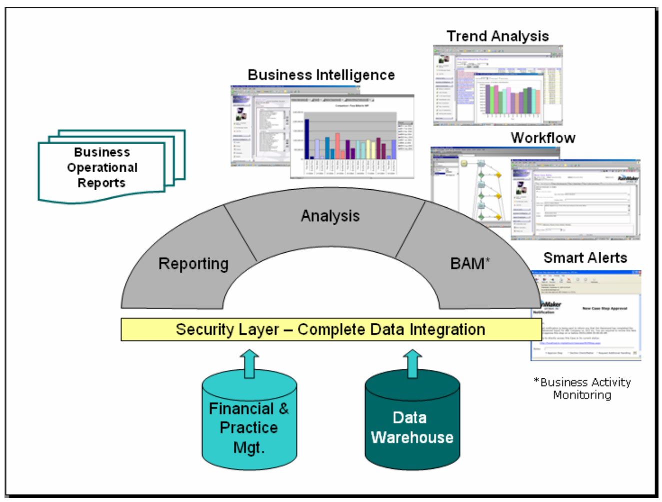
DIY Reporting – How to Get What You Want

By Marcy Fisher, Regional Sales Manager, RainMaker Software, Inc.
www.rainmakerlegal.com

Every day, I talk to firms across the country about their goals and what they would like to accomplish with new software when they are ready to look at a change. Uniformly, at the top of the list for nearly everyone, is ***DIY Reporting (Do It Yourself)*** – having the ability to *easily* query the database and get a response on screen or create a report when asked for information that doesn't exist on most standard reports or exists in pieces over *several* standard reports. And, of course, the requester is always a partner who needs it right NOW and won't have the patience to wait while you scramble.

I've seen what firms do in this situation and all of it takes time. Either you run a combination of data reports and spend hours retyping it into a spreadsheet so you can format it into a more readable style; you download the report to a spreadsheet and spend hours reformatting it; you turn to your IT guru who makes up a SQL query to extract the data into a report writer like Microsoft® Access or into Microsoft® Excel, and then spend hours making it look good; or, you contact your vendor and, after much delay and sometimes considerable expense, have a custom report written.



You may end up with a pretty report, but at the end of the day you're pretty tired and probably pretty frustrated. And the attorney who had to wait while you did all this is pretty annoyed. Not a pretty picture.

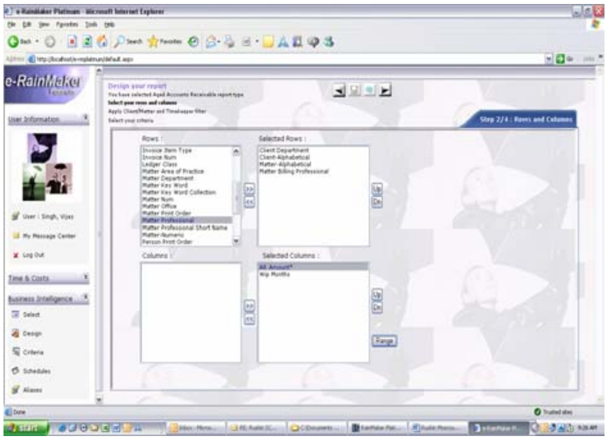
I'd like to show you how RainMaker clients do it.

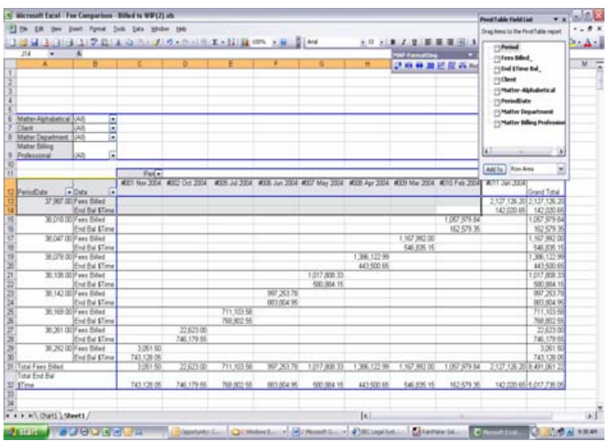
RainMaker Reporting – What You Gain

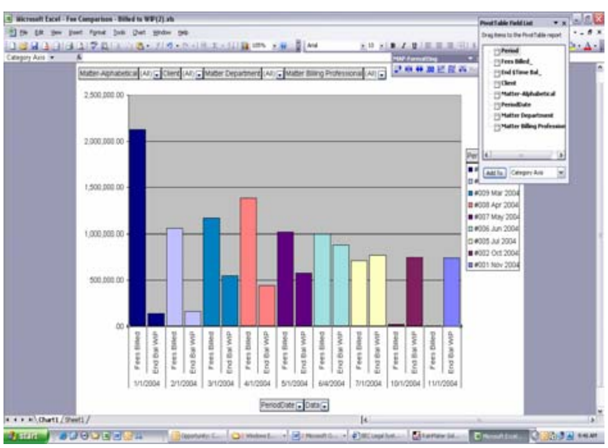
RainMaker reporting includes three types of reports. The first type is the set of standard business operational reports that come with the software and are typically used by the accounting department to verify transaction entries, audit accounts, monitor billings, receipts and trust activity. These reports can be edited by you in an easy report writer, by modifying our templates or creating new versions. Second, for management reporting, the Management Analysis module includes a Business Intelligence report designer which focuses on do-it-yourself report creation for performance, profitability, resource leveraging, trending, billing effectiveness and realization. And third, is the Business Activity Monitor which takes into account workflow processes such as matter entry, receivable collections and proactive "alerts" or email notifications for significant activities or situations. All of our reports offer native output to Microsoft Excel in PivotTables, spreadsheets, or graphs and also to a variety of other formats including HTML, PDF and RTF. In addition, most reports offer easy design, format editing and customization capabilities either through our Management Analysis module, Report Wizards or through ActiveReports.

