



Leveraging Technology to Implement the 11 Habits of Successful Law Firms

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Director of Litigation, LEAP Legal Software

Presenter Background

- Sy J. Sommer, Esq. – Director of Litigation at LEAP Legal Software
 - 2008 - 2010 - Attended Fordham Law School in New York, NY - Graduated with JD in May 2010.
 - 2010 – 2013 - Practiced Family and Matrimonial Law at Davidoff Hutcher & Citron LLP in New York, NY.
 - 2013 – 2018 – Practiced Contested Foreclosure Law at JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA in Brooklyn, NY.
 - 2018 – 2019 – Joined LEAP Legal Software as Consulting Manager.
 - 2019 – 2021 – Served as LEAP’s Partner Network and Franchise Operations Director.
 - 2021 – Present – Serves as LEAP’s Director of Litigation.

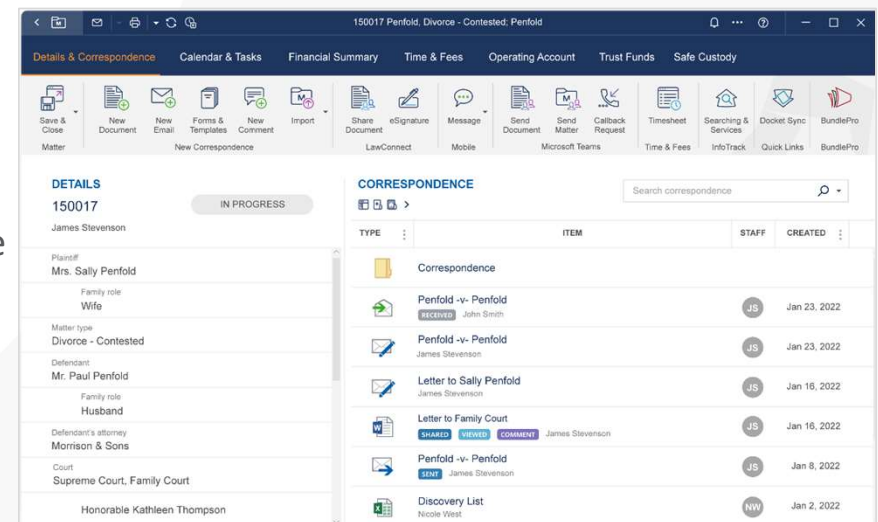
The 11 Habits of Successful Law Firms

"Success is a few simple disciplines, practiced every day; while failure is simply a few errors in judgment, repeated every day ... Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying basic fundamentals." – Jim Rohn

1. Decide to be efficient;
2. Be an early adopter in the use of technology;
3. Enjoy practicing law;
4. Employ smart people and treat them very well;
5. Select the areas of law you enjoy and focus on them;
6. Dedicate time to building the firm as a business and take time to care for yourself as well;
7. Confront the challenge of getting paid to solve 'problems';
8. Have standard processes and procedures in place for all matters;
9. Make compliance a natural consequence of running your firm well;
10. Become an expert in the client experience; and
11. Understand the finances of your firm.

