VoIP Phone System

7 Things You Can Do to Get the Most Out of Your Law Firm VoIP Phone System

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When it comes to getting the most out of your law firm's VoIP phone system, are you using it to maximize your client relationships, matter management, and business operations?

Well, if all you're doing is taking and making phone calls, you're only using a fraction of the features and services available to you in a modern VoIP phone system. And, to be clear: a modern VoIP phone system begins and ends in the cloud; so, if you're still using a traditional, hardwired phone system: you're paying too much, giving up flexibility, and missing out on valuable functionality and integrations with your other law practice applications.

It is commonly known that the average law firm significantly underutilizes software. Most attorneys are comfortable using the most basic features of a software application. In my experience working with hundreds of law firms, I've found that legal professionals only use about 10% of any given software product's features in their tech stack. That means that those law firms wasting the financial investment made in the software also blatantly ignore the efficiency upgrades that a full-scale implementation would offer. Resistance to change is a primary motivator in technology adoption failure. Progressive law firms must commit to implementing new systems via a comprehensive training protocol and reinforcing the benefits of new systems/software until it becomes the 'new normal.'

While underutilization is typically applied to software tools that attorneys think of immediately, like productivity (email, calendar) software and law practice management software, the fact is, lawyers don't often think of their phone systems as software. But, VoIP systems are more like software than Alexander Graham Bell could ever have imagined. And so, the same line of logic should apply to a modern law firm phone system.

Do you want to know whether you're getting the most out of your law firm VoIP phone system?

If you're accessing the following feature, you're doing it right.

The 7 Killer Features of VoIP Phone Systems for Law Firms

1 | Masking Your Personal Number

Depending on your practice area, you may not want your clients to have your home or personal mobile phone numbers. Scratch that: no lawyer wants her clients to have her personal phone numbers. With traditional phone systems, that is a challenge because you are limited to an office phone number attached to an office phone. If you called or texted your client while you are away from the office, it must be from a discoverable landline or your personal smartphone number.
Not only will it reveal your personal (potentially private) number to your client, it also means that you are having conversations (oral or written) outside of your law firm management system. Without an effective and automatic method for tracking and archiving those conversations, you set yourself up for a malpractice claim that you can't effectively answer. On the other hand, VoIP systems allow you to make and take calls on multiple devices (including your personal smartphone, home computer, or tablet) using your business number without being tethered to the office. You can make calls from any internet-ready device without revealing your personal number to the caller, so long as you dial from the app, not your phone dial pad.

2 | Texting

Text messaging cannot be avoided in the modern law business. Clients demand immediate access and responses to their inquiries. Yet, lawyers are historically challenged to stay in contact with clients. Texting via a VoIP phone system makes it easier to communicate via different devices and platforms while reducing the malpractice risk that caused many attorneys to be reticent about improving their communication strategies. Texting has traditionally been a nightmare for law firms. While clients love to text their attorneys, and lawyers can deliver a quicker response via text, there hasn't been a convenient place to store those communications, making every text thread an ethical and potential malpractice landmine. With a VoIP system, however, text messages are archived. They can be shared with other software applications, like your practice management system, in real-time to create a complete set of client communications. Storing text messages in your integrated VoIP phone and practice management systems helps build a record of all your client communications.

3 | Softphones and Smartphones

Probably the best feature of a VoIP phone system is that literally, any device with a secure web-enabled connection can become a phone. Add your VoIP app to a device, and you can make calls from it. Perhaps a more pedestrian use is the ability to make phone calls outside of the office, using a phone, tablet, or laptop. With the adoption of remote workforce policies in a growing number of law firms and businesses, attorneys need to utilize methods to answer the phone when clients or referral sources call, which does not require a specific location, desk, or traditional handset. And softphone capabilities don't stop there. You can answer and route calls to other firm members (again, regardless of their location) with ease, instantly recognize an inbound caller and have her case records immediately available, take notes, and record time, all from your device.

4 | Speech-to-Text

If you hate listening to long-drawn-out voicemail messages, you're not alone; everybody does. Voicemail is annoying, and you probably wish the caller had just sent a text instead. Well, with VoIP phone systems, voicemail is quickly turned into a text record by transcribing the voice recording, and by now, we know what that means. It can be saved to your practice management system. With Speech-to-Text, you can read your voicemail and get the gist of the conversation before replying – via return phone call, or sending

a text message, all from the same dashboard. This takes call screening to the next level. But, it's not the only speech-to-text recognition tool available via VoIP software. You can make calls, send text messages, draft notes and send emails via voice functionality. With so many options for hands-free communication, you'll be throwing your voice like Edgar Bergen.

5 | Click-to-Call

Imagine turning your desktop or laptop computer into a phone. Now you have Click-to-Call. Using integrated popular legal practice management software applications, Outlook, or Google, every client, opposing counsel, or expert in your contact list is now just a click away. Think of the time you'll save and the convenience…no more number look-up and then dialing. Simply select a contact record and click on the phone icon to make a call. Use your computer's speakers, and even start a video conference with ease. Take notes on your computer while you're speaking, and your VoIP system will automatically track and record the date, time, and duration of the call. In one simple action on your computer or tablet, you've made a call, taken notes, and tracked the call for both matter and billing management. To take Click-to-Call one step further, record the call, store it on your system. You can even have it transcribed. The time and effort you'll save is just the tip of the iceberg.

6 | Call Tracking + Time Tracking

VoIP phone systems are particularly well-equipped for tracking data. Not only can VoIP phone systems track phone calls, voice messages, and text messages – all of that data can be shared with other software programs at the law firm's disposal via integrations. As mentioned above, creating an archive for all client communications is essential for a diligent law firm. But, having that data on hand is also helpful for modern law firms that wish to make better business management decisions by relying on information sets rather than gut reactions or reactive choices. Intimately understanding your communications with your leads, clients, and referrals will help you to improve your law firm's marketing and nurture cycles. But, wait – there's more: tracking call time will also allow you to capture time that is missed in traditional phone system applications because it's so easy to push that data into your time and billing system. That operation directly affects your bottom-line revenue. It also serves as a gateway to more effectively track efficiency metrics, like utilization rate, which is also a significant revenue driver in law firms. Have you ever wondered if you're spending too much time or charging enough for a specific matter or case type? VoIP phone systems can provide a complete record of the time you spend on the phone, enabling you to make informed business decisions.

7 | Data Security

Over the last decade, there has been an increasing need for law firms to better secure client data stored in their technology systems; this has coincided with the rise of cloud software usage by law firms – and that's not a coincidence. At this point, there are local ethics rules, ethics opinions, state laws, and federal laws governing how lawyers (and other business professionals) interact with their customer/client data. The modern lawyer must now be committed to vetting and testing each technology tool she plans to use to determine if it includes the appropriate security features. Now, I know what you're thinking: flexibility of communications, more communication types = more data to protect. And, while that's true, legitimate VoIP providers routinely deliver effective security protocols across all platform options, from encrypted voice communications to encrypted data to secure video conferencing and screen-sharing technology.

Wait, VoIP does video conferencing, too? It sure can.

Calls aren't the only thing you'll miss if you don't optimize your phone systems by adopting a modern, VoIP cloud-based platform.

Just as WordPerfect, Lotus 1-2-3, and flip-phones have given way to Office 365, smartphones, and online conferences, today's modern law businesses must rely on state-of-the-art communication tools to get and keep clients, eliminate malpractice risks, and improve business operations and efficiencies. While change is often unsettling, VoIP systems can be easy to implement and learn when you select a provider that knows and understands lawyers and law firms and is attuned to your operational requirements.

For questions regarding commissions, please call 855-585-2455

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