CASE STUDY:

Better Timekeepers, Better Results.

How Attorneys at Bernstein Shur Became Rockstar Timekeepers.

For many firms, timekeeping is a sore subject. Attorneys hate doing it because many of the existing processes and technology in place add complexity to an already hectic day. Yet, timekeeping cannot be ignored because its accuracy drives financial performance, client satisfaction and attorney productivity. In this case study, we talk with Kat Joyce, Shareholder at Bernstein Shur, about her experience with iTimekeep. We'll explore her relationship with technology, frustrations in reconstructive time entry and how iTimekeep transformed her ability to practice contemporaneous time entry.

iTimekeep

Aderant

Challenges

For Kat Joyce, Partner at Bernstein Shur, her timekeeping habits were not just a problem for the firm, they were a problem for her.

Like most attorneys, Joyce regarded timekeeping as a form of drudgery, "checking the box" so that bills can be sent. Joyce says that timekeeping was her "most hated task, always at the bottom of the pile." For years, Joyce kept time by scribbling on a notepad or scraps of paper. At the end of the week, she would spend a few hours reconstructing her time by reviewing her stack of somewhat-cryptic notes on what she had worked on. She used her calendar and email to fill in the blanks.

Joyce had concerns over her reconstructive time entry practices and how it impacted the accuracy of her time entries. "If I am unsure about my estimate, I'm not going to over bill my client. Therefore, I would continually underestimate – and lose money," Joyce said.

Revenue loss caused by time leakage is certainly a concern, but the issue of accuracy in time entries had an even wider scope. This lack of accuracy in time entry meant that Joyce was unable to generate accurate baselines for common tasks (i.e., how long it should take to write a memo). This left her seeking meaningful information to share with the client about how much her services cost.

Furthermore, Joyce had recently taken on a management role at the firm and was becoming in tune to the role that timekeeping accuracy plays in the overall health of a firm. "When you're trying to run a profitable business, you have to keep your time accurately so that you can understand financial performance. Even more, it is important to understand and analyze whether you're providing value to the clients," she said.

As a manager, she was also worried about the strain on the firm's staff that resulted from attorneys putting off their time entries. "When timekeeping is delayed, that means the accounting staff is tasked with calling you and reminding you. You're wasting all these firm resources to avoid a task that you have to do, but hate. It weighs on you. You're always fighting against it. It's always in the back of your mind. There's even more guilt than the basic guilt of trying to be a good parent and a good lawyer at the same time," Joyce shared.

With a newfound focus on timekeeping accuracy, Joyce downloaded a free time tracking app that she had come across in the App Store. While this provided her with some convenience, she found the user experience to be too complex to add tremendous value. "It was a little awkward and it didn't work as easily, but I'd already wrapped my head around the fact that mobile time entry was going to be the way of the future here for me. I trained myself on that, but I just used its most basic features. It was just a first step," said Joyce.

How iTimekeep Helped Bernstein Shur Embrace Contemporaneous Time Entry

Although Joyce bought in to the value of contemporaneous time entry, she was still skeptical when the firm announced that it was rolling out iTimekeep. After all, she was no stranger to technology that promised benefits to the user, but failed to deliver. "I have a very tenuous relationship with technology. We don't always jive. I think that attorneys have heard way too many times that something that is really geared to making the firm's life easier will be easier for them. I think there's this sense of impending doom whenever anyone comes out of IT and says, 'I have some new software for you.' 'No! I don't want it!' is the typical response from attorneys. There's this general resistance to new technologies because time and time again, the software, doesn't work the way it's supposed to, or it takes a huge amount of training in order to really take full advantage of it," said Joyce.

The iTimekeep experience was remarkably different, however. After a 5-minute training session, Joyce realized that iTimekeep was an app that could actually add value. "It was very intuitive and easy to use. All the excuses that I'd come up with about why timekeeping is hard and a pain in the neck; too many steps – were all gone. All the information I needed was right at my fingertips. I could find the client. I could find the matter. Timekeeping was suddenly effortless. I didn't have to work for it," Joyce said.

Now that Joyce had access to a solution that made contemporaneous time entry doable, she could begin to experience the benefits of recording accurate time entries.

Results, Return on Investment and Future Plans

As Joyce continued to use iTimekeep, she was pleased with the ability to account for her time. "iTimekeep allows for efficiency in timekeeping for people who are really on the move, and in and out of a lot of meetings. It's not as if attorneys today are sitting at their desk, so the old system isn't realistic. The law industry is changing, and we're trying to figure out how to stay profitable in a system where there's huge pressure, internally and externally, to be efficient."

"One of the ways that we really understand and capture and communicate with our clients about value is actually capturing an accurate picture of our time. If we don't do that, then our business doesn't have the ability to change and transform in this market place because we don't even know what our baseline is. As a member of a firm, providing that accurate information, we should all feel a strong sense of obligation about that," Joyce continued.

With iTimekeep, Joyce has been able to recover at least one additional hour per day. That's more than 250 additional hours each year – a considerable impact on revenue when you multiply this number by the number of iTimekeep users at the firm.

In addition to preventing time leakage, Joyce has saved time that would have otherwise been devoted to reconstructive time entry, approximately two hours per week. It seems that most attorneys would appreciate an extra 104 hours each year, especially if they are freed from the frustration of reconstructive time entry.

Joyce added, "Having a tool that is truly easy to use made all of the difference. Part of my former hatred of timekeeping is that I spend most of my time in meetings or on the road. I'm not at my desk to enter my time in real time. Now I can enter it on my phone. If I'm walking into a meeting, I literally press two buttons on my phone. I dictate, 'Meeting regarding fill in the blank,' hit start, and that was all it took for me. My whole life has changed for the better," she said.

iTimekeep Has Improved Attorneys' Velocity and the Firm Has Become Contemporaneous

Prior to implementing iTimekeep, the average time velocity (the time in number of days that it takes attorneys to enter their time after task completion) was more than three days. An average velocity of three days was not acceptable for a firm looking to become contemporaneous. Currently, for the attorneys at the firm using iTimekeep, the average velocity is 0.7 days. This transformation is nothing short of remarkable!

When it comes to contemporaneous time entry, only 30% of the timecards were entered in the system contemporaneously prior to iTimekeep. With iTimekeep, 86% of timecards are entered contemporaneously. This represents a 185% increase in contemporaneous time entry at the firm.

Bernstein Shur Continues its Commitment to Create Better Timekeepers

These remarkable results brought about at Bernstein Shur are the result of the firm's leadership and their relentless commitment to improve their time entry practices. The firm's management immediately realized that by providing their attorneys with the right tools, they would remove any roadblocks to time entry and enable attorney time entry to become contemporaneous.

Chief Operating Officer, Julie Boehme, along with other executives at the firm understand the importance of time entry, and how accurate and prompt time entry benefits the firm. Improving time entry practices leads to better financial results and better relationships with clients.

Bernstein Shur is committed to implementing innovative technology that makes attorneys' lives easier, such as mobile and everywhere time entry that works the way attorneys work.