillssets that can be used across the firm. You want more people who can wear more hats so they can help bridge divides between the departments.

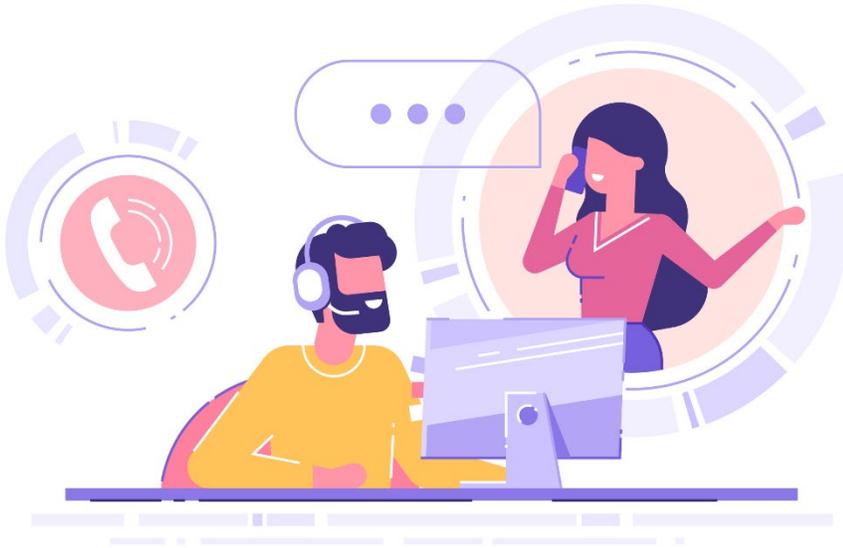
- **PRO:** Hiring more staff will take the pressure off the current staff to manage the increased case load. As the new staff is learning they might start with the administrative work on the cases and then transition to new roles as their knowledge and experience grows.
- **CON:** It can be time consuming to train new staff and there will probably be errors along the way. It is also tricky to match the firm's culture. It's important to get the balance right when the firm is in a busy growth stage. This is especially true in a work-from-home environment.

AVERAGE COSTS

A typical Customer Service Representative will be paid on average \$28,000 per year in the United States. A skilled Legal Assistant/Paralegal will earn on average \$48,000-\$76,000 per year. When you combine this with hiring costs and benefits, new hires aren't necessarily an inexpensive choice, and could come with more negatives than positives.



OPTION 2: RETAIN CALL CENTERS



Call centers are a popular option for nationwide campaigns that span multiple time zones, or when your marketing outreach is happening during non-business hours. Is a call center the right fit for your team?

Call centers are a great way to quickly increase available communication bandwidth without having to hire individual staff. The firm can look at a call center to handle the new cases coming in or for questions that need to be completed on the case.

OUTSOURCING YOUR PAIN POINTS

When reviewing call centers, it is important to determine what is important to the firm. For example, would you like the staff to have a local focus or a particular industry knowledge? This can include what language the call center staff speaks or their industry knowledge.

Quality will be important to make sure data is collected and transcribed with accuracy. Your project manager is in charge of making sure the outsourced staff knows what's important. When choosing a company to work with, make sure they're able to accommodate the type of information you need to gather, and that they are willing and capable of translating the data in the format you need. Incorrect data can put the firm at risk.

It is also good to quality check the calls and length. Remember how important your metrics are. If a prospect is calling the firm they want to be helped immediately. If it takes 3-5 minutes to relay their initial information, this can leave a bad first impression of the firm. This is true for your in-house staff and the outsourced call center.

UPSIDES & DOWNSIDES

Call center support can usually be implemented in a short amount of time, and improve as the support team learns what's important to you. While they can help fill non-traditional



