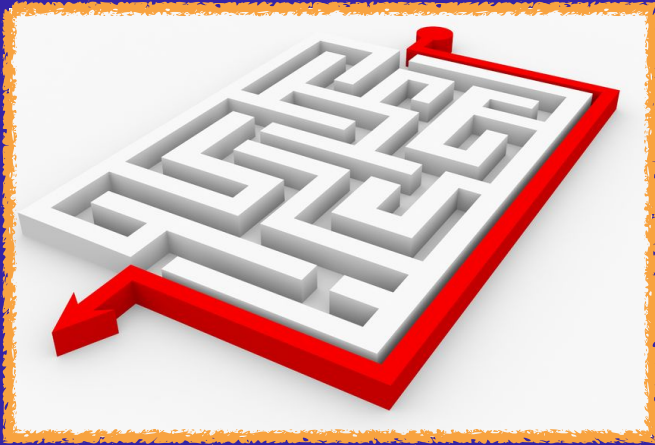


Learn How To Work Smarter

With technology



Start working less



And relaxing more



Working Smarter with Technology

A basic guide to improving your practice by leveraging paperless automation and low-cost outsourcing

As a busy lawyer, you must be ruthless about using limited resources. Time is your most valuable and most limited resource. Technology can help you save lots of time, get better results — and do so more easily. At least, in theory.

Unfortunately, technology is often more bewildering and frustrating than helpful. For most lawyers, at least. The key to success is to "work smarter" with technology. Which means being strategic and realistic (as opposed to haphazard and naïve).

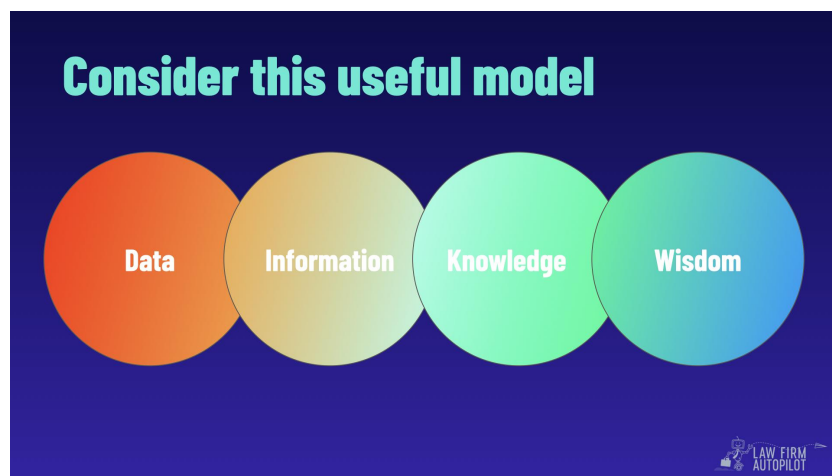
Maximum success comes when you focus ruthlessly on the high-value levers of modern technology. The two levers to focus on first and foremost are (1) paperless **automation**, and (2) affordable **outsourcing**. And, if you need more clients, then learn to do low-cost online marketing.

This guide will not discuss marketing. Operational efficiency is what most lawyers need to concentrate on first.

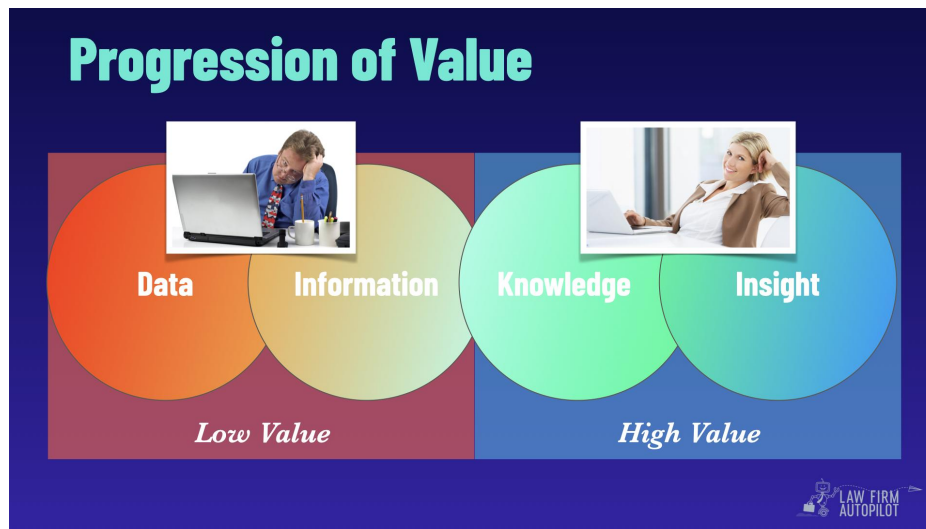
Efficiency is only useful, though, if it helps you deliver higher value to your clients in a way that brings you greater financial returns.

You need to avoid getting bogged down with administrative drudgery so you can focus on leveraging your hard won knowledge. This may seem like common sense, but it's most assuredly not common practice.

Visualizing How to Work Smarter



Creating More Value by Working Smarter



There are several keys to using technology effectively, but here are three of the most important ones.

3 Keys To Success in The Digital Age

Mastering these three keys will be your biggest step towards working smarter:

1. Automation of paperless workflows
2. Outsourcing as much as possible
3. Systems to organize your practice and streamline your workflows

1. Automation

Every modern business has a slew of repetitive workflows. You need to identify all of those workflows and automate as many of them as possible. Doing so will make those workflows happen faster, easier, and more reliably.

Needless to say it's easier to automate paperless workflows than ones involving cumbersome paper pushing. Paperless automation can be amazing when it is set up properly.

