



The Top 6 Reasons Why Firms Replace Time and Billing Systems

by Jim Hammond, president, RainMaker Software, Inc.

www.rainmakerlegal.com

Is it time to make the big move? How can you tell if you really need a new system? Finding the right Time and Billing system can be a very stressful experience, especially considering that your firm will most likely have to live with the new system for a very long time. Many administrators are unsure whether they need to switch. What are the road signs to look for in determining if the time is right. Take a look at the top 6 reasons why firms switch systems.

1. **Old – you can't get what you want.** The current system is over 7 years old and just lacks the functionality you need. Maybe you have out grown it, it was just fine when you were a smaller firm. Clients are demanding special billing arrangements and you can't provide them without a lot of manual effort. It seems like the answer to every partner's financial inquiry is "the system doesn't do that". You analyze your business needs and it is real clear you need more than your current system can deliver. It actually will cost you more money to wait, then to switch. Add up current inefficiencies, manual efforts and missed business opportunities. A new system might have a one year return on your investment.
2. **Outdated, in maintenance mode.** Your current system is in maintenance mode, there will be few if any future enhancements to meet your ever-changing needs. You might be getting a little nervous when you see that your system is no longer being sold to new clients. The list of existing clients will only get smaller as other firms bail out. What are your assurances that the vendor will continue to support your product? It may be quite difficult to convert to a new system if all the key people leave your current vendor. As more clients leave your existing vendor, that vendor can no longer afford the same level of support, it is a downward spiral.
3. **You need to become more efficient and reduce costs.** Older systems do not take advantage of newer and more efficient ways of doing things. Your current system lacks workflow for new matter opening. With a more modern system you can redeploy staff to other critical chores instead of performing redundant data entry and unnecessary manual tasks.
4. **You need better reports and financial modeling tools, not custom programming.** Standard canned-type reports and inquiry screens can only handle so much, you need more. You need to analyze where your business is going, what are the key elements to profitability, why are some areas of law not measuring up. Only newer systems provide tools such as Business Intelligence and Digital Scorecards. In the old days everything was an expensive custom report. With today's data cube technology you can easily analyze all your T&B information in a split second. Providing answers not excuses.
5. **You need real integration.** Your firm can no longer live with the total lack of integration between your front-office and back-office applications. You need robust capabilities in marketing, docketing and collections just as much as in Time and Billing. You need to be able to search for terrorists during a conflicts search, not just routine client names. Attorneys should be able to work from within Outlook to handle everything from their contacts to new calendar dates and have Outlook update the front-office database.
6. **An upgrade is too expensive, besides you get poor support.** Your current vendor has an upgrade offer but it is just too expensive. You need a rich set of features but you don't feel

you should pay mega-firm type price. Besides, you just aren't delighted with the support you get from your vendor. What was the right decision 8 years ago, may not be the right decision today. There are other vendors that now have outstanding technology and products built for firms your size. Some of these vendors make client satisfaction a priority, not an after-thought.

Summary

Choosing a new Time and Billing system need not be a difficult task, there are clearly defined differences between products and costs. One vendor has become arrogant in their pricing and has also lost their cutting edge. Another has gone through continual ownership changes and has lost their focus. Some are only for smaller firms. In any case do your homework, there will always be one that is just right for your firm.