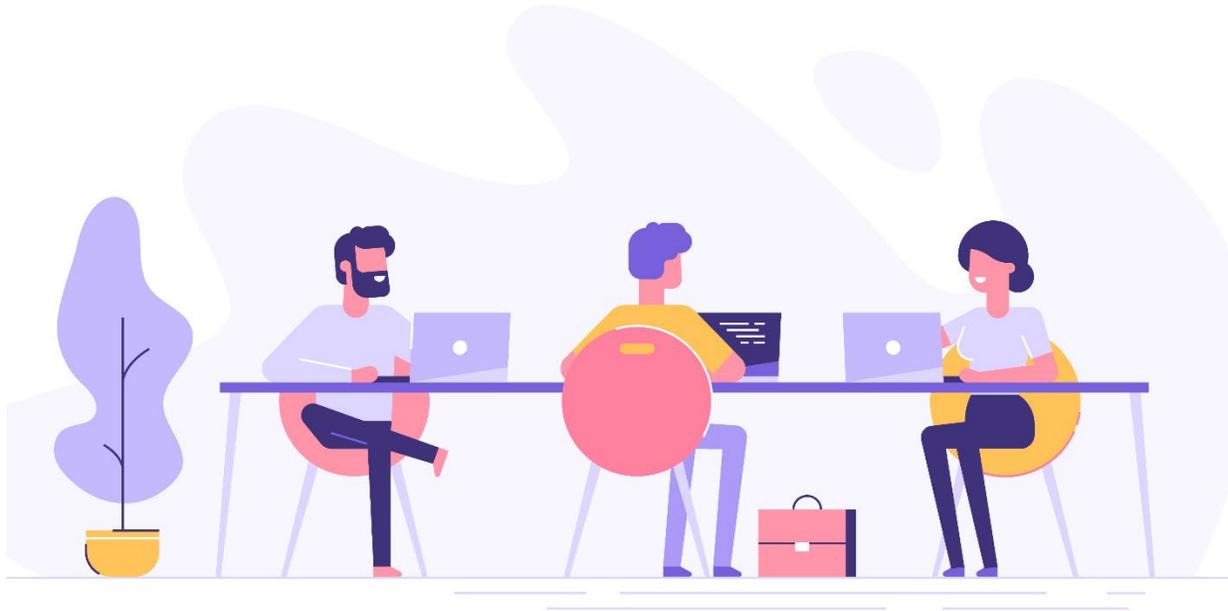
business hours and overflow during peak call times, make sure you think about the level of service you expect. If your firm already has a reputation for personal service, it can be a challenge to seamlessly introduce call center staff with the same style and tone your clients are used to. Be prepared for a learning curve and seek client feedback on their experience.

AVERAGE COSTS

- The average cost is \$1.00-\$2.00 per minute.
- Depending how the information is collected, the firm might need to use a transcription service which is typically \$1.50 per minute.
- If a Plaintiff Fact Sheet is 20 pages and it takes 75 minutes to complete, the cost would be \$75 per plaintiff plus transcription services
 - At 8,000 cases =\$600,000 plus transcription services
 - At 15,000 cases =\$1,125,000 plus transcription services



OPTION 3: LOOK AT TECHNOLOGY



Legal technology is getting very advanced and can help with every stage of a case. While there are some niche softwares that are designed to work on specific case phases, a popular option is to look at a general Case Management Software (CMS) that considers all case phases. This lessens the need to integrate multiple systems, which is expensive to get going and can be frustrating to maintain.

SIFTING FOR GOLD

Many law firms have only begun to use a true cloud-based suite of products. If you have desktop software that requires local servers and maintenance, consider other options that don't make you so dependent on physical office space. Going cloud-based means that staff can more easily work from home, call center staff can be easily integrated into your processes, file storage can be truly accessible anywhere, among many other advantages.

There are several CMS options on the market in all different price ranges and feature spectrums, which can make it difficult to choose. You don't want to get stuck with a case of analysis paralysis, weighing the pros and cons of vendors that seem to offer basically the same thing - a place to do data entry and store documents. How do you find the right fit?



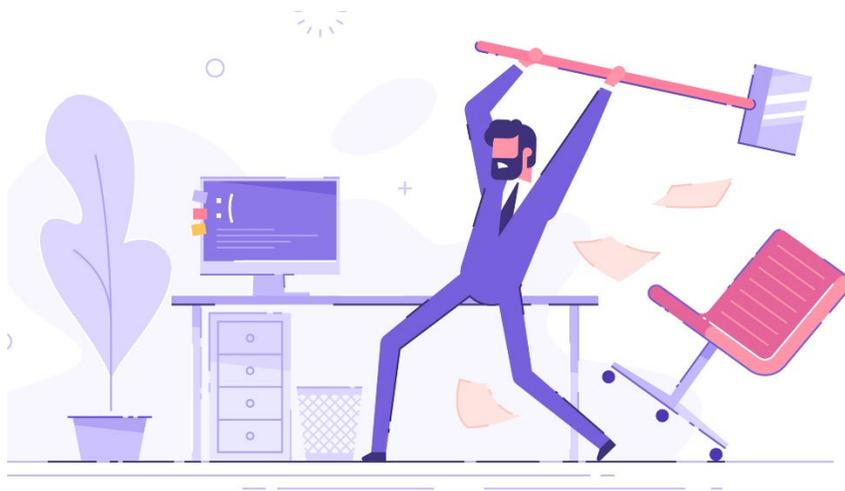
Pick software that:

