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## Why Analytics Make Workflow Technology Mission-Critical in Today's Law Firms

**Law firms today have new opportunities to improve service delivery and better manage resources by implementing workflow systems designed specifically for law firms. With better information at their disposal, firms can allocate resources effectively to improve efficiency and ensure better value for their clients.**

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The benefits of workflow technology can make a big impact. The key for law firms is to deploy a system that provides robust tracking and analytic capabilities that will help streamline and improve processes while reducing costs.

Legal managers play a critical role in helping their firms understand what to look for with workflow technology, including the ease of implementation and adoption.

### **WHY FIRMS NEED ANALYTICS AND WORKFLOW SYSTEMS**

Most law firms have processes in place to manage common tasks, such as updating legal briefs and transcribing dictations. However, often these processes have been developed ad hoc or adapted from existing systems, such as IT ticketing software, that are not ideal. More likely, firms are handling these tasks via email and shared inboxes, resulting in a lack of clarity around project requirements and virtually no vision to deadlines and overall quantity of work.

These approaches are highly manual and do not allow for real-time tracking of specific tasks or managing overall workflow. Implementing a workflow system allows attorneys and secretarial staff to easily track the status of their projects, which is critical to ensuring a smooth transition to the new structure and process.

In addition, the skill set of legal support staff evolves and positions become increasingly more specialized. With a workflow system, tasks can be automatically routed to the people best suited to accomplish the work, allowing for a more streamlined organization, improved client service and increased ROI.

**INSIGHTS THAT ANALYTICS CAN UNCOVER**

Without a system in place, or with a poorly adapted system, law firms struggle to understand the scope of work their cases require and whether that work is being handled in the most efficient way possible. This is where workflow systems that produce solid analytics can provide invaluable insights and allow legal managers to transform how work is assigned and completed.

Firms should look for workflow systems that can provide the following specific types of data. The following tips can help.

**Quantifying the amount of work requested by attorneys and staff:**

Many law firms do not have an accurate way to determine how much work back-office staff needs to complete and where it comes from. Without the ability to quantify this information, it's impossible to gauge how many tasks are assigned by specific attorneys, departments and offices, and the time it will take to complete the work. Workflow analytics can help to provide this information.

**Who is managing what work and whether that makes sense:**

Without workflow systems, it is difficult to know who is working on what and the status of each task. It is also hard to know on a macro level how much time it takes to complete certain types of tasks and whether the most capable person has been assigned. Conversely, is work that can easily be completed at a lower cost going to the right resource? With analytics, firms can identify how long each task takes and the most efficient resource to manage it based on skill, cost and capacity.

**Whether the firm is efficiently allocating projects:**

With analytics, firms can see at a glance if one staff member is extremely busy while someone else down the hall or in another office is available to take on more work. This type of information allows the firm to seamlessly shift work from staff who are overwhelmed to others who have more capacity.

**Determining if staff are as productive as possible:** The right software will also allow firms to understand which staff can handle work as efficiently as possible. With this type of

insight, firms can assign work to those who are exceptionally good in particular areas. Firms can also provide additional training and support to those who may have challenges completing particular tasks in a timely manner. This type of insight can be especially beneficial to firms looking to specialize or centralize certain functions.

**Determining if there is a better way:** With the right analytics, firms can gain insight for decisions about staffing, resource management, and short- and long-term goals. When administrators and their firms understand how much time is spent on jobs such as word processing, they can decide whether these tasks could be more effectively outsourced or if it makes sense to add more staff to focus on that area.

Still wondering if a workflow system is worth the investment? If so, consider a firm that has 3,000 jobs a month. When just 6 to 10 minutes can be saved per job thanks to a dynamic and thorough system, that system will quickly pay for itself. Additionally, projects that are completed correctly and on time improve overall client service. ■



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Eric Wangler** is President of the North American business unit for BigHand. With more than 15 years of experience in the legal industry, he has grown the North American business and the BigHand customer base significantly. In addition, Wangler led the acquisition of Esquire Innovations (Now BigHand Office) in Temecula, California.

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