

Leveraging Technology to Implement the 11 Habits of Successful Law Firms

Sy Justin Sommer, Esq.

Director of Litigation Success - LEAP Legal Software

Jacqui Bettio

Implementation Consultant & Legal Accounts Specialist – Jayva Consulting

Presenter Backgrounds

- Sy J. Sommer – Director of Litigation at LEAP Legal Software
 - 2008 – 2010 - Attended Fordham Law School; Graduated with JD in May 2010
 - 2010 – 2013 - Practiced Family Law at Davidoff Hutcher & Citron LLP in New York, NY
 - 2013 – 2018 – Practiced Contested Foreclosure Law at JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA in Brooklyn, NY
 - 2018 – Present – Joined LEAP Legal Software. Currently LEAP Director of Litigation
- Jacqui Bettio – Implementation Consultant and Legal Accounts Specialist at Jayva Consulting
 - 1993 – 1996 – Senior Paralegal & Office Administrator at a California Family Law Firm
 - 1996 – 2007 – Various senior executive management roles in Australian professional services firms
 - 2006 – 2014 – Associate Director of Administration at Goodman Law, Australia
 - 2014 – 2022 – Senior Executive Company Secretary for various Australian and American law firms
 - 2021 – Present – Managing Director of Infinite Business Solutions, in partnership with Jayva

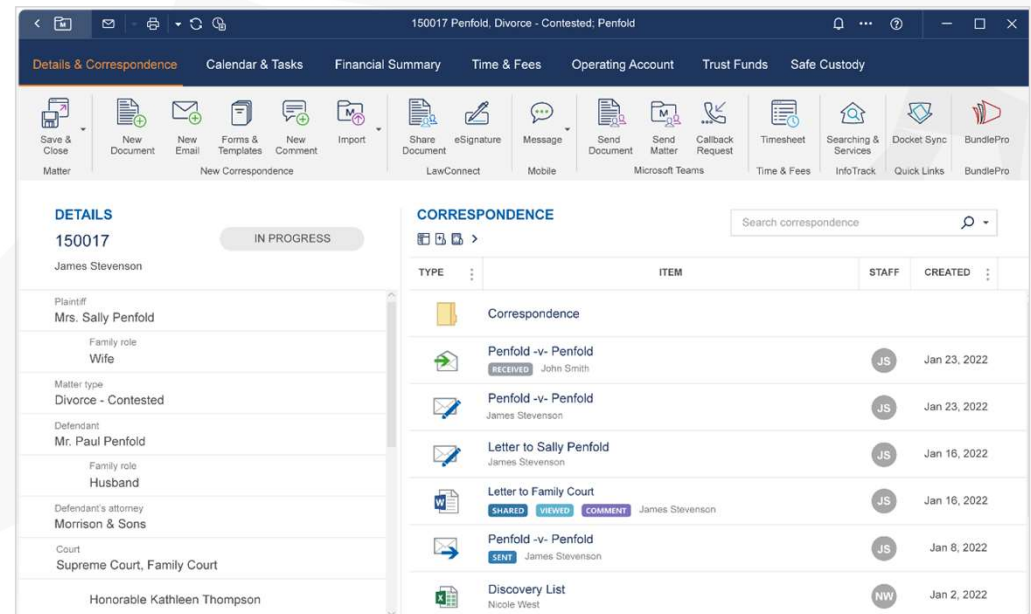
The 11 Habits of Successful Law Firms

"Success is a few simple disciplines, practiced every day; while failure is simply a few errors in judgment, repeated every day ... Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying basic fundamentals." – Jim Rohn

1. Decide to be efficient;
2. Be an early adopter in the use of technology;
3. Enjoy practicing law;
4. Employ smart people and treat them very well;
5. Select the areas of law you enjoy and focus on them;
6. Dedicate time to building the firm as a business;
7. Understand the finances of your firm.
8. Confront the challenge of getting paid to solve 'problems';
9. Have standard processes and procedures in place for all matters;
10. Make compliance a natural consequence of running your firm well; and
11. Become an expert in the client experience.

Habit #1 – Decide to be efficient

- Rule 1.3 – “A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.”
- Small firms must be efficient. This can be counter-intuitive due to hourly billing structures.
- Organization leads to efficiencies.
- Software can help firms become highly organized.
- Cloud software is compliant with RPCs. (See e.g., NJ Ethics Opinion 701).
- Automate production of common documents.
- Use contemporaneous time-tracking systems.



Habit #3 – Enjoy practicing law

- Avoid practicing outside your areas of expertise.
- Comment [3] to Rule 1.3 - “A lawyer’s workload must be controlled so that each matter can be handled competently.”
- Rule 1.16 – Withdraw if physical or mental condition materially impacts ability to represent the client.
- Happy clients = Happier lawyer = Be cognizant of client experience.
- Implement technologies that make it easier for you to manage the firm, lowering your stress and increasing your enjoyment.



