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Product Review:

RainMaker Software's Business Intelligence Suite

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Founded in 1845, Robinson & Cole LLP is a commercial law firm with more than 200 lawyers in six offices throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York. As with most firms, our time and billing system is critical to daily operations. Vast amounts of information go into the system, but extracting data in a meaningful way was always a struggle. Standard reports were inadequate and our system did not lend itself to on-the-fly customizations. To get the information that we needed in a format that we wanted, we would have to contact our time and billing vendor to create customized reports, which was both expensive and time consuming. Further, we'd often have to run reports at night, because they would slow

down our entire system. We were simply unable to get the critical information that we needed in a practical and timely manner.

When we were looking to upgrade our time and billing system in 2001, we did a comprehensive review of several leading vendors. We evaluated their technologies and spoke with their current customers. After much consideration, we selected RainMaker's Financial Management system. Reputation and customer service were important to us and we had a good rapport with RainMaker. We also liked the flexibility of the software, both in its ability to integrate with our firm's other systems and in reporting. In fact, RainMaker's outstanding reporting capabilities, which are part of the company's Business Intelligence product suite, were a major factor in our decision.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE SUITE

RainMaker's core Business Intelligence software incorporates Lightning, a second-generation data warehousing design, with Thunder, a built-in inquiry and analysis reporting tool for access to pertinent firm information without

requiring custom programming. Built utilizing Microsoft SQL Server 2000 technology, Thunder provides access to the information stored in the Lightning data warehouse product.

First, RainMaker Lightning stores our information in a manner in which it can be easily extracted and manipulated. Then, Thunder allows us to customize the data and fields that we need. Thunder is highly flexible and does not require users to understand complex structures like database tables, logical data joins and programmer-type language. Thunder provides for a variety of output formats, including printed reports, Excel spreadsheets, PivotTables, and PivotGraph, with optional password protection. The reports are easy to run and figure out, and the functionality is great. We're able to create and send new reports almost instantaneously.

Thunder and Lightning enable us to analyze our practice from a business perspective. We can now pull the data that our attorneys and our managing partner need to make informed business decisions. For example, we can

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specify the data to be analyzed based on pre-defined information components, such as clients and matters, timekeepers, offices, departments, unbilled time and costs, accounts receivable, billing and collections, and many more. We can also compare information for various periods or arrange for a specified hierarchical presentation of results. This information can be viewed as a high-level summary or in detail, such as an analysis of performance by task or activity codes associated with time entries.

One of the best features is the ability to attach reports and send them via e-mail, instead of having to print them. We're not yet paperless, but we're trying to move in that direction. Now we can pull a few numbers without wasting hordes of paper. Our attorneys can save these e-mail attachments and print them in part or whole at their convenience. Plus, we can easily send reports to clients electronically, which is often their preferred form of communication.

Rounding out RainMaker's Business Intelligence suite are the Digital Dashboards, a library of business inquiry web tools that run from within Microsoft Outlook for point-and-click access, presentation and dissemination of data. We're just now installing the Digital Dashboards, but are looking forward to our attorneys being able to make on-the-fly decisions based on up to the minute, live information. Our attorneys will be able to customize the different

screens for their own use and will have the ability to zoom in or drill-down on demand. For example, they can have a client on the phone and check whether or not there are outstanding receivables, or they can check their personal productivity against firm goals. Although the Digital Dashboards are intuitive, we plan to hold training sessions in order to draw people in and show them how they can benefit from using the software.

VISUAL BILL DESIGNER

We have also come to find RainMaker's Visual Bill Editor to be an invaluable asset because it mimics the flexibility and intuitiveness of the Business Intelligence tools. The Visual Bill Editor lets us easily design and change invoices by pulling relevant fields and data into a bill format. The best part is the electronic billing functionality, which RainMaker just improved. It's very easy to use, and enables us to create electronic invoices which can be set up to print in a variety of ways, including "normal" looking bills or ASCII format. When it comes to billing, clients seem to want something different, and we're now able to meet their needs.

Overall, we've been pleased with RainMaker's software. Problems have been minimal, and when they do occur, they are responded to swiftly. We're looking forward to the new .NET version that RainMaker is preparing to rollout, because it will make managing the technologies of our six offices much more efficient.

BENEFITS

Collectively, the Business Intelligence suite enables us to effectively manage numerous areas of our practices and grow the business overall. For example, our managing partner now has the data he needs to support the rationale behind decisions such as the hiring of new personnel, the expansion of a practice group or the addition of a certain type of work. We can clearly identify how decisions affect the firm's bottom line (*eg*, if a section is not profitable, why add staff to that section?). Now that we're used to getting a report on almost anything, we're finding more ways to use the system. Our firm has benefited from an increased use of data, improved productivity, greater accountability, process simplification and enhanced customer satisfaction. Today, everything moves faster. Our clients are always looking for information and answers quickly, and we're able to do a better job of that with the help of RainMaker's Business Intelligence tools and Visual Bill Designer. Overall, we're better prepared for the future.



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