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### What Software Is Needed For Starting A Law Firm?

I'm a member of the Law Student Division and the GP|Solo section as well. I'm currently in a course called Small Firm Practice and our group is giving a presentation on software used in small firms. I was wondering if any of you could offer some insight into the software that you use, the good and the bad. I have been looking through the archives and found some good information, but would like an overall picture of how much software we will need.

Matt Schultz, Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Software choices are going to be dependent on practice type.

I have a general practice that focuses on residential real estate, small business counsel, divorce, and a smattering of wills, traffic, etc.

For real estate --> Softpro's ProForm and ProTrust For accounting --> Quickbooks Professional OS --> W2k Server and W2k client Mail --> Mozilla Thunderbird (its free) Mail server --> MailEnable (its free)

Greg DeWitt Law, Carrboro, North Carolina

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The question you are asking is somewhat of a "Ford/Chevrolet" question -- which is better? Software for legal practices has changed a LOT in the last few years. Two of the most popular programs are PCLaw and TimeMatters. (Since TimeMatters just purchased PCLaw, are they going to change the name to PCMatters or TimeLaw?) There are others, but each seems to have its own cult lovers and haters. Lots of firms are using QuickBooks and Peachtree Accounting in addition to practice management packages.

You new guys are probably going to be the first real generation of technically sophisticated attorneys who are going to completely revolutionize practice software usage -- again. Go for it.

Mike Phillips, Cary, North Carolina

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Basics -- word processing. Adobe acrobat. Mail program -- Mozilla Thunderbird. Internet browser -- Mozilla, Netscape.

Legal -- time keeping like Time Matters. Billing?

Accounting -- Quickbooks or something to manage firm finances, checking accts, etc.



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And those document prep s/w programs like Hot Docs or Legal Solutions for those who handle lots of court pleadings. I use Hot Docs with the California court forms for family law and probate matters. Plus any special s/w for your practice... maybe a Wills drafting system.

Jennifer N. Sawday, Long Beach, California

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CaseSoft for litigation management. The BEST.

CaseMap and TextMap for organizing deposition testimony, documents, issues, witnesses, -- in short everything to do with litigation.

TimeMap and NoteMap are GREAT tools. Have limited purpose, but do them extremely well. TimeMap makes creating time lines so easy that ANYONE can do it. And timelines can become VERY important not only in presenting a case, but in understanding it. It is amazing what a time line can expose in a case.

Steve Terrell, Indianapolis, Indiana

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If you plan to run a paperless office, Adobe Acrobat or PaperPort is a must. (Also refer to our own David L. Masters' book, "The Lawyer's Guide to Adobe Acrobat.")

Susan K. Ashabraner

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Ross L. Kodner, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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