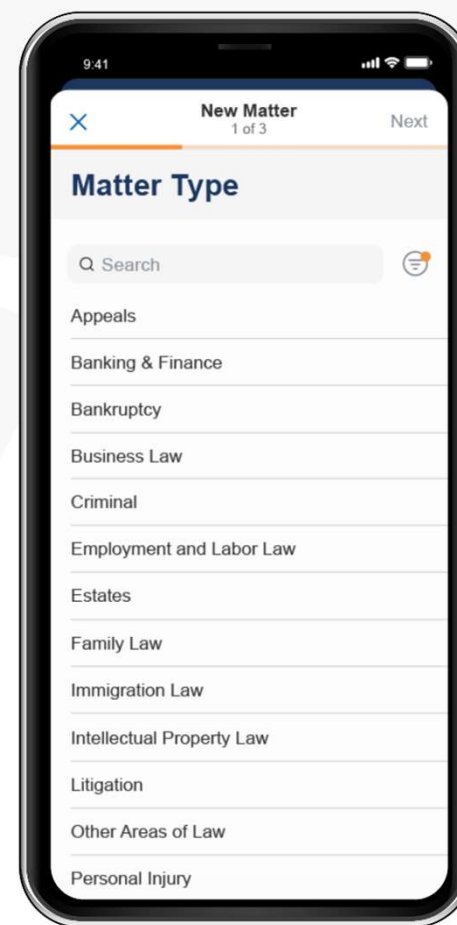
Habit #4 – Employ smart people and treat them very well

- Attract the best employees by adopting technologies that will enable them to work efficiently and flexibly.
- Re: Remote Work - ABA Formal Opinion 495 – No violation of Rule 5.5 by working remotely from a jurisdiction where a lawyer is not licensed so long as the lawyer does not hold themselves out as licensed to practice in that jurisdiction.
- Rule 5.3 – Managing attorneys are responsible for non-lawyer staff members' compliance with ethics rules.



Habit #5 - Select the areas of law you enjoy and focus on them

- It can be risky to be overly specialized - strike the right balance by specializing in a few complimentary areas of law.
- Successful law firms:
 - Develop deep expertise in defined areas of law;
 - Select areas of law that fit comfortably together; and
 - Ensure marketing efforts are directed to emphasize areas of expertise.
- NJ Rule 7.4 –Lawyer may communicate that they do or don't practice in certain fields. A lawyer may not state that they've been recognized as a specialist in a particular field unless certification has been granted by the NJ Court or an organization recognized by the ABA.



Habit #6 – Dedicate time to building the firm as a business

- Lawyers can be vulnerable to failing to adequately manage the business of their firms.
- Know your numbers. Record and measure everything. Implement software that provides deep data insights.
- Marketing matters. Be cognizant of how you sell your services (website, social media, e-mail marketing, etc.).
- Attorney competence requirements may encompass basic knowledge of major social media platforms.
- Self-care is important! Carve out time for peoples' personal lives.



Habit #7 – Understand the finances of your firm

- Understand the finances of your firm! To grow, understanding the sources of capital and the stock of available time and resources and effectively managing them is critical.
- Software can ease the burden of financial management through automated time tracking, bulk and matter-level invoicing, a trust fund management system, and more.
- Software can also provide reporting that enables you to make the best decisions. What matters produce the greatest returns? Are staff using time efficiently and hitting budgeted billing goals?

Fee Earner Overview

Start Date: 09/01/2020 | End Date: 09/30/2020 | Staff Type: Staff Responsible | Staff: James Stevenson

Sections: All Items Selected | View

Select Top:

- Top Clients
- Top Fees Billed
- Top Exposure
- Matters by Matter Type
- Fees Current Financial Year vs Last Financial Year by Matter (responsible)
- Fees Performance Summary FYTD by Matter
- Fees Current Financial Year vs Last Financial Year for Staff (ment Bal.)
- Fees Performance Summary FYTD recorded for Staff

Current Matters	Current Clients	Total Exposure *Inc. Tax
5	5	\$19,924.35

New Matters:1 for Reporting Period: 09/01/2020 to 09/30/2020

Matter	Client	Description	Staff Responsible	Cost Estimate
201676	Mr. Taylor Cranston	Divorce	James Stevenson	-

Top 10 Clients for Reporting Period: 09/01/2020 to 09/30/2020 *Amounts Include Tax