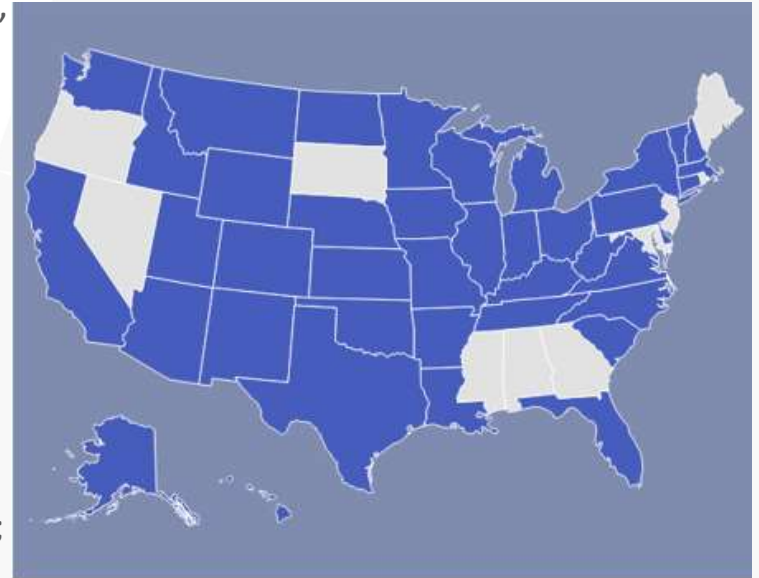
Habit #1 – Decide to be efficient

- Rule 1.3 – Diligence – “A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.”
- Small firms must be efficient. This can be counter-intuitive to lawyers accustomed to hourly billing.
- Organization facilitates efficiency, so choosing the right practice management system is essential. Using a SaaS vendor for practice management software is compliant with the RPC.
- Document automation allows you to save time on the production of commonly used documents.
- Be efficient when billing with contemporaneous time-tracking.



Habit #2 – Be an early adopter in the use of technology

- Comment [8] to RPC 1.1 – “To maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology...”
- Comment [8] has been adopted in some form by 40 states.
- Successful law firms use technology to focus on:
 - Having a single database of information;
 - Having their practice management, legal accounting, and trust accounting in a single application;
 - Having libraries of forms, letters, and other templates available and set up for automation;
 - Recording activity as it occurs to ensure timely and accurate billing; and
 - Providing clients with an easy-to-use online portal.



States that have adopted Comment [8]

Habit #3 – Enjoy practicing law

- Avoid practicing outside defined areas of expertise and never take on more work than you can handle.
- Comment [3] to Rule 1.3 (Diligence) provides that “A lawyer’s workload must be controlled so that each matter can be handled competently.”
- Set time aside to manage the business of the law firm.
- Be conscious of the client experience and set accurate expectations.
- Be thoughtful about implementing technologies that make it easier for you to manage the firm, increasing your enjoyment.



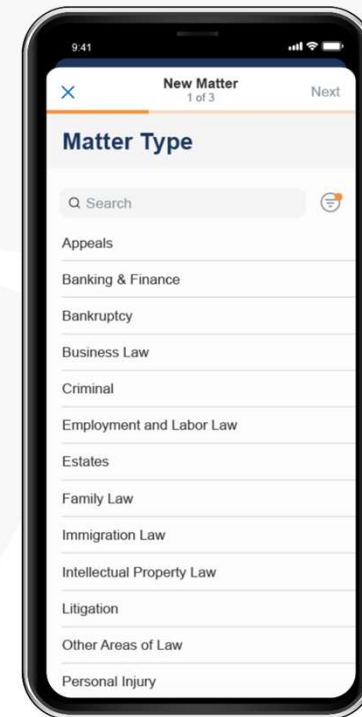
Habit #4 – Employ smart people and treat them very well

- As work-life has been transformed by remote work, it is important to hire the best and most trustworthy people.
- Attract the most talented employees by adopting technology that will enable them to work efficiently and flexibly.
- ABA Formal Opinion 495 – A lawyer does not violate Rule 5.5 by working remotely from a jurisdiction where the lawyer is not licensed to practice so long as the lawyer does not hold themselves out as licensed to practice in that jurisdiction.
- Invest in your staff and their futures to build loyalty. Pay your staff competitively and treat them with kindness and respect.
- RPC 5.3 – Managing attorneys are responsible for staff's compliance with ethics rules.



