



CASE STUDY:

How Severson & Werson Drives Compliance with Contemporaneous Time Entry

California law firm struggled to get timekeepers to enter their time – until they took a new approach to time entry.

The Challenge

The culture at Severson & Werson isn't policy driven. The firm operates under very few rules, and until recently had no formal time entry policy in place.

While a handful of attorneys at the firm dutifully entered their time daily, most did not. In fact, most attorneys' time entry was submitted 30 days after the work was completed. Timekeeping simply wasn't a priority for Severson's 120 attorneys managing aggressive case loads. Given the lag between action and entry, the firm's management suspected that the firm was missing out on billable hours that weren't being recorded. After all, how accurate can a time sheet be when a busy attorney is riding on the recollection of work completed over a month before?

"We've always felt that we had too many time keepers that are not keeping their time on a daily basis. In fact, many attorneys weren't entering their time weekly, including several chronic cases who entered their entire time after the month had ended," said Ron Manual, the firm's CFO.

So, a time entry policy it would be. The firm implemented a rule that all time must be entered by 6 AM the second business day of the following month. As with any cultural change, the new rule was met with resistance. Attorneys at all levels within the firm dug in their heels.

Leadership at Severson knew that if they wanted their new time entry policy to work, they would have to find an easier way for attorneys to enter their time. Their current solutions included manual or remote entry into their time and billing system. Partners had the option of enlisting administrative support, while associates were expected to complete it themselves. Neither option allowed for contemporaneous time entry, and both methods were clunky and time-intensive, which only worked against the firm's new policy.

"We thought if we had easier ways for attorneys to enter their time, they would be more likely to enter it sooner after the task was completed," said Manuel.



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How Attorneys at Severson Went From “I’m Too Busy” to “This is Easy”

What Severson did next was telling of their ultimate success. Severson’s approach to implementing their new time entry policy was not to fight the culture, but rather to support it. Instead of spending time and energy enforcing their time entry policy, they focused on finding the answer to the following question: what will make it easier (and thus more likely) for attorneys to enter their time remotely?

Keeping in mind that the firm’s attorneys are constantly on the go, attorneys needed the ability to enter their time remotely. Smart phone usage at the firm was high, especially among younger tech-savvy attorneys. A mobile time entry solution that would allow attorneys to use their iPhone or Android devices to enter their time contemporaneously quickly became the clear solution to the firm’s time entry challenges.

Severson & Werson uses Juris for their time and billing system. iTimekeep is the only mobile time entry application that integrates with Juris, which played a major role in the firm’s decision to move forward with iTimekeep. However, that’s not the only reason that Severson chose iTimekeep.

Attorneys at the firm were already relying heavily on their mobile devices to do their work. A few months prior to implementing iTimekeep, the firm had purchased smart phones for any attorneys that wanted them. Therefore, most of the firm was already using mobile devices, which make iTimekeep easier to implement. Since most of the firm is comprised of iPhone users, attorneys were able to take advantage of iTimekeep’s ability to enter time via voice to text. This is an appealing option for more seasoned attorneys who are accustomed to using dictation devices.

As part of the implementation process, Severson provided training for its attorneys. Manuel noted, however, that the training was minimal because iTimekeep is “straightforward and easy to use.”

While there are certainly a few attorneys that fail to enter their time according to the firm’s policy, many attorneys have embraced contemporaneous time entry. The reason? It’s now easy for attorneys to enter their time. In fact, iTimekeep provides the least painful means of time entry, making it a no-brainer for the attorneys using it.

Contemporaneous Time Entry Benefits More Than Attorneys

In addition to compliance, Severson has experienced other benefits. The billing department, for example, spends less time making corrections to time entries and billable hours. This increase in accuracy of time entered is a common benefit of contemporaneous time entry. After all, if you are keeping track of your time as you work, you are much more likely to have an accurate sense of how much time a task took compared to reconstructive methods, which are ultimately a rough estimate.

“iTimekeep pays off for anyone who’s using it,” said Manuel. “If the attorney is regularly using iTimekeep, it can’t help but be a net benefit to the firm. You don’t have to capture much time to break even on the cost of investing in iTimekeep.”

Severson continues to embrace contemporaneous time entry as part of their culture. New employees are given the option to use iTimekeep during their orientation at the firm, along with other benefits such as a 401(k).

Why Severson Chose iTimekeep

“We certainly did not choose iTimekeep because we liked the flashy new technology. It’s only because it’s practical and financially beneficial to the firm.”

Well said, sir. Thank you for doing business with us.



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