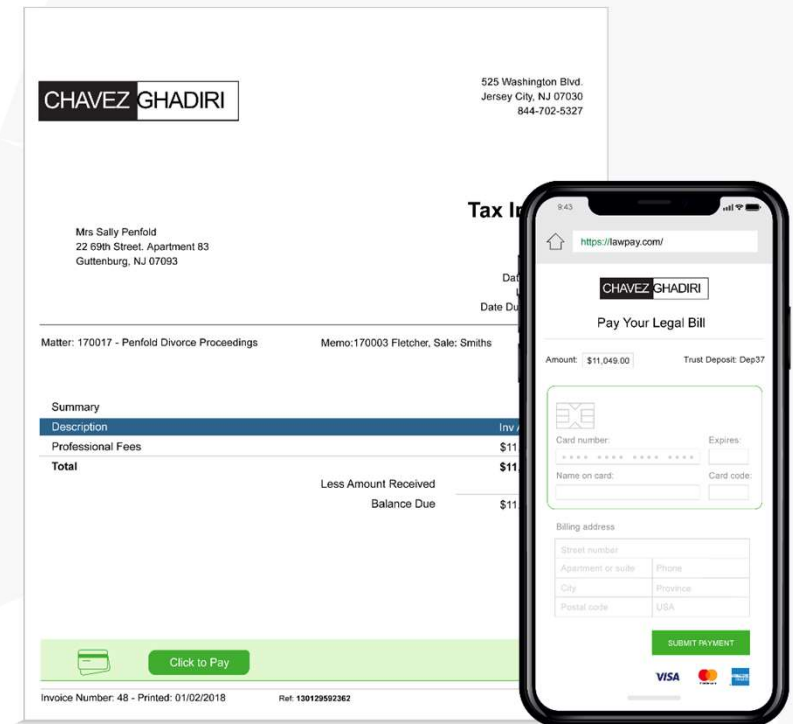
Client Name	No. of Matters	Total Fees Billed
Mr. Kenneth James Giffey	1	\$6,600.00
Mrs. Sally Penfold	1	\$3,567.00
Mr. Victor Manning	1	\$3,000.00
Mr. Joe MacRobert	1	\$600.00
Mr. Taylor Cranston	1	480.00
Total:	5	\$14,247.00

Top 10 Fees Billed for Reporting Period: 09/01/2020 to 09/30/2020

Matter	Client	Description	Fee
201676	Mr. Taylor Cranston	Divorce	\$480.00

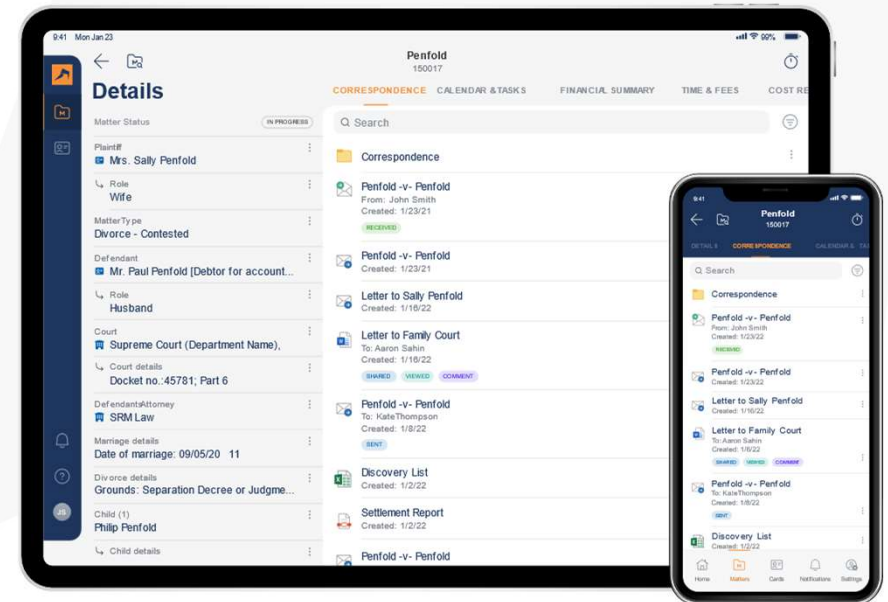
Habit #8 – Confront the challenges of getting paid to solve ‘problems’

- Successful firms confront the challenges of getting paid head on. Some ways to do this include:
 - Ensuring there is a clear retainer for every matter;
 - Billing on a regular and predictable cycle;
 - Making it easy for clients to make payments online;
 - If estimates change, communicating this to the client clearly.
- ABA Rule 1.5 – “The scope of the representation and the basis or rate of the fee and expenses ... shall be communicated to the client, preferably in writing...” –
 - Best practice is to always use written retainers!



