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Product Review

Omega Legal: Zero to ROI in 30 Days

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For a new firm having limited experience with the inner workings of time and billing systems, the inclination would be to find a system offering the most features for the least amount of money. In fact, that's the route our consultant suggested we take. But what we really wanted was a system that supported our most critical business needs: accurate and timely billing with single-click review of fees and hours billed and realized.

Wargo & French LLP is a newly formed 13-attorney firm in Atlanta, GA. Our practice areas include complex commercial litigation, intellectual property litigation, class action litigation, labor and employment law and general corporate law. While the firm itself was formed in 2003, most of our members have practiced with each other for the majority of their careers. Similarly, the vast majority of the firm's clients have been

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served by members of Wargo & French for years and in many instances for over a decade. Many of these clients are Fortune 100 companies, allowing the firm to enjoy a practice that is truly national in scope. At least half of the litigation matters handled by the firm at any given time are pending outside Georgia. Indeed, during the past 12 months alone, the firm's attorneys have actively litigated matters in no fewer than 20 states. Furthermore, members of the firm are licensed to practice in California, Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee and Texas.

All of our partners have been with AmLaw 100 law firms. As such, we understand the benefits derived from top-of-the-line technologies and had certain expectations regarding our new firm's infrastructure. We also place a premium on a system being "user friendly." For example, we use one provider for all of our telecommunications needs. Our faxes are received directly into individual computers, and our phone system transmits voice mails directly into our computers for easy transfer of calls. We have one call to make for service, and there's no finger pointing. We had similar expectations of

our time and billing system.

Billing needs are at the forefront of every attorney's mind, especially in starting a new firm. What we expect from a system is the ability to look at one screen and see our billable hours, nonbillable hours and number of hours billed over a period of time. This may sound basic, but our first time and billing system did not have this functionality.

We hired a consultant to help us select a time and billing system when we first set up the firm. After just a few weeks, it was clear that the chosen system couldn't cut it. It was not nearly robust enough. We didn't have confidence in the billing — the system didn't have enough functionality and it wasn't intuitive. For example, we could enter time for a client, but we had difficulty viewing anything else we billed for that day or even what we had billed already for that same client from inception to date. We didn't trust the data, and we were concerned about our ability to get bills out. This was a grave concern as accuracy and timeliness in billing is both expected from our clients and critical to our success.

Several of the partners, including myself, had used Omega Legal at

a former law firm and liked its service and functionality. Accordingly, we put Omega Legal on the short list. We also looked at another system that had a great user interface. We at first put that system at the top of the list because we had recently used that system and could implement it with little training. However, it wasn't an integrated system in that it lacked billing and accounting capability. Entering time would be easy enough, but we would have to go through another vendor for the accounting and billing capability.

We decided on Omega Legal because it was fully integrated with accounting and billing capability and more of a turnkey solution. It also provided true double entry accounting. In addition, I knew that the other attorneys in the firm would be comfortable with Omega because of their previous experience with the system. Furthermore, Omega Legal had the extensive reporting capabilities that we were looking for.

Omega Legal is the difference between night and day from our previous system. It is sophisticated, user friendly and provides us the data we require to effectively run our firm. I can quickly get answers to questions I literally ask myself every day: "What is the number of hours billed today?" "This month?" "What are our nonbillable hours and the number of hours billed for a client over a period of time?" In

one or two mouse clicks, I can extract the information I need, from hours billed to detailed A/R history, to fees billed and paid by a client from inception to date. Omega Legal reports provide me with all of that information and more. Integrity in billing systems is the only way to benchmark how you're doing as a firm. Omega Legal's billing system gives us that.

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Our clients are sophisticated, and our monthly billings reflect the complexity of the cases we handle. We cannot afford to make a mistake on our bills. We also cannot afford to take a lot of time to generate bills. It is critical to our practice to have our bills correct and out the door in a timely fashion. Our time and billing system also needs to be user-friendly and intuitive and cannot require a lot of training time. Omega's interactive online training through Omega University was

a perfect fit. Our staff took the courses they needed to get bills done. Omega was flexible in structuring the courses we needed, when we needed them and no on-site training was required. Only the attorneys who had never used Omega Legal before required training, and Omega Legal's intuitive user interface made that simple. All the attorneys are now entering their own time. Now that the immediate needs that arise from starting a firm are over, the staff will continue to take Omega University courses to complete their training.

From the time we decided to implement Omega Legal, it took only 3.5 weeks until we were able to mail our first invoices. We received our first client payment, from a first-time billed client, within the next week. Frankly, I didn't think Omega's staff could get us up and running as quickly as they said they could, but they met their commitment. The responsiveness of Omega's in-house staff and their dedication to the process enabled us to get our bills out in an expeditious timeframe.

The first client payment check? It alone paid for our Omega Legal system. Now that's a quick ROI.



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