

Answering Service

A July 2011 discussion on SoloSez, the email listserv for general practice, solo and small firm lawyers

Anyone here recommend an answering service? I'm considering answeringservicecare.com. Anyone familiar with them?

I, like many others here, use, and have been very happy with, Ruby Receptionist.

<http://www.callruby.com> Contact Diana Stepleton for a free trial period at Diana@callruby.com.

Deb Matthews, Virginia

I've been using Ruby Receptionist for about a month and a half. Freaking love 'em. All the operators are professional and friendly. I especially love that you can ask them to make calls on your behalf which is great when I'm in court and that one needy client starts blowing my phone up. I let Ruby land on that grenade!

Matter of fact I like them so much I'm about to write a column on virtual offices for TechnoLawyer in a month or so, and Ruby will be one of the services mentioned. I even love em so much I'm about to affiliate with them on my blog. They'll be the first ever ad on my blog!

Clark V. Stewart, Alabama

Clark and other Ruby lovers,

Can you give me a sense of your call plan and what a normal month costs you, compared to what you THOUGHT it might cost you? I'm a family law solo and my phones are usually pretty mellow - but the price jump from 100 minutes to 500 stops me in my tracks - that's a big portion of my overhead (how lucky am I to be able to say that? anyhow...)

Thanks!

Ann Vetter-Hansen, Washington

Try it. There is no ball and chain contract. See how it works for you.

Deb Matthews

I spend anywhere between \$300 and \$500 per month on Ruby. I'd say we're a fairly typical two-person firm with normal call volume. Our bill would be lower if I was a solo.

I got into a Twitter-debate the other day about Ruby's costs. There is one thing I couldn't say because of the 140-character limit...

A typical interruption costs me about six minutes. There is the time it takes to get up to speed on the interruption, plus the time it takes to get my head back to where it was before I was interrupted. I think I'm pretty typical in that regard. So, a true solo with no assistant loses a tenth of an hour each time the phone rings. Or, if they ignore the phone, they lose a client-service opportunity, which places them at a disadvantage compared to others whose phone are answered by a live person.

To me, the cost of Ruby is incredibly easy to justify.

Cheers,

David Allen Hiersekorn, California

I would easily fall into the 209 plan. True solo with lighter call volume. The real benefit is that they're trained to ask if my callers are current clients or potential clients. If I don't answer the call I'll get a text message stating a PC called. Most PCs like it when I call right back. This happened today and I have an appointment with said PC tomorrow. Couple that with the iPhone app and Ruby is extremely easy to justify.

Clark V. Stewart

Diana may want to chime in, but I'm not positive that telemarketers count toward minutes, and they do a hell of a job screening them. A lot of times my phone will ring but they won't put a call through. I have to check my iPhone app to see what's up and it'll show some telemarketer that they screened. Awesome!

Clark V. Stewart

I believe solicitors do count against our Ruby minutes. But they usually get them off the line quickly, and it's well worth the expense to keep me from being distracted by them.

Ruby rounds to half minute increments.

I'm a happy Ruby customer. I have a crazy high call volume, but Ruby only handles overflow now. I'm on the \$349 plan, and I go a little over some months.

As Deb said, try it. You have nothing to lose. The free trial really is free, and you get a better feel for how they work, what it will truly cost you, etc.

Andrew Flusche, Virginia

[Solosezzer Deb Matthews arranged for another subscriber to receive 3 months' complimentary service from Ruby Receptionists.]

Three cheers for Deb!

Andrew Flusche

I was using Ruby, but I have now switched to a more extensive phone system. I am happier with the phone system. It screens calls, it tells me if it is the court or potential client or current client. It transcribes messages for files -it sends messages to blackberry and my computer. I can click on the phone number in my computer and it calls it. An extensive caller ID -- It sends call to cell - transfers calls to cell and back to the phone system. It does about 50 other things that I am still learning about as my business grows. It direct calls to the right place and person in the office depending if I am in court or not and it does this automatically as long as I have it set up correctly-- and wait for it ----- my phone bill did not go up - I was able to save the money on the receptionist - in house or ask Ruby. Better yet I don't have to deal with Verizon anymore - my third party provider does.

Most importantly my clients have stated they are much happier. I enjoyed using Ruby, but my clients really like speaking to someone in my office and prefer leaving a message on a voicemail if I am not there.

The only bad side was it took a week to get it working the way I wanted -- but once I had it going -- and I can change it as the business changes -- so if I add an employee I can change it -- I can add a directory etc.

Rinky S. Parwani, Florida

What phone system is this?

Michael Constanzo

Please share the name of this program. Thanks!

Ryan C. Young, Virginia

Rinky...inquiring minds want to know! ;)

Best wishes,

Jason Beahm, California