Habit #9 – Have standard processes and procedures in place for all matters

- Use software to establish standardized workflows, document templates, and organizational systems.
- Following standard procedures using software facilitates consistency and smooth onboarding.
- ABA Formal Opinion 477R – Lawyers should use secure document delivery/encryption when transmitting sensitive information to remain compliant with attorneys' duties of competence and confidentiality.
- Embrace the digital file. If you are using a cloud system, your files are available wherever you have an internet connection and cannot be lost.



Habit #10 – Make compliance a natural consequence of running your firm well

- Successful law firms use modern systems to maintain compliance with Rules of Professional Responsibility.
- Rule 1.15 requires that client funds are held in trust. Firms should be able to generate trust account activity reports and reconciliation records which can be produced in the event of an audit.
- Matter financial statements should be available for production to your client or the court.
- Deadline management is crucial. Missed deadlines can cause malpractice claims.

Account: Default Trust Account Morrison & Sons

BANK RECONCILIATION

NEW ADDITION ALL

ADDITIONS

TRANSITIONS

DATE	DESCRIPTION	WITHDRAWAL	DEPOSIT
2/12/2020	PayE265 SRM Law 221 River Street Hoboken, NJ 07030	\$85.00	-
4/06/2020	REC946 Mrs. S Penfold 34 E 42nd Street, New York, NY 10012	-	\$2,500.00
5/06/2020	Pay318 Wells Fargo 463 Broadway New York, NY 10013	\$150.00	-
6/06/2020	Dep137 Bank Deposit	\$100,000.00	-
6/06/2020	Rec872 Mr. D Henry 2 Tide Street Orlando, FL 32809	-	\$5,000.00

Bank

02/27/2021
Statements Date

\$1,450,069.01
Statements Balance

\$1,459,569.01
Calculated Balance

VARIANCE \$0.00

Cashbook

\$1,891,369.01
System Cashbook

\$1,891,369.01
Reconciled Cashbook

VARIANCE \$0.00

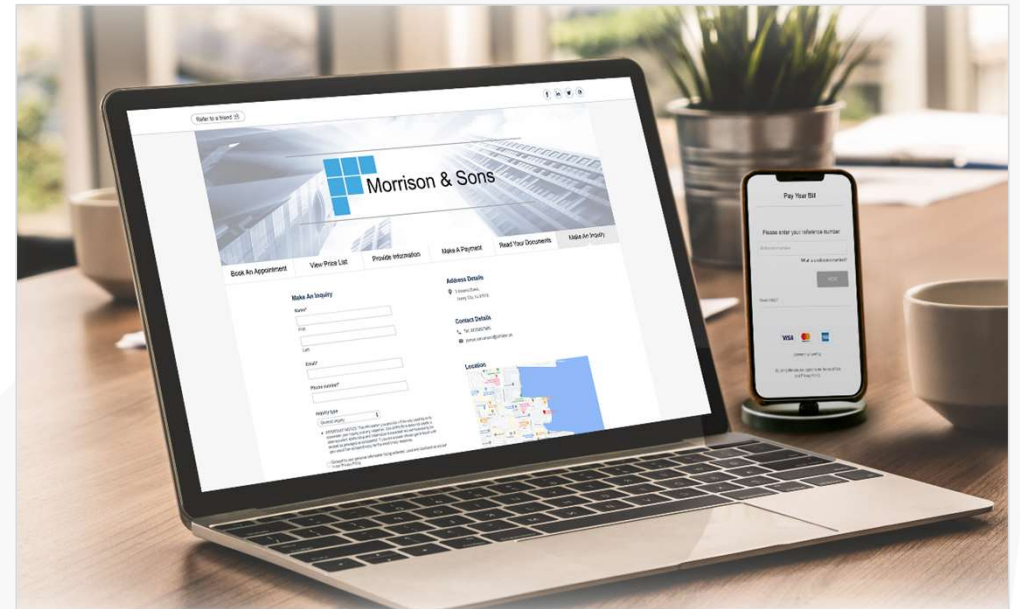
Additions (1) \$430,300.00
Last Reconciled Date 02/27/2021

SAVE FOR LATER

RECONCILE

Habit #11 – Become an expert in client experience

- Embed great customer service throughout your culture. Constantly seek to improve the client experience.
- Communication is the foundation of a positive customer experience.
- Implementing the technologies that simplify the handling of legal matters from the client's perspective.
- Today's client expects to be able to pay online and to have access to their case documents and matter financials online at any time = Provide an online client portal!



Conclusion & Contact Information

- Questions?
- Contact Us!
 - Sy.Sommer@leap.us
 - (201) 744-8435
 - Learn more about LEAP and book a demonstration at www.leap.us
 - Jacqui.Bettio@jayvaglobal.com
 - (888) 563-9342
 - Learn about how Jayva can assist your law firm at www.jayvaglobal.com