Do it Yourself Management Analysis

When RainMaker clients are faced with an ad hoc report request they use the Business Intelligence report designer to get quick, attractive answers – either on paper or delivered electronically to the requester. This browser-based application lets you select a report class (prebilling, aged WIP or AR, key collective data, billing and collections, historical data and many others) and point-and-click to choose columns and rows for your report. Columns are named as they would be on your report and not with cryptic field names that bear no resemblance to what you are looking for. For instance, you can choose a *Fee Billing Realization %* column instead of translating from "database-ese" for a column named *FeBiRel_%*. Instead of printing reams of paper, RainMaker users have a choice to send the report to spreadsheets, pivot tables, graphs, the screen *or* printed reports. No need to kill trees just to get the total A/R for one department anymore.







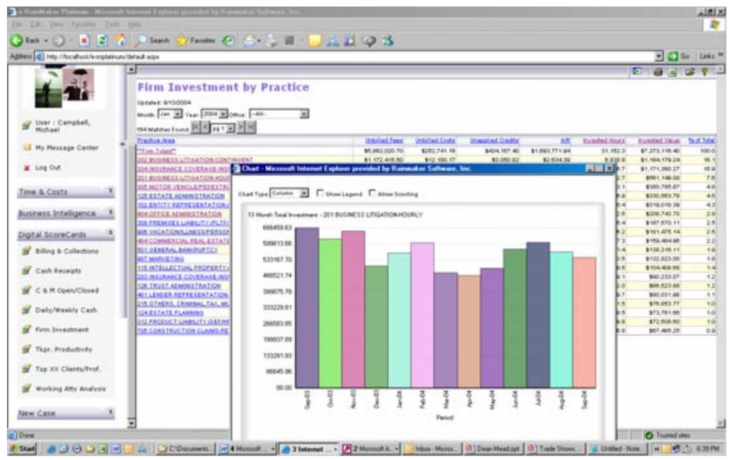
Business Intelligence brings significant flexibility as well - basic data about clients/matters and timekeepers include the ability to summarize by client, timekeeper, departments, practice areas and other categories so you can look at your data from a wide variety of angles. And reports can present high-level summary information or drill-down to additional detail through the native use of pivot tables. Inquiries and report definitions can be saved for later use and may be scheduled to run automatically.

If you just need an answer, and don't need the report behind it, do the query and view the results on screen. Queries may be performed on several classes of groups or categories including clients or client groups, area of law, department, time worked, costs entered, aged unbilled time/costs, fees and costs billed and paid and aged accounts receivables. Data elements include variance (actual amount and %) and realization (actual amounts and %) calculations. Limits and ranges can be applied to narrow down the information to be reviewed, such as by a specific individual or group of clients, timekeepers, aging periods, timeframes or dollar amount. Budget comparisons are available for clients, matters, professionals or timekeepers. Results may be automatically e-mailed to recipients or posted in HTML to the firm's intranet page. And, for standard monthly management reports, you can eliminate the printed report and simply make the reports available as "Favorites" on the e-RainMaker web page.

Pretty fast. Pretty reports. Pretty cool.

Keeping Score with Digital Scorecards

In addition to its reporting capability, RainMaker's Digital Scorecards offer business analytics in an easy-to-use browser interface that can be distributed to the partner desktop and limited by security to only that data necessary to that individual. Scorecards include the following:



- Timekeeper Analysis - Current and YTD hours and values are available for individual working attorneys.
- Working Attorney Analysis - An expanded timekeeper analysis including billing and receipt credit and realization. A 13-month trend analysis graph is also available.
- Billings & Collections - Billing, collections, write-off analysis and realization for a billing attorney with drill-down capability to view clients.
- Cash Receipts - Analyze cash receipts by month at the firm, office, department, attorney type, attorney or client level including 13-month trend analysis. Also shows how cash was applied at the client level, i.e. fees, costs etc.
- Daily/Weekly Cash Analysis - Analyze by day, week or user-specified date range, cash receipts at the firm, office, department, attorney or client level, including 13 month trend analysis. Also shows how cash was applied at the client level, i.e. fees, costs etc.
- Top xx Clients or Professionals - Analyze year to date top xx clients or attorneys based upon billings and receipts.
- Clients and Matters Opened/Closed - Allows the attorney to see new files (clients and matters) that have been opened or closed in any specified date range. Allows the ability to filter by office, department, attorney type and specific attorney.
- Firm Investment - This is defined as an analysis of "we have done the work but have not been paid". Firm Investment is calculated as Unbilled + AR - retainers. This calculation is available as a monthly view for the entire firm, by office and by practice group, with a 13-month trend analysis for practice groups included.

You CAN DIY – RainMaker Can Help!

With the right reporting tools, you CAN do-it-yourself and give your attorneys what they want and need to make informed business decisions. You can help to increase visibility into the key performance metrics that will help your partners identify which business decisions make sense for your firm and where improvement is needed. RainMaker reporting will simplify access to key information, satisfy ad hoc queries fast and easily and give you the flexibility you've been looking for to answer complex questions. And best of all, we're ready when you are!

RainMaker Software, Inc. provides proven, practical and progressive Financial and Practice Management systems designed to help mid-to-large sized law firms and legal departments effectively and profitably manage and grow their business. With more than 36 years of legal-specific development experience, RainMaker has consistently delivered stable and feature-rich, yet easy to use solutions.

For more information regarding RainMaker's products, interested parties can contact the sales department at 1.800.341.4012 x3413 or via email at legalinfo@rainmakerlegal.com.