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*From
the Oct. 2006 Review of Practice Management Systems*

Time Matters

with Billing Matters Plus 7 from LexisNexis encases the entire business process, with timekeeping, customer relations, billings, employee scheduling, project management, communications, research tools and document management. With three business series, small and midsize accounting and legal firms are well served, though this product can also be adopted by other professional service businesses, as well.

Ease of Use/Flexibility — 5 Stars

The accounting version exhibits a few key differences from its legal cousin. Both versions operate with similar interfaces, incorporating a taskbar for fast access to business processes. Analogous to tax and accounting firm engagements, LexisNexis provides case management for law firms. Terminology can be selected so that interfaces meet the definitions that your firm most often uses. Setup is extremely fast, which includes integration to some pre-installed products. Security settings can be customized as new users are entered, and inheritance from like-users is allowed.

Not to understate the complexity of the software, Time Matters is an intuitive product that feels welcoming. To make the product more navigable, menus are broken out by task/subject, the taskbar provides fast access to the most commonly used tools, and the Navigator gives access by process-type. Users are not initially confronted with reminders of all the things they haven't done yet (or worse, done wrong). However, options exist to do just that with Alerts, Watches,

and Todos with priority ordering. Wizards can assist with setup and new-item

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case and billing, thus providing for the needs of both firm service and train in clients.

Scalability/Stability — 5 Stars

Time Matters can be installed as either a stand-alone workstation or on a network, making the product fully scalable for small tax and accounting offices to large firms. The LexisNexis research tools are some of the highest rated on the market, and stability has not been a problem with the research site, nor the database. Problems related to scalability that have been brought up by readers in the past are most often associated with growing pains and not giving forethought to rapid expansion. Learn from previous users: Plan well, and you will be rewarded; don't plan, and you may be punished. Time Matters is an excellent choice for firms that have identified available features that they would like to grow into, such as document management and group communication.

Productivity Tools/Features — 5 Stars

An abundance of productivity tools are available in the Time Matters and Billing Matters products. The primary component is contact management, wherein access to all information regarding a particular contact (or client) can be found. In the legal version, case/matter management is provided. Because communication and correspondence records are vital to smooth handling of clients, LexisNexis incorporates an e-mail application, messaging system, and documenting of physical mail and phone calls. Frances Molinari, CPA, of Molinari Oswald LLC, states that one of the most beneficial aspects of the software is that "it has streamlined our ability to manage our firm. It is a program that all can use and eliminates the need for multiple programs. It also allows us to keep one database of contacts with all their contact info. No duplicates."

Also, recognizing the importance of connectivity while traveling, remote time can be entered on all major portable platforms (PocketPC, Blackberry and Palm).

Billing features have also been added to the portable platform. A separate hosted

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Molinari also appreciates features built into the billing process. “From a billing perspective, I like the fact that you can bill differently for each engagement, i.e. flat fee no detail or hourly, but also maintain a client-level AR,” he said. “This allows us to set up each engagement and forget it. Each engagement carries with it ALL the important info you need for billing. This includes what the bill will look like, how the engagement will be billed, how the fees will be allocated (important for compensation), etc.”

One of the features that distinctly separates Time Matters from all other products in this review is direct integration of research tools. Firms that have subscriptions to www.lexis.com can access the research site, tagging entries and referencing them with cases. Other web research can similarly be tracked, and time entries can be generated. Document management works very similarly with the ability to track time surrounding documents and attribute documents to particular contacts. New Files can be generated in the document manager, which includes the creation of templates. The document management system included

is one of the most complex, as it also provides support for scans, merging of documents and entries to HotDocs. Documents stored in the database can be accessed

either directly if native application support exists or through the launcher. Files can also be shared or e-mailed, and version control is offered.

Reporting — 4.5 Stars

Time Matters provides a useful selection of reports, though many firms will find a need to create custom reports for better decision making. As addressed in last year's review, Billing Matters Plus provides billing reporting, which includes profitability, case billings, productivity and write-up/down.

Many reports offer numerous filter fields, and groupings and ranges can often

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updates to journals, and how to create customizable workflow navigators. Clearly, LexisNexis is leading the way with regular updates and extended functionality, much of which is user-driven. Help and support is reliable, and the vendor's website provides access to web support, a knowledgebase and even a drop box for development ideas.

Integration — 5 Stars

Newly added this year is support for Microsoft Small Business Accounting, RSS newsfeeds, and several calendar and e-mail products. This just complements what was already a long list of supported products for synchronizing data, including ACT!, QuickBooks and Timeslips. Microsoft Office products such as Outlook and Word have built-in support. For portables, Palm, Blackberry and Pocket PC platforms are recognized, and billing record support for Palm has just been added. Firms should consider the value of integration before uprooting processes and requiring users to learn all new platforms.

Relative Value — 5 Stars

Time Matters with Billing Matters Plus' functionality does well to match its ease-of-use. At a cost of \$700 for the first user, and \$400 for each user thereafter, a 10-user firm would pay \$3,900 for the 7.0 edition. Upgrade purchases are offered consistently at a discounted price to current users. Given the advanced tools such as messaging and e-mail, research tracking, and integration with desktop products and portable platforms, this is an excellent solution for growing firms of all sizes.

2006 Overall Rating: 5 Stars

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