The problem with automation is that it's not a magic wand. You actually need to *think* about how to automate most effectively. And for most lawyers, **this is a new way of thinking**. It's easy to get overwhelmed with merely deciding what to automate.

Here's a helpful tip: anything that involves text should be automated or templated to the maximum extent possible. A lot of automation can happen around creating your legal documents. And same goes with email. The Working Smarter Course has a whole section about what most solo and small firm lawyers should automate.

And remember that haphazard automation can make you a lot less productive. Or as Bill Gates said,

*“The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify its efficiency. The second is that **automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.**”*

That’s why you need to work on creating **systems** first and foremost!

2. Outsourcing

In the globalized, virtual world there are new opportunities for getting other people to do work for you. But you have to discover those opportunities and then learn to leverage them.

Learning to leverage is best done by using outsourcing services as much as possible. Below are outsourcing services I recommend you consider using:

- [Smith.ai](#) (high-quality receptionist services that are also super affordable)
- [Fiverr.com](#) (low-cost virtual assistance in a variety of areas)
- [Fancy Hands](#) (general subscription-based VA services)
- [LawClerk.legal](#) (exceptional service for hiring part-time lawyer freelancers)
- [Chatterboss.com](#) (get a top-notch, dedicated executive assistant that’s also affordable; you can also hire specialist assistants. You can book a free call to learn more)
- [Upwork](#) (an **advanced** level marketplace for all different types of freelance workers)

The easiest outsourcing opportunities are those that don’t require you to train the person you’ll work with or to specify how to do the work. For example, bookkeeping, receptionist services, or accounting.

3. Systems

Doing work in a systematic way, by following prescribed steps will transform your law practice more than anything else you can possibly do. There are many benefits to using documented systems, but here are a few of the most important ones:

- Sharpening the attention of the person doing a task (to help avoid mistakes)
- Helping to create greater consistency in how all of your firm's work is done
- Enabling everyone (including you) to do higher-quality work
- Making it so the onboarding and training of new workers becomes exponentially easier (especially with virtual assistants)
- Improving the overall quality of your legal services (so your clients notice and appreciate this, and then refer you more good clients because of this high-quality)

Yes, it’s true: creating systems takes time, energy, and ongoing attention. But here’s the key insight that changes everything once it clicks in your mind: the value of creating systems far outweighs the effort you put into creating them.

And it’s important to understand that systems are more than just a process for doing work. Systems also relate to thinking.

For example, “systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots.”¹

So almost everything can be considered a system. But the following things are the most common systems that come up in a typical lawyer’s practice:

- Systems for file-naming, or any type of standardization (e.g. [this example](#))
- Systems for organizing documents, especially in digital form (e.g. the [LATCH system](#))
- Systems for conceptualizing (I.R.A.C. framework in legal writing)
- Systems for task-management (GTD, Time-Blocking, Ideal Week, Monday Map, Daily Plan)
- Systems for decision-making (e.g. [mental models](#))
- Systems for note-taking (e.g. [Linking Your Thinking](#))
- Systems for doing things (checklists, process maps, [recipes](#) etc.)
- Systems for project management (e.g. [Agile & Scrum](#))
- Systems for automating or outsourcing
- Systems for evaluating resources/results ([S.W.O.T analysis](#), Friday Wrap)
- Systems for marketing (see e.g. [A.I.D.A. framework](#), Storybrand)

How you develop your workflows (using all the above) is a system. How you refine those workflows over time is a system.

If your workflows are done in a haphazard way that’s still a system; it’s just a poor system. So the only question is are you going to work on making your systems better, or not?²

Knowledge > Technology

The thing that matters most in our Digital Age is not technology. It’s knowledge. So, the more you can **leverage your knowledge** to provide tremendous value to your clients, the happier you’ll be in your practice. Because you’ll attract much higher quality clients, who will be more willing to pay you what your efforts are worth.

Your business should primarily be a knowledge business, not a paper-pushing business or an information processing business. And this business is your greatest asset.

Invest In Yourself & Your Firm

If you want to make significant improvements in your practice you’ll need to invest some combination of time, energy, or money. You probably don’t have enough time to figure everything all by yourself.

You don’t need to scale your practice to some behemoth size. But you will need help from other people to do a lot of the work that has to be done. If you can automate things, then do so. If you can’t figure out what to automate, or how, then hire someone to help you.

¹ [The Great Mental Models Volume 3: Systems and Mathematics](#), Farnam St.

² If you want to develop and refine systems for your practice, then you might be interested in the [Law Firm Systems Workshop](#).

If you need help with busy work get a virtual assistant to handle everything that can be done virtually. But remember you'll need to define what work has to be done and how to do it. That means you need to create written procedures (e.g. that [look like this](#)).

And, in the coming days, keep an eye out for my emails, which will be giving you some more helpful insights about improving your law practice.

If you don't want to get those emails, no worries: just hit the unsubscribe button at the bottom of the emails.

If you prefer to talk with me one-on-one, don't hesitate to set up a free call [with this link](#). Whatever path you take, I'll look forward to (hopefully) sparing you as much of the agony and frustration that I felt when I was trying to figure everything out on my own.

About Ernie

Ernie Svenson learned the secret to working smarter (vs. *harder*) in 2001. That's when he discovered the power of **creating a paperless practice**, which was dismissed as impossible by most lawyers.

Two years later, Ernie was **the 5th lawyer to create a weblog**, which led him to discover the power of online marketing before 99% of attorneys even imagined they might be able to get clients via a website.

For the past decade he's focused on **teaching solo and small firm lawyers** how to harness **systems**, technology, and **psychology** to better manage and market their practices—so they can start working less, earning more, and taking more time off. To learn more, visit these websites: **lawfirmautopilot.com** **paperlesschase.com** and **ernietheattorney.net**





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