- Knows your niche
- Can be easily taught to new hires
- Is accessible to call center staff
- Has knowledgeable, experienced customer support
- Gives you the data you need to measure success
- Benefits people outside your immediate team

REMEMBER WHO THE BOSS IS

Implementing new software is perhaps the most difficult of the 3 solutions for a firm to adopt. Adding people to the team, through hiring more staff or tacking on a call center for overflow calls, is generally going to be well received by the firm. The more people to shoulder the workload, the better.

But what happens when you ask people to change the way they've always done things?



You're going to encounter resistance, and it's best to face this fact upfront and for what it is - normal. Even the most enthusiastic team member is likely to have moments of frustration where they want to settle back into parts of their old routine. We are creatures of habit, and new tech means relearning how to do daily tasks.

This is where the project manager becomes the firm's bridge to sanity. This person will be involved in the software selection process, they'll be intimately familiar with the requirements of each department, they'll have worked with the SMEs to get buy-in, they'll have a direct line to the software's implementation and support teams, and - most importantly - they have the support of leadership to enforce new policies and processes, while being able to make adjustments when necessary.

APPS CLOSE THE GAPS

As technology advances, people are getting used to a new level of service. The same is true between a plaintiff and their law team. Communication styles are evolving, and many feel that email and the occasional phone call just don't cut it anymore.



Consider a solution that brings your clients into the fold and provides customer service 24/7. Mobile apps and client portals are becoming a software standard, but not very many legal case management products have embraced this idea.

While it is possible to buy stand alone apps or cloud software that allow for lead generation, client surveys, or email campaigns, consider what it means to have siloed systems that only specialize in one thing. Does the marketing app communicate to the email software to update email addresses, or does your staff have to remember to update both contacts when client emails bounce? Does the client survey system integrate to the case management system, or will your staff have to re-enter data that the plaintiff already input?

There are CMS options that offer more than one type of user experience. These products consider both the firm user and the plaintiff user to come up with solutions that work for everyone and close the gap between client and attorney.



5 MODERN WAYS TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PLAINTIFFS

1. Mobile Discovery for Bulk Data Collection

Every phase of a case has a different type of discovery, from the intake packet to interrogatories. You're always campaigning for more info from your clients, even if you don't call it by that name. Find a software that allows you to collect data in bulk, in a consistent and intelligent manner, and with as much of the work happening up front as possible.

Imagine that you've begun submitting claims for a mass tort case, which includes mandatory submission of a Plaintiff Fact Sheet within the first 45 days. Each plaintiff needs to submit their own paperwork, 40 pages long with hundreds of questions. This is frustrating because not every section applies to all of your clients. There's a whole section on real property, but only some of your clients even owned land. The last category is about physical injury, and you know most of your claims are for emotional distress. You need to limit what each plaintiff has to respond to, minimizing their time commitment and the time it takes your staff to collect what they really need.



Look for software that supports this need. If you take the time to set up forms or templates that break down each section of discovery, you can recycle that intelligent data collection over and over. **Remember that you want your data collection to go right from the plaintiff to your CMS.** If you require your staff or call center to transcribe data from the app or portal to the CMS, you've negated the time-saving capability of the app and opened the firm up to typos and inaccuracy.

2. Direct Messaging for a Personal Touch

Have you ever found yourself texting a client the address to the courthouse, or asking them to take a picture of their vehicle damage to send in? Suddenly your personal cell phone number that was only meant as a one-time thing is being used all the time. Once it's out there, it feels like the only way out is to change your number or ignore your client.

There is a third option - direct messaging inside an app or portal will provide a secure alternative to text, email, and phone calls. Implementing a product that allows for after hours auto-replies is like having 'round the clock customer service available, without needing to hire additional staff. Your clients still get the convenience of using their cell phone, and the stress is off your staff to monitor their personal text messages for work.

