Managing Matters Effectively

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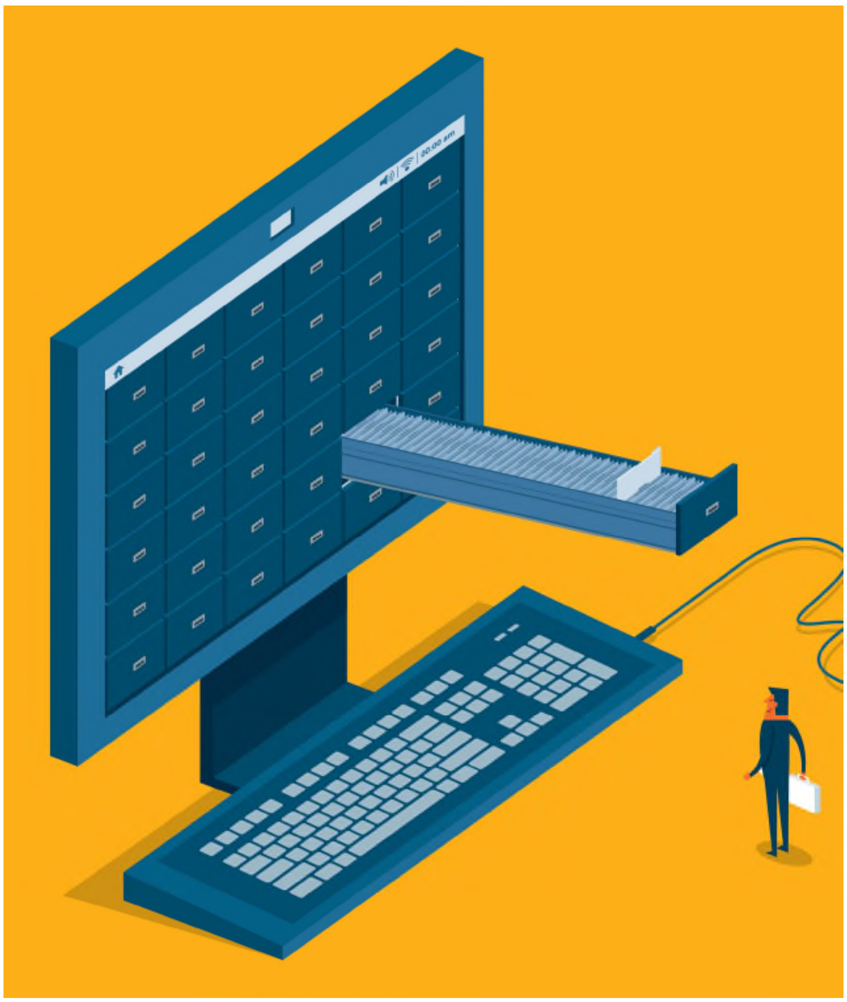

How can busy lawyers maintain laser-focus on their clients without being distracted by the administrative minutiae of the case? The answer is efficient matter management. In today's fiercely competitive financial climate in which law firms face increasing pressure to work more efficiently and cost-effectively to exceed the expectations of clients, a firm or department's matter management system tailored to its needs and environment can mean the difference between profits and loss.

To explore this topic further, we asked four of your ILTA peers to talk about how their firm or legal department manages matters.

What tools does your team rely on for matter management?

Cindy (Large Firm): We use SharePoint, Box and a document management system, and we maintain a flexible approach that allows our practices to select the tool that best suits the needs of our clients. As an example, our public finance group manages every closing in Box so they can quickly and easily share documents with all parties. Our lawyers love that it's easy to use and that they have great mobile access.

Chris (Midsize Firm): We use SharePoint, and that interface is shared with the entire firm. We also use Excel; in specific matter arrangements, Excel spreadsheets will reside within the client matter in the document management system. The bigger piece we utilize is business intelligence through a Sisense dashboard, which analyzes our e-discovery resources being used throughout the firm through different perspectives.

Mike (Small Firm): Since 2011, we've primarily used LawBase for calendaring, docketing and case management. It keeps deadlines on track and provides a basic set of documents to lawyers. We selected this software primarily because of its flexibility and reputation. Both are important in my role as sole technology provider and surveyor of potential software.

Vanessa (Law Department): We implemented E-Council a little over a year ago, with two tools that support it:

» AnalysisCenter gives us a more robust way to extract information out of our matter management system. We can also report on it in different and more creative ways.

» Smartlink allows us to build custom rules and prevent certain actions on matters. We also take advantage of rules related to invoice management.

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Who picks the tools to use?

Chris (MF): It's a team decision on what tools we use. We first determine what goals and vision we want to achieve, and then we define how we want to implement the tool (or process). We bring in stakeholders from the case and review suggestions and feedback from attorneys and paralegals, and then we decide on the right solution.

Vanessa (LD): Our steering team, comprising different members of the legal department (including representatives from transaction and corporate teams), made sure each member within our department had a voice when selecting the matter management system. We had representatives from network architecture, security, application support and IT to cover all our bases and deliver something that would work well within our environment.