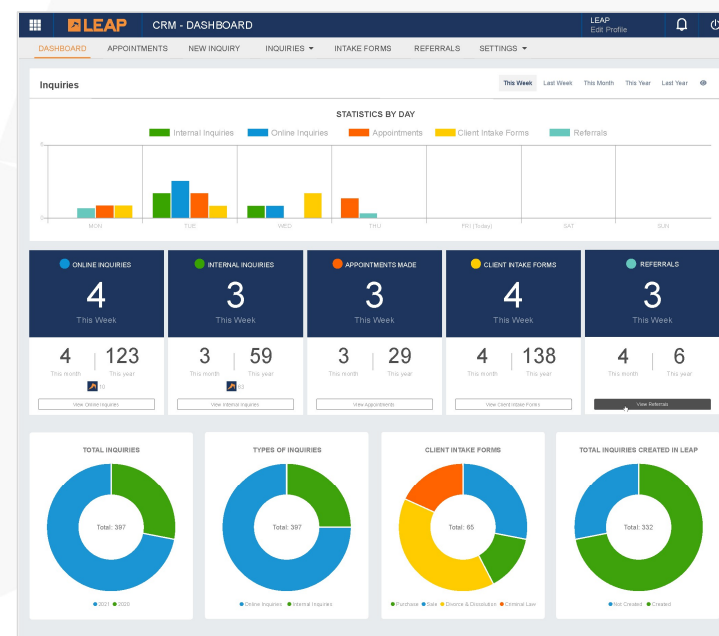
Habit #5 – Select the areas of law you enjoy and focus on them

- It is better to be a specialist than a generalist, but it is also risky to be overly specialized. Strike the right balance by specializing in a few complimentary areas of law.
- Successful law firms:
 - Develop deep expertise in defined areas of law;
 - Select areas of law that fit comfortably together; and
 - Ensure that marketing efforts are properly directed to emphasize areas of expertise.
- NJ RPC 7.4 – An attorney may advertise that they handle specific areas of practice. An attorney may only represent themselves as a certified specialist if certification came from the Supreme Court of NJ, or an organization approved by the ABA.



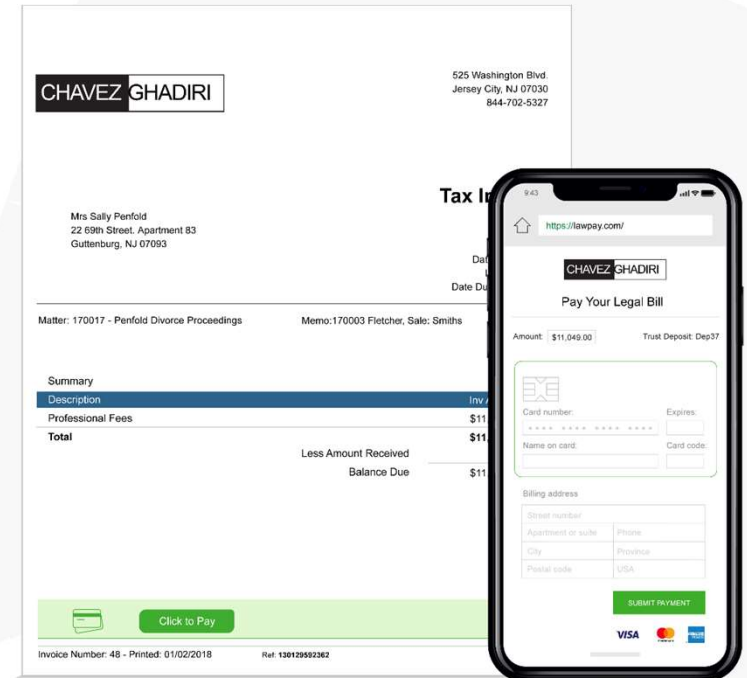
Habit #6 – Dedicate time to building the firm as a business and take time to care for yourself as well

- Lawyers are not trained businesspeople and can be vulnerable to failing to adequately manage the business side of their firms.
- Know your numbers. Record everything. Measure everything. Implement software to give you access to data.
- Marketing matters. Be cognizant of how you package and sell your services. Be mindful of your website, social media, e-mail marketing, etc.
- Attorney competence requirements may encompass competence and basic knowledge of major social media platforms.
- Self-care is important. Carve out time for peoples' personal lives.



