

# Four Time-Saving Hacks for a More Efficient Workday

Time is an essential commodity for law firms. Unfortunately, lawyers don't always get to spend their time and energy the way they want to during the workday. Instead, they are subject to things like endless meetings and out-of-control email chains, and then they waste more time reporting on those activities.

## Time Squandered on Mundane Tasks Means Money Lost

Results from the 2018 Thomson Reuters Dynamic Law Firms Study show that what separates the most profitable firms from their less profitable peers is not their rates. It is the number of billable hours they actually charge for. It stands to reason, then, that an increase in substantive case and matter management activities and a decrease in administrative busywork will ultimately boost profitability and improve client relations.

To reach that goal, we see law firms are moving toward an era of tech-enabled lawyering. It not only sparks productivity and profitability gains, but it also enables lawyers to spend more time providing clients with real value, promoting a more satisfied culture.

## So How Do You Have a More Efficient and Effective Workday?

Here are four time-saving hacks to consider.

**1. Go mobile.** The American Bar Association's Legal Technology Survey Report found a whopping 96 percent of lawyers use a smartphone to do some amount of legal work. But there's mobility and mobile lawyering, and

then there's *true mobility*. Mobility is when a lawyer brings his or her smartphone to the courtroom and replies to a client email in between sessions. True mobility is when productivity on mobile devices becomes equal to or greater than working from a desktop. Companies are already starting to move 100 percent of their IT applications onto mobile platforms for workers who aren't tethered to a desk. And, according to a Deloitte study, in the next five to 10 years, the 100 percent-mobile employee will be the majority. From rapid access to information to the ability to collaborate in real time, a mobile-first strategy saves time.

**2. Automate the mundane.** Managing and developing people or activities that require expert decision-making and creativity are the most difficult tasks to automate. But, usually, those are also the most rewarding responsibilities. Artificial intelligence technologies are very good at taking over the most boring everyday administration tasks. Natural language processing (NLP), for example, allows a machine to carefully compare and contrast data — which means any deep reading of terms, such as reviewing contracts or leases, that typically would take a law firm associate days or even months can now be done in minutes.

Document and email filing are two other major pain points. Consider that without even responding or fully reading emails and attachments, an individual can easily spend hours a week (roughly 10 percent of total time) just filing messages. Every act of categorization — every drag-and-drop of a file from one place to another — represents another micro-decision that is subject to error and distracts from more substantive legal work. AI technologies like NLP, machine learning and pattern recognition are now mature enough to operate invisibly in the background, quickly learn from a

user's behavior, and perform these tasks instantly and more accurately than humans. They can also prioritize emails, highlight important language that needs immediate attention, and automatically integrate documents into billing and document management systems.

**3. Reduce distractions.** The average person gets interrupted once every eight minutes, eating up a staggering 50 to 60 minutes on average per day! What's worse, 80 percent of those interruptions are deemed unimportant. One way to protect your productivity is to block off time on your calendar as "busy" to reduce the potential for meeting requests or unplanned stop-bys.

Using your phone's settings is also useful. The "Do Not Disturb" mode stops all calls and notifications from making any noise, vibration or lighting up the phone screen. You can even tailor it to allow calls from your designated favorites or only certain members of a group in your contacts.

**4. Use project management tools.** Organization is key to improving time management and working smarter. Legal practice management programs have built-in project management and calendaring tools designed specifically for law firms. There are also consumer apps like Trello, Basecamp and Asana to help with task assignment, management and collaboration. This technology can help you organize and track progress on anything from client deliverables to depositions and hearings. Some of these tools include reporting and analytics functions to help adjust timelines or evaluate where to eliminate inefficiencies and boost productivity.

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