We also wanted our matter management system to automate and improve our invoice process, so finance weighed in on what would be helpful to them and what process flow might work well.

We had a large team, but that helped the legal department and the corporation as a whole select the right tool for our environment.

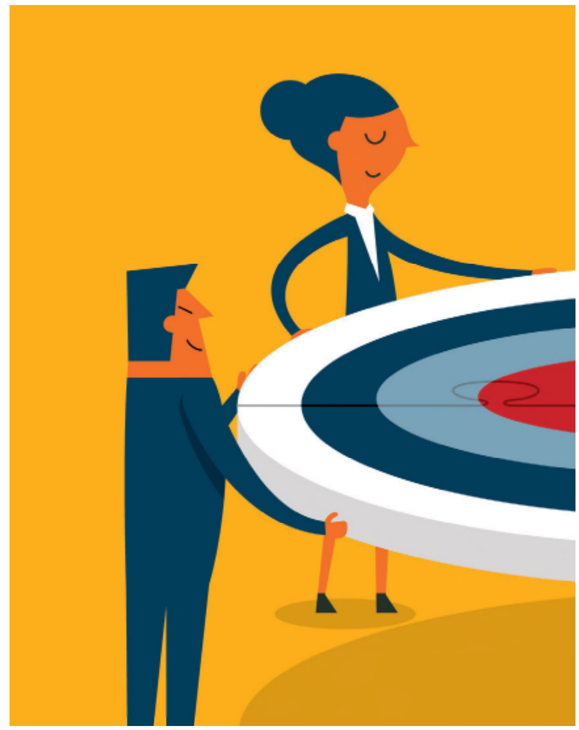
Cindy (LF): Our tools are determined by a combination of knowledge management, IT and our lawyers. With our CaseStream litigation case management technology, the KM team did an extensive needs analysis, and we made recommendations based on lots of lawyer and staff feedback.

Mike (SF): For us, it varies. When we signed on with LawBase, we reviewed several options and worked with a group of key paralegals and partners. More often, the officer manager and I decide which tools will be used to manage matters.

Is your organization using a current tool in a creative way?

Cindy (LF): We have gotten creative in several ways. With CaseStream, we completed a process mapping exercise, focusing on everything that goes into efficient case management. It was a unique way to focus the project and define how to use the technology tools.

Another creative example is our client dashboards, which help organize all aspects of



supporting an emerging technology company, including documents, people and finance. One of the advantages of these dashboards is that we can quickly answer client questions — everything from the details of the latest stock plan to when a particular board member's term expires. We even built in an alerting system that lets us know when critical information is missing.

Mike (SF): LawBase is a SQL server on the back end and a .NET-developed application, so it is very customizable for matter management. Beyond matter management, we use the system for helpdesk ticketing and as our time system.

Vanessa (LD): Working in a corporate environment means we're continuously getting creative. We support internal business units in multiple ways, through contracts and transactions, and we have a customized tool that allows us to capture information that's important to our business units.

Chris (MF): Our business intelligence tool sets us apart from a lot of other firms. The concept

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has been developed in other industries for some time, and what we have is an interactive dashboard built on Sisense analytics that can pull in a lot of our e-discovery resources on SalesForce. This allows us to pivot and filter dynamically throughout cases.

How does the connection— or, conversely, the disconnection — between systems affect efficient matter management?

Vanessa (LD): One disconnection we're working on is an integration with email to enhance our effectiveness by having all email, calendaring and tasks related to a matter in a centralized location. The connections that drive efficiencies are our integrations with PeopleSoft, our system for processing invoices, and our document management system. This helps us operate in one platform, creating a one-stop shop.

Chris (MF): Our SharePoint integration is built within our intranet, and we're allowing our peer-to-peer portal to be shown so we can draw people in and engage with staff from other offices we might not normally see or speak with who are interested in what we do. This transparency allows people to see our activity. The direct connection of that system with SharePoint allows us to collaborate effectively.

Cindy (LF): It depends on the system, but in Box we find that our teams can create documents, edit them and share them with clients and interested parties in one easy-to-use system. We needed little additional integration there, but when we have systems to integrate, we are lucky to have a talented web development team. For example, they easily integrated key dates from our docketing system into SharePoint calendars.

Mike (SF): It's critical that we have a working relationship between all our applications and all documents associated with a particular case, whether they're linked as primary key documents or need to be added to the matter manager in LawBase. They all need successful integration and successful connections to operate optimally. **P2P**

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Vanessa Lozzi is an Assistant Vice President and the Senior Legal Technology and Litigation Support Administrator with Flagstar Bank, headquartered in Troy, MI. She is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, Paralegal Section, the International Legal Technology Association's Relationship Coordinating Team and ACC Legal Operations. Vanessa has been a part-time college professor, teaching at Baker College for the paralegal program. She also volunteered her time by serving on the Baker College Paralegal Advisory Board, where she assisted the school with receiving ABA accreditation for their program. Contact Vanessa at vanessa.lozzi@flagstar.com.

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