

PROLAW CASE STUDY

STEMPEL BENNETT
CLAMAN & HOCHBERG, P.C.

SIGNIFICANT ROI AND ENHANCED CLIENT SERVICE WITH PROLAW



THOMSON REUTERS™

STEMPEL BENNETT CLAMAN & HOCHBERG, P.C.

SIGNIFICANT ROI AND ENHANCED CLIENT SERVICE WITH PROLAW

MAINTAINING FIRM REPUTATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Since 1995, Stempel Bennett Claman & Hochberg has built a 12-attorney boutique real estate firm with seasoned lawyers who have stellar reputations in the New York City real estate market. While the firm represents some of the city's largest property owners, developers and operators, it also handles smaller transactions related to property and ownership issues. With such a wide range of service offerings, Stempel Bennett partners recognize that the firm must leverage technology to keep the firm running smoothly and efficiently for superior client service.

The firm employs a "just in time" technology philosophy that looks at both the cost/benefit analysis and the likelihood of staff adoption. "We know that technology will only be effective if our staff actually uses it. Our approach to new technology is to bring it on intelligently, not wastefully," explains Steven Hochberg, Managing Partner. Hochberg and his Technology Committee initially evaluated ProLaw® in 1996 as an upgrade to its billing and accounting system. But once they saw how ProLaw's single integrated solution provided everything needed to organize and automate a law practice, they were convinced it was well worth the investment.

.....
"Having a centralized database for financial and matter-related data is a huge benefit. The only thing we have to sell is our time and ProLaw enables us to produce more work in less time and therefore service our clients more efficiently while remaining profitable."

.....
Steven Hochberg
Managing Partner
.....

SAVING TIME AND MONEY

The firm's bottom line was immediately affected by ProLaw. Within 18 months of the ProLaw integration, the firm was able to replace a full-time employee. More billing responsibilities shifted to the firm's paralegals, and attorneys were granted access to all client financial information. Hochberg estimates that the firm saves a minimum of \$50K per year on the reduced accounting staff. "Saving \$50K for the past 12 years adds up to \$600K! The ROI for ProLaw is very tangible for us," adds Hochberg. In addition, the team's billing protocol and diligent time entry allows it to quickly turn around invoices each month to maintain positive cash flow.

"The back office functions are integral to our firm. I am happy to say that I take those functions for granted at this point. The financial system alone has saved our firm a lot of money," says Hochberg.

Besides consolidating its financial processes, firm management wanted to centralize its practice management functions so attorneys can more effectively manage their time. With ProLaw, any attorney can look up a matter and instantly understand its status, which saves tremendous amounts of time. "Having a centralized database for financial and matter-related data is a huge benefit. The only thing we have to sell is our time, and ProLaw enables us to produce more work in less time and therefore service our clients more efficiently while remaining profitable," says Hochberg.

In addition to managing soft costs, ProLaw easily integrates with hard cost recovery systems such as photocopying, faxing and postage to capture expenses, which can be easily tagged and added to a client invoice. ProLaw's straightforward reporting capabilities have had an unexpected impact on Stempel Bennett's storage costs. Space is at a premium in New York, and old paper invoices take up a lot of shelf space in on-site and off-site storage units. Based on a ProLaw report that displayed closed matters with zero balances, the firm was able to identify and destroy old invoices, thereby reducing overall storage costs.

STEMPEL BENNETT CLAMAN & HOCHBERG, P.C.

Headquartered in New York City, Stempel Bennett is a boutique real estate law firm offering a sophisticated level of legal services and advice to clients.

MISSION

To integrate financial and practice management features through a centralized database.

WHY PROLAW?

ProLaw was the first and remains the legal industry's leading fully-integrated software suite to automate the practice and manage the business of law.

BENEFITS

- Cost and time savings
- Better informed business decisions
- Timely proactive and reactive client service

“We have to deliver a quality product quickly and ProLaw offers powerful tools to allow us to effectively compete on every level.”

Steven Hochberg

MAKING MORE INFORMED BUSINESS DECISIONS

“In our market, we compete against the small two-to-three attorney firm, all the way up to the large 500-plus attorney firm. We have to deliver a quality product quickly, and ProLaw offers powerful tools to allow us to effectively compete on every level,” states Hochberg.

Firm management uses ProLaw data to help them determine fee structure. Stempel Bennett offers fixed-fee pricing on certain transactions such as real estate tax abatement applications or condominium-offering plans. ProLaw reporting capabilities provide reports so firm partners can analyze cost-to-fee ratios, and management can make proactive decisions when billing and fees are not aligned. “Real-time data helps me assess what is happening: either our fee is too low; our staff is taking too much time on the task; or we don’t have the right person assigned to the task. Having this level of detail at our fingertips allows us to make adjustments along the way,” says Hochberg.

Keeping a close eye on billing allows firm management to make informed staffing decisions. For example, when reports revealed that an attorney was taking too much time on a certain fixed-fee task, they trained a paralegal to handle the task at a lower bill rate. ProLaw also helps the firm staff to determine the value of an associate in-training’s work for a particular matter, so that time may be realized in a client invoice.

Time and billing reports also allow management to track how much time attorneys are entering, how effective they are on managing their time, and how much business they are generating. Having accurate, readily-available information helps determine bonus compensation and other rewards.

“It is extremely important for a firm our size to evaluate the cost of providing our services, and constantly compare it to how much the market will bear in order to stay competitive,” explains Hochberg.

PROVIDING STELLAR CLIENT SERVICE

“Getting back to the client with the right information in the shortest time possible is a cornerstone for our firm. ProLaw provides the tools that allow us to be more attentive to our clients’ needs,” says Hochberg.

The firm’s central contact database is an extremely useful tool for maintaining details and historical information on related parties to a matter. Staff is able to easily search on contacts and understand the firm’s relationship with other lawyers and third parties. This historical information enables staff to provide better counsel in certain situations. For example, a client wanted to lease a small amount of space in a short period of time. As he was on the phone, Hochberg discovered that he had previously worked with the property landlord’s attorney, and knew he could quickly “knock this one out quickly” based on past dealings with that lawyer.

Likewise, attorneys are able to look up financial information without leaving their desks. They have access to the complete billing history for a matter or client and can pull up the exact image of any invoice. “It is not inconceivable that a client may call up and have a question on their bill. It is a huge benefit to be able to pull up their entire billing file while still on the phone and directly address any issues they may have,” says Hochberg. To gain this customer service edge, the firm insists that all attorneys know how to use ProLaw—not just their support staff.

“Getting back to the client with the right information in the shortest time possible is a cornerstone for our firm. ProLaw provides the tools that allow us to be more attentive to our clients’ needs.”

Steven Hochberg

PAYING IT FORWARD

Hochberg often recommends ProLaw to other law and professional services firms, and in fact he knows of several firms that have followed suit with implementing the system. “I am a major advocate of ProLaw because I know how it has saved our firm time and money,” concludes Hochberg.

For more information about ProLaw, please call **(800) 977-6529** or visit **prolaw.com**.