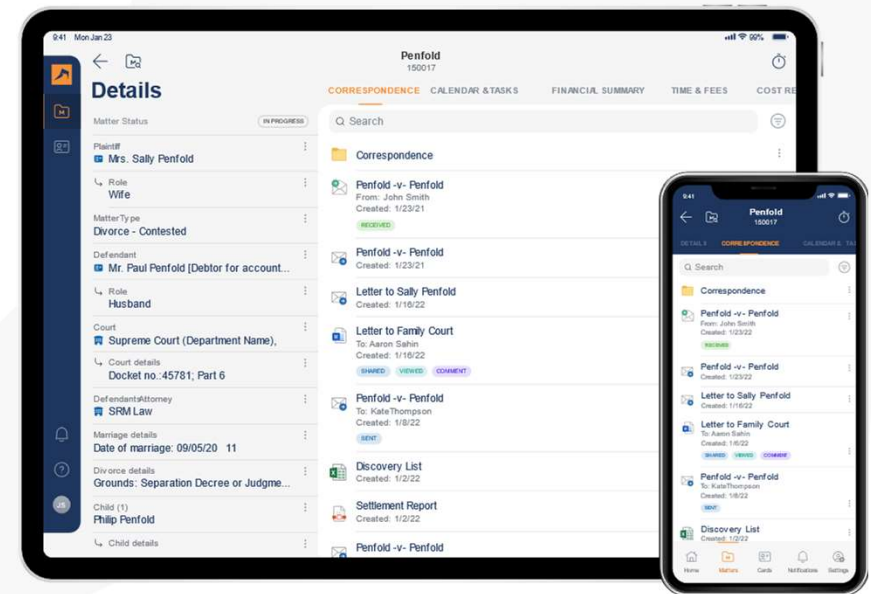
Habit #7 – Confront the challenges of getting paid to solve ‘problems’

- Successful law firms confront the challenges of getting paid head on. Some ways to do this include:
 - Ensuring that there is a clear retainer for every matter;
 - Billing on a regular and predictable cycle;
 - Making it simple for clients to make payments online; and
 - If cost estimates change, communicating this to the client clearly.
- ABA Rule 1.5 – “The scope of the representation and the basis or rate of the fee and expenses ... shall be communicated to the client, preferably in writing...”
- Firms that address these challenges get paid faster, do not waste time chasing unpaid invoices, and experience less stress.



Habit #8 – Have standard processes and procedures in place for all matters

- Use software to establish standardized workflows, document templates, and organizational systems.
- Implementing standard processes and procedures through software allows for consistency of approach across staff and facilitates easier onboarding of new hires.
- Formal Opinion 477R – Lawyers should use secure document delivery and/or encrypted e-mail when transmitting sensitive information to remain compliant with attorneys' duties of competence and confidentiality.
- Embrace the digital file. If you are using a cloud system, your files are available wherever you have an internet connection and cannot be lost.



Habit #9 – Make compliance a natural consequence of running your firm well

- Successful law firms use modern systems to maintain compliance with Rules of Professional Responsibility.
- ABA Model Rules that are relevant re: Technology – 1.1, 1.4, 1.6, 1.15, 1.16, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3
- Rule 1.15 requires client funds to be held in trust. Firms should be able to generate monthly trust account activity reports which can be produced in the event of an audit.
- Matter financial statements should be available for production to your client or the court.
- Deadline management is crucial as missed deadlines can lead to malpractice claims.

Account: Default Trust Account

Morrison & Sons

BANK RECONCILIATION

NEW ADDITION

ALL

ADDITIONS

TRANSITIONS

DATE	DESCRIPTION	WITHDRAWAL	DEPOSIT
2/12/2020	PayE265 SRM Law 221 River Street Hoboken, NJ 07030	\$85.00	-
4/06/2020	REC946 Mrs. S Penfold 34 E 42nd Street, New York, NY 10012	-	\$2,500.00
5/06/2020	Pay318 Wells Fargo 463 Broadway New York, NY 10013	\$150.00	-
6/06/2020	Dep137 Bank Deposit	\$100,000.00	-
6/06/2020	Rec872 Mr. D Henry 2 Tide Street Orlando, FL 32809	-	\$5,000.00

