

PROLAW CASE STUDY

ARTHUR CHAPMAN
KETTERING SMETAK
& PIKALA, P.A.

ENABLING A COLLABORATIVE, CONNECTED FIRM
CULTURE WITH PROLAW



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Kellie Klein
Paralegal and ProLaw Administrator

Arthur Chapman Kettering Smetak & Pikala, P.A. has been specializing in insurance defense litigation since 1974. Today it has approximately 50 lawyers in two offices in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Hudson, Wisconsin handling both large and small disputes, including personal injury, workers’ compensation injury, insurance fraud, and product liability claims.

The firm’s approach to technology is pragmatic: Solutions need to enable lawyers to deliver leading-edge legal expertise but be easy to use. It has been using ProLaw®, the comprehensive business management solution from Thomson Reuters Elite, for the last 10 years to help connect its entire organization in a streamlined and efficient way.

Arthur Chapman uses ProLaw—which combines case and matter management as well as time entry, billing, and accounting capabilities within a single integrated solution—for all of the firm’s front-office requirements.

An important feature for the firm is its portability. The nature of Arthur Chapman’s business means that lawyers are often in court, so it was important for them to be able to take digital documents with them using the “check-out” feature without jeopardizing internal version control.

Next year the firm plans to take this to the next level by rolling out an online portal from which documents can be accessed and edited both in the office and remotely. They also plan to implement mobile accessibility to help users access ProLaw in the field more easily from any device.

Another key benefit of ProLaw is its centralized docketing capability. It allows anyone in the firm to access diaries and calendars and assign tasks appropriately to specific individuals, without having to check permissions first.

CUSTOMIZATION IS KEY

Kellie Klein, paralegal and ProLaw administrator at Arthur Chapman, is responsible for overseeing the firm’s use and optimization of the solution. For her, the ability to customize ProLaw is key.

For example, Klein customizes user-defined “tabs” for different practice areas, in order to carefully control the input and tracking of data or case/matter information and to filter searches. The tabs required to organize information relating to auto accidents will be very different than those for workplace injury compensation claims, for instance, making this a highly value-adding feature.

Not only does tab customization make it more efficient for lawyers to organize and access information on current and historical matters, it also enables the marketing department and individual business teams to respond faster and more accurately to prospective new clients on the scope and cost of work. They can search for the information they need to price work centrally, rather than requiring data to be gathered individually from different lawyers.

Being able to customize rule sets across document templates or dockets is another major plus to ensure uniformity and standardization and to avoid the potential for errors. For instance, the docketing system and its associated sets of rules are configured on the basis of critical deadlines across different jurisdictions. Alerts can be customized too, in terms of when and how they are sent to lawyers—critical in the firm’s specific line of business where missed deadlines can result in malpractice lawsuits.

ARTHUR CHAPMAN KETTERING SMETAK & PIKALA, P.A.

An insurance litigation specialist with offices in Minnesota and Wisconsin, Arthur Chapman Kettering Smetak & Pikala, P.A. employs approximately 50 lawyers and has been in business for 45 years. Its broad litigation and liability practice covers both general and highly specific areas of expertise from employment law and professional liability to trucking law and fire litigation.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

To streamline working processes and make them more consistent via centralized firm-wide docketing and the creation of customized organizational tabs and rule sets. Also, to increase portability of documents to enable them to be accessed and worked on remotely.

WHY PROLAW?

ProLaw offered the breadth and depth of customization the firm was looking for to create a solution that exactly fit its needs. The system offered portability for lawyers working out of the office while simultaneously creating a centralized system.

BENEFITS

- Fully customizable for firm, client, and matter needs
- Empowers lawyers on the go while centralizing systems
- Creates consistency and encourages collaboration across the firm
- Increases efficiency and reinforces brand identity
- Supported by an excellent online education resource

Arthur Chapman is now developing different sets of rules for different clients, so that users know exactly which form or template to use to meet a client's unique requirements, whether it's to fit in with their preferences or to comply with court rules. This gives lawyers comfort that everything is set up to meet clients' needs and also enables documents to be created or dockets to be completed by other users if need be.

"Customization was definitely a determining factor in the choice of ProLaw," says Klein. "Once you know how to do it, it's easy, and it makes users get more on board with the product."

"The scope for customization in ProLaw is endless. There are so many opportunities to make it fit your specific needs," Klein adds. However, customization is centralized within Arthur Chapman, so that individuals cannot make their own changes to the system—vital to maintain that all-important consistency and oversight.

OPTIMIZATION VIA ONLINE EDUCATION

Klein uses most of the various features and functionality of ProLaw in her role, but says she is always finding something new.

She regularly attends user conferences for ProLaw so she can learn more about its various capabilities and get one-to-one help and advice from Elite employees. Klein also finds the online education platform invaluable to help her and the firm get the best out of the solution.

This is where Klein finds out about upcoming release information or can view videos on how to utilize new features and functionality. She distributes "what's new" training videos to colleagues so they can access them in their own time.

She also uses the online education content in both new user and ongoing refresher training on different aspects of the ProLaw system. The training helps users understand how the solution works, before creating personalized training to suit individual or team needs.

This approach helps ensure that all users are kept up to date on evolving functionality as well as being competent and consistent in their everyday use of ProLaw.

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Kellie Klein

INTERNAL TRANSFORMATION

When it came to implementing ProLaw initially, according to Klein, "once we could demonstrate the robust nature of ProLaw and what it could do for our firm, it made a ton of lightbulbs go off in people's heads."

The firm's lawyers, paralegals, and legal administrative assistants have become more comfortable with ProLaw and aware of its various benefits. The organizational culture has been transformed, becoming far more interconnected in its ways of working.

Klein explains, "ProLaw has helped to create a very collaborative platform across the firm. Whereas before we were very team-based, now because ProLaw allows for anyone to step in and assist on or have access to any kind of case, there's a lot more firm-wide interaction."

Processes have become more streamlined, and everything has become aligned with the Arthur Chapman brand. Being able to customize ProLaw to the firm's needs has helped users understand exactly how tools can help them. Users have embraced the solution. They can see that the tools are there to help them become more efficient by automating certain elements, so they can focus on the job of practicing law.

Klein adds that ProLaw is now integral to the firm. "We've brought it so much into our culture as our main case management system as well as a docketing warehouse. We would be at a real disadvantage without it."

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

