

Annual “What Did You Do to Cut Expenses?” Question

It's that time of year again.....

What did you do to trim expenses, cut overhead and create efficiencies in your office in 2013?

This was more of a spending year for me. I needed a new file cabinet and shelving, changed out some office equipment (nothing huge there), and revamped my website.

However, as a result of my car accident last year, I did save money on gas and wear/tear on the vehicle by handling more AAA hearings by telephone. Driving around Long Island is not fun on the lower back anymore.

I ordered my business and iolta checks through Costco, saved about 40%.

Michael A. Blake, Connecticut

I left an AV firm (on friendly terms) and cut my overhead by 90% overnight.

As an added benefit, I think I'm a much more effective lawyer and person not having to worry about grinding out fees just to pay the overhead.

PS - okay, I actually did that in 2006..

This year, I switched to Clio over renewing Timeslips , dropped a way too expensive offsite backup for Carbonite, and cut out Dex for print advertising. Yellow Book will probably go next.

A new phone system is also saving about 25%.

Merry Christmas

James P. Moriarty, Iowa

Implemented new "blow through every other toll booth" policy when driving and implemented new exercise regime of jumping over subway turnstiles.

Oh, yeah, canceled HBO. What a waste!

Trippe Fried

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I moved into a new office space cutting my overhead by about \$250 per month. Am looking for more ways to cut back next year though.....and better ways to collect my money!

Letisha Luecking Orlet, Illinois

I've tried to do more hearings telephonically and/or confirm hearings were still on before leaving my office, which cut down on gas.

But, my latest, greatest love after Entertainment books are: Cardpool.com. If I know that I need to make a purchase at say Office Depot, I use my Costco AmEx card to order a gift card at a discount from Cardpool.com, where gift cards are often discounted over 20%! So I get dollars back on my AmEx AND save by using the discounted card! I've ordered enough cards to purchase a new refrigerator (since the purchase was over 1k, the cards were sent registered) and amounts as low as \$25, including gasoline cards. The cards usually arrive w/in 3 days of order.

I also made some difficult choices regarding staff and let unproductive people go. It was so hard for me, but it had to be done. I also quit providing so many free lunches for my staff.

Oh, and I also took advantage of my Office Depot discount through the ABA, making some purchases at more than 30% discount!

Vicki Levy Eskin, Florida

Google Voice and Eliminated my landline: I converted my phone to Google Voice so that it rings my cell phone and my partner's cell phone. Also screens the calls as Law Firm, so we do not get confused with personal/business calls.

Internet Advertising: Website, Newsletter, Blogging, Google Alerts, regular blogging (still a work in progress)

File Management in the Cloud: Box.com in lieu of the \$9.99 for dropbox. Set up automation with Google Drive so that there is a complete backup of all my lawfirm files on Google Drive.

Shared Office space with no contract commitment

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Document templates and automation through Adobe Indesign, Word, and scripting commands for excel

Mint.com to monitor my regular purchases such as taxis, restaurants, and overall spending by category.

-Gia
Gianna Scatchell, Illinois

Canceled Comcast fax line, saved \$40.00 monthly. I used OBI to send faxes for free (will cost as of May 2014) and myfax.com to send/receive while in the office.

Negotiated a reduction to my Pitney Bowes account to half of the price. I called them seriously intended to move to Stamps.com. they wanted to keep me as a long-time customer, they gave me a deal for two years.

Got rid of Mozi backup. I have too many backups and I would have to be the most unluckiest guy in the world for them to fail all at once.

I stopped paying advertisers, too. I will focus more on marketing my own next year.

I did not renew unnecessary 1880 minded bar associations. They are not good for solos, at least the Phila Bar in my view.

I am working on getting a new phone system to cut even more.

It's easier to cut when you have been doing this for a while. You know what you need and don't. You know what clients appreciate and don't.

Rod Alcidonis, Pennsylvania

Leticia: You just reminded me of a few others--

Stripe and square to integrate with online payment; Wave Apps for Accounting; Zen Cash for collections management.

Gianna Scatchell

I also, sadly, began to cut back on my pro bono work - or at least have resolved to take on no more than one new pro bono case per week. I've withdrawn from unproductive slow or no pay cases. I cut down my case load (still a work in progress) to focus on more productive cases.

I had more frequent group meetings with staff to group similar tasks to become more "automated" in getting standard matters done. Grouping tasks really has streamlined the process, moving cases faster and leading to higher revenue production. I try to assign tasks to those who handle certain tasks faster than

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others and have had more staff training sessions to increase understanding and ability to handle higher level projects. This has really led to cost cuts as I have been able to cut down a bit on outsourcing some of the tasks that others outside the office were handling.

Vicki Levy Eskin

Tip for people who have cut down on the need to drive. Our insurance company cut the bill for my car in half when we contacted them to ask about it. Since I drive 7K or fewer miles each year they gave us the discount

Donna R. Ireland, Not a lawyer, New Jersey

I paid off all my business debt so I am not paying any finance fees, that is nice!

On a personal note, my family moved to a new house that is LESS EXPENSIVE. It is (too us) nicer and in a wonderful neighborhood, but farther from downtown and a very high ranked junior high (which we had no interest in anyways) so we are better off and paying less.

Apparently purchasing a less expensive house is so uncommon, the lender asked my husband to write a letter explaining why we were "buying down in value".

We didn't even know what to say. "We wanted to buy more mink coats? We plan on quitting our jobs and starting a business selling paperclip animals?"

I ended up telling my husband to write "We want to live closer to Rob Robertson" and the loan got granted right away. (JK -- we still had to fill out 8,024 pieces of paper and give away the crystals in our inner ear to be financed.)

Amy Clark Kleinpeter, Texas

Work your solosez connections.

Gene Thompson, Texas

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Dropped my advertising from one (of our 3!) yellow pages books.

Found a much more efficient contract paralegal. (This saved my sanity as well as \$\$.)

BUT, I wiped out all the savings by getting a new research subscription, a leased copy machine (MUCH less headache!), and buying some furniture and a tablet. Oh, well.

Cynthia Hannah-White, Hawaii

I dropped most of my organization memberships. Sorry ABA, it just wasn't affordable anymore.

Emilie Fairbanks, District of Columbia

The ABA has a special dues rate for those experiencing financial difficult.

Lawyers who are experiencing financial hardship may apply for a discounted annual ABA dues rate of \$100 and a one-time discounted annual Section or Division dues rate of \$5 (for participating specialty groups). Apply or contact us. - See more at:
http://www.americanbar.org/membership/dues_eligibility/dues_discounts_payment_plans.html#sthash.5H7NjICm.dpuf

How does \$50 sound if you're unemployed?

See http://www.americanbar.org/membership/dues_eligibility/dues_discounts_payment_plans.html

Your word is good enough. No proof needed.

jennifer j. rose, Mexico

The ABA does offer a discounted rate for solos and also a financial hardship rate if you were interested in trying to keep the ABA membership.

Naomi C. Fujimoto, Hawaii

The ABA rate for solos is 1/2 the regular rate.

Deb Matthews, Virginia

Changed firms.

Michael Sweeney
