



Case Study

Lawyer Discovers 250 “Lost” Billable Hours a Year

Company: John T. Phipps Law Offices, P.C.

Location: Champaign, Illinois

Number of Employees: 4

The Lawyer

John T. Phipps knows a thing or two about technology. As he says, “I’m an old guy who likes new things.” A lawyer for 45 years, he has consistently been an early adopter of new technology, whether it is software or hardware. He opened his practice in 1970 with cutting-edge technology that included memory typewriters and later introduced an Apple computer. In 1972, he helped to create the Illinois State Bar Association Legal Technology Committee - one of the first legal technology committees in the country. His love of technology and his devotion to law has helped him grow his successful practice, which is focused on family law and general civil practice. Additionally, he is a frequent CLE lecturer on technology issues and office management and has been published in more than 100 newsletters and CLE book chapters.

The Challenge

Prior to 1999, John relied on a personal information management program to help manage his practice. The program featured a calendar, note pad, calculator and address book. Although the program was useful for basic tasks such as compiling contacts, it was not tailored for the legal industry and allowed for no collaboration between John and his staff – that meant valuable billing and client information could be overlooked or hard to identify. In John’s words, “It was very limited.” It was clear that his practice had outgrown its software.

The Solution

As a true technology aficionado, John began researching several practice management solutions in early 1999. A visit to a legal technology conference helped whittle his options to two contenders, one of which was Amicus Attorney. He licensed both solutions so he could experiment in a real-practice environment.

It soon became evident that Amicus Attorney had the upper hand. What clinched the deal was the ability to quickly understand and use the solution. “Amicus does everything I want and it takes less time to learn. My staff could easily and quickly pick up on it, which was a big boost for productivity. We were able to capture and find valuable information that we couldn’t otherwise. Amicus worked the way I wanted to work – without adding extra work.”

And it still does now. Eleven years later, John is still an avid advocate for Amicus Attorney. Recently, he upgraded to the Amicus Attorney 2010 Premium Edition and is rolling out Amicus Mobile for Blackberry use.

The Benefits

John cites three reasons he uses Amicus Attorney:

1. It makes his life easier.
2. It captures the time and client information he needs.
3. It allows him to travel.

Easier Practice Management

John's practice now embraces a more collaborative environment, thanks to Amicus Attorney. His staff can easily check his availability, identify deadlines, review case chronology and track time. Features such as reminders, sticky notes, phone call logs and color coding streamline case documentation, notes and billing. Everyone in the office now knows what everyone is doing, thanks to a centralized repository of case information.

The centralized repository of information provided by Amicus also allows John to access and review his to-do list, appointments, court dates and professional development activities as sorted by his time parameters – days, weeks or months. This helps preserve the ability to concentrate on “the big picture.”

Information Capture

According to John, “With Amicus Attorney, I capture an hour or more of time each day that I wasn't getting before. This adds up to approximately 240-250 billable hours a year.” Over 11 years, this adds up to a considerable return on investment – more than 2,500 “found” hours.

The software's easy of adoption and use eliminates extra work and saves time when it comes to client services. John uses time entries to keep summary notes for himself and his clients, making it easy to correlate bills and activities. This gives clients a greater awareness and understanding of his activities and services.

The availability of case information at his fingertips is another valuable addition to his practice. In addition to being able to review the case history, he and his staff can also tell clients exactly what actions were taken and when and how they were billed for them. This translates into happier clients. This information can also help if there were any questions about services. When an ex-client once questioned his representation, John was able to locate and produce information that documented the client's refusal to heed his legal advice – from paid bills to notes and emails - all within minutes.

Travel

Amicus has also allowed John to mobilize his practice. As a frequent traveler, he can run his practice from any location with the help of a laptop or his Blackberry – allowing him to do more, bill more and go home early. “It's like having your file right in front of you – no matter where you are,” he says.

Out of the many benefits Amicus Attorney offers, one of the most valuable for John is the building of case documentation and history. As he says, “The longer you use it, the more valuable it becomes because of the information it yields. Imagine if you were to sell your practice. With Amicus, someone can walk in and know what needs to be done immediately. It's an amazing addition to the value of your practice.”