How lawyers are optimizing cash flow and workflow

By John Lehman

The convenience of paying for your services online goes a long way in fostering satisfaction in your clients. But what’s in it for you? How does an online payment tool help make your workday easier, save you time, or deliver valuable business insights? Here, we’ll dig into both process and operational benefits to see how online payments are being used in successful firms to boost cash flow and save time.

Stop waiting for checks to arrive in the mail

Consider for a moment just how much time is eaten up waiting for your client’s check to arrive in the mail. First, you mail your client your itemized bill, which itself can take as much as a week or more to arrive. Your client then writes their check and sends it through the mail, so add another week on top of that. When you finally get the check in your hands, you’ll then have to take it down to the bank to deposit it (or process it through your phone). All in all, from writing your bill to receiving funds, you’re looking at as much as two to three weeks!

And then, there’s online payments, where this entire process is handled within a few days. In fact, one survey of legal industry professionals found that those who accept payments online get paid 39 percent faster on average. You send your client a payment link, your client can pay it instantly, you get a near-immediate confirmation email when payment is submitted, and the transaction shows as pending on your bank account within seconds.

While reviewing online payment services for lawyers, Glenn Garnes – a retired business trial attorney and founder of Small Business CEO – wrote, “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been on the road, at the courthouse, or out of the office when someone wanted to make a payment; and I delayed my ability to accept it by having to ask them to send a check. I also can’t tell you how many times that check was late or never came in the first place.”

Automate your cash flow

You can make your billing process even simpler by setting up recurring payments with an online payments solution. This is, in effect, like putting your cash flow on autopilot, kicking your feet up, and just watching revenue flow in. Of course, you could also use the time you’re saving on billing towards something more productive, such as working on additional cases or adding new services to your practice. Want to streamline this process further? Include credit card authorization forms in your onboarding paperwork so your clients can consent to automated payments from the get-go.

Let your tech tools work together in tandem

Another big benefit of an online payment platform is that many integrate with the software you already use and love. Rather than having to bounce between multiple browser tabs or software windows, you can keep all of your practice management narrowed down to one program.

Plus, integrated software can often supplement each other with shared data and features, providing you with smarter business insights as well as a more efficient workflow. For example, an integrated payment tool can offer tagging functionality to your invoices to make organizing and tracking your billing easier and help you see precisely where income is coming from. You can also dig into who your top-paying clients are, and maybe look for ways to offer them additional services or reach out to them requesting a referral.

Alleviate your security burden

With high-profile events like the 2019 Capital One breach and more targeted ransomware attacks against law firms, legal professionals and their clients are naturally on edge. But in spite of it all, people are still favoring paying for goods and services electronically. In fact, in a recent survey by TSYS, more than half of respondents said they believe credit or debit is the safest payment type.

One of the greatest perks of using an online payment solution is your clients enter their card information into a secure portal themselves. Their information is then stored within an encrypted card vault protected by your online payments solution, which lets you effectively shift much of the related security burden off of your firm. When comparing vendors, be sure to choose one with PCI Level 1 security, as this represents the highest level of internet security possible.