

Jones, Skelton & Hochuli Transforms Its Billing Process with eCop®

A Growing Management Problem

Jones, Skelton & Hochuli, P.L.C. (JS&H) is a successful, 75-attorney, litigation firm in Phoenix, Arizona. The firm produces an average of 2,400 bills each month and approximately 80% of its clients provide the firm with billing and submission guidelines for those bills. “We have over 600 pages of billing guideline documents. I create a summary of each set, which is stored in our document management system for everyone to review, and also recap key items in our billing system. But the volume has grown so much, it’s become a major headache to try to keep track of all the various requirements,” said Debby Johnson, billing coordinator at JS&H.

Training timekeepers, ensuring compliance with clients’ billing guidelines before submitting bills, and dealing with subsequent rejections and appeals turned into a full-time workload for Johnson. She noted, “It was taking hours for us to look for billing rule violations in just one attorney’s drafts. Every month I would think to myself, ‘someone needs to find a way to automate this process.’”

“eCop is saving us a tremendous amount of time in our efforts to comply with clients’ billing guidelines. Our attorneys love it so much – they’ve started to call me Santa Claus.”

Debby Johnson, billing coordinator, Jones Skelton & Hochuli, P.L.C.

A Plea for Help

Johnson eventually turned to Omega, the firm’s time and billing system vendor for over 20 years. She met with several members of Omega’s development team to describe and demonstrate the burden being placed upon the firm, and she was sure JS&H wasn’t alone. Omega agreed and, with Johnson’s and other firms’ input, set about defining the scope and functionality of what became eCop.

A Paradigm Shift

eCop transforms the billing process by shifting the firm’s focus from reviewing bills at the end of a billing period to reviewing entries when they are first put into the system. eCop notifies users of potential problems while they are entering time and costs and provides assistance on how to correct the entries based on each client’s specific set of guidelines. Johnson defined rules in eCop to flag entries for such things as block billing, disallowed phrasing, vague descriptions, unapproved timekeepers, incorrect task or activity codes, and travel time and costs requiring pre-approval.

“Before eCop, we spent a huge amount of time training our timekeepers and sending them reminders about adhering to client billing rules,” says Johnson. “eCop is a great training tool. It just sits quietly in the background and then waves its hand when it spots trouble. We’re seeing good rules compliance now by all of our timekeepers because they really understand the value in addressing issues up front.”

Transformation with Benefits

Now that JS&H’s billing guideline review process has been significantly automated by using eCop, Johnson estimates that the firm is easily saving one week per month in combined review time. Rejections of submitted bills have been dramatically reduced, which has decreased the time spent on the appeals process. The bottom line is that, with eCop, firms are able to submit bills much faster, get paid faster, and collect more of what they bill.

Omega

Omega is a privately held Scottsdale-based company that provides mid-to-large size law firms an integrated financial and practice management software suite that sets the standard for return on investment, system performance and service. Since 1975, Omega has been solving critical business issues for law firms, improving their profitability, productivity and efficiency.