Take it a step further and find software that has built-in client messaging that goes from the app or portal right into the CMS. Having your conversation show up in real time in the same system where the rest of the case detail is available is an invaluable feature, saving your team the oft forgotten task of logging the interaction as a note.

3. Push Notifications to Skip the Email Traffic Jam

Push notifications are a great way to send reminders to your clients without feeling, well...pushy. Mobile apps allow clients to set notification preferences, and they can easily act on them or save them for later. Sometimes getting clients to act on tedious discovery and give you the info you need is like pulling teeth, and push notifications are a great tool to fold into the mix.

4. Message Boards for Mass Broadcasts (and bragging rights)

Updating your client on their case is one thing, but what do you do when need to cascade an update about a mass tort, class action, or change in case law to the masses? Some apps offer message board and blog post features, allowing the firm to push updates to whole groups of people instead of using one-off methods.

Not only can you use this to communicate the latest news happening in the legal industry, but you can turn this type of feature into marketing campaigns for the firm. Posting recent wins and high value settlements that the firm brought in is a good way to advertise your service and instill confidence.



5. Capture Evidence

Document and photo gathering can be a time-consuming process. They can come into the firm as email attachments, text messages, snail mail, faxes...the list goes on.

If your clients have taken the time to download an app, you should add as much value as possible. This keeps them engaged and moves the cases forward faster.

Check into products that allow you to request and receive documents and other files from your clients, ideally that get uploaded to your CMS automatically. Make sure to look for features like predetermined file names and profiling for document management. Pre-applying those labels and naming conventions to incoming files is one of the biggest time savers there is. Not only do you save the upfront time of manually uploading, naming, and profiling documents, you also make them very easy to find later.



AVERAGE COSTS

There are many software pricing models out there, so determining an average cost becomes pretty tricky. Let's take a look at some different pricing categories to get an understanding of what to expect.

- **Implementation Costs:** It's typical to be quoted a one-time implementation cost, which can range from a couple hundred to a few thousand dollars. Most software vendors will also offer data migration services to get you off your old platform, as well as software customization options, usually at an hourly rate. They may also charge for user training and follow-up support in the form of maintenance or consulting fees. Estimates of costs should be transparent, so don't be shy about asking for more detail and making sure you understand what your money gets you. Hidden costs are no fun, and the right company won't want to surprise you with exorbitant bills.
- **Licensing & Subscription Costs:** Almost every CMS is going to charge you a per user licensing fee that becomes part of your overhead budget. This can be a subscription model where you pay per user, per month. It could also be an annual maintenance fee in addition to or instead of a subscription cost. **This is not your only (or best) option.** You know that not every team member is going to use the software the same way or need it very often, so paying per user means there's money being wasted. Look for software vendors that offer universal access to the whole firm without charging extra.



- **Case-Based Costs: For firms that are trying to minimize overhead costs to make room in the budget for other resources, look for technology that you can apply directly back to a single case.** This is the alternative to a per user license, which you can't accurately (or ethically) recoup from plaintiff settlements. But if the software subscription is per case, and not per firm user, you can itemize the charge when disbursing the settlement because you know down to the penny how much was invoiced.

CONCLUSION

Investing money in tech is arguably the best solution for those that want a high ROI. Automating tasks and making data more consumable allows you to support a high volume docket with less staff and overhead. That means you can slow down on hiring new people and limit your outsourcing for additional customer service. All the maintenance costs, licensing fees and subscription charges from your existing CMS and other outdated products also count as investment gains. Keep all of this in mind as you start pricing out which solution or combination of solutions makes sense for your firm.

Technology can only go so far. Ultimately, we recommend you look at a mixture of staff, outsourcing, and technology for maximum scalability. By attacking the problems of a large case load from multiple angles, every department will feel the benefit and use the new resources that make the biggest impact for their unique roles.

This white paper was written based on real firm experience from the perspective of paralegals, project managers and CasePacer's Customer Success Team. CasePacer has developed technology for plaintiff law firms, personal injury and mass tort firms. Even more important is the experience and consultative services that CasePacer brings. It is our goal to help your firm grow.

If you want to see how we can help you, just like we helped one of our clients manage 15,000 cases with 20 associates, call, email or request a demo here: <https://casepacer.com/demo/>