Bank

02/27/2021

Statements Date

\$1,450,069.01

Statements Balance

\$1,459,569.01

Calculated Balance

VARIANCE \$0.00

Cashbook

\$1,891,369.01

System Cashbook

\$1,891,369.01

Reconciled Cashbook

VARIANCE \$0.00

Additions (1) \$430,300.00

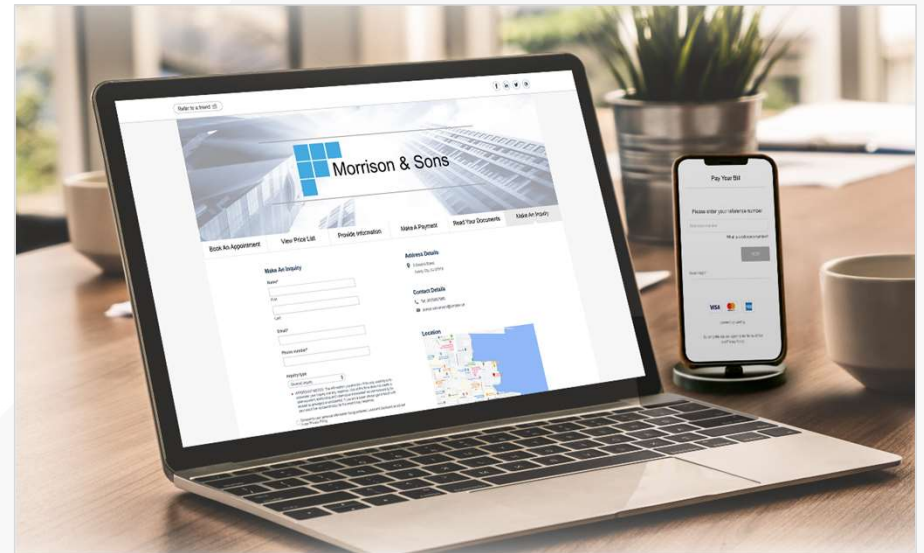
Last Reconciled Date 02/27/2021

SAVE FOR LATER

RECONCILE

Habit #10 – Become an expert in client experience

- Embed great customer service throughout your culture and constantly seek to improve the client experience.
- Communication is the foundation of a positive customer experience.
- One of the most effective ways to improve the client experience is by implementing technologies that simplify the handling of legal matters from the client's perspective.
- The modern client expects the ability to pay online and by credit card and expects access to their case documents and matter financials online at any time.



Habit #11 – Understand the finances of your firm

- You must understand the finances of your firm. To successfully grow a firm, understanding the sources of capital and the stock of available time and effectively managing them is critical.
- Software can ease the burden of financial management through automated time tracking, bulk and matter-level invoicing, a robust trust fund management system, and more.
- Software can also provide financial reporting that enables you to make the best decisions. What kind of matters produce the greatest returns? Is staff using time efficiently and hitting budgeted billing goals?

Fee Earner Overview

Start Date: 09/01/2020 | End Date: 09/30/2020 | Staff Type: Staff Responsible | Staff: James Stevenson | Inc. Inactive Staff:

Sections: All Items Selected | View

Current Matters	Current Clients	Total Exposure *Inc Tax
5	5	\$19,924.95

New Matters:1 for Reporting Period 09/01/2020 to 09/30/2020

Matter	Client	Description	Staff Responsible	Cost Estimate
201676	Mr. Taylor Cranston	Divorce	James Stevenson	-

Top 10 Clients for Reporting Period 09/01/2020 to 09/30/2020

Client Name	No. of Matters	Total Fees Billed
Mr. Kenneth James Giffey	1	\$6,600.00
Mrs. Sally Penfold	1	\$3,567.00
Mr. Victor Manning	1	\$3,000.00
Mr. Joe MacRobert	1	\$600.00
Mr. Taylor Cranston	1	490.00
Total:	5	\$14,247.00

Top 10 Fees Billed for Reporting Period 09/01/2020 to 09/30/2020

Matter	Client	Description	Fee
201676	Mr. Taylor Cranston	Divorce	\$6,600.00

Conclusion & Contact Information

- Questions?
 - Contact me at Sy.Sommer@leap.us
- Learn more about LEAP, the legal practice productivity solution, at www.leap.us
- Book a demonstration by visiting www.leap.us/demonstration or calling 844-702-LEAP

