

Cost Recovery

Choosing the Right Cost Recovery Software Vendor

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There are many choices for cost recovery solutions today, with more vendors coming into the market all the time. Considering that cost recovery is a critical, core system for most legal firms, and that vendors of those systems are usually engaged for multi-year terms, selecting the right vendor is equally as important as selecting the right solution for your firm.

The average cost recovery solution for a mid to large-sized law firm can cost tens of thousands of dollars, will require technical support and training to integrate into the firm's systems and work-flow, and will be in place for many years. Needless to say, your relationship with the vendor must go far beyond the point-of-sale. That relationship and their responsiveness to your needs are going to determine your success long-term. Over the last 30 years, we have identified several key, universal standards that you should look for to help you choose the best vendor – not just the best cost recovery solution – that will work for your firm.

Experience in the Legal Market

It may be rudimentary, but nothing is more important than a vendor's experience with law firms. The legal market has always been a service driven industry and as a result, firms have unique cultures unlike those in other industries. Look for a vendor that can demonstrate an understanding of your firm's work-flows, the pressure points within those work-flows, and ultimately how they can help fulfill your firm's mission of serving your clients.

Vendors should be aware of market changes, new workflows and trends. An example of this is the switch from a copy/fax-centric office to one that uses scanning and printing. Good vendors will build upon their experience in the marketplace and should proactively address these new issues as well as suggest ideas to improve your systems and processes.

Service and Support

One thing in business is certain: things will happen that are out of our control – equipment breaks down, software is not infallible, and chances are issues will occur at the worst time. The last thing an IT administrator wants is for their firm to come to a screeching halt because the cost recovery system is not working. A vendor's track record in service and support is a critical area to scrutinize before making a purchase. Key factors to take into consideration are:

Hours of support / help desk availability: Most software issues should be able to be solved quickly and without a major disruption to the office or productivity. 24/7 support for a mission-critical system is important and the hours of availability of the vendor's help desk and phone support should be a key consideration.

Next Day Service: A vendor should not only offer next day, on-site service for critical issues, but prove they can actually fulfill on this promise to clients. If a vendor is only meeting 20-30% of their next-day support commitments, they may not have the depth of personnel to properly meet their service guarantee.

Device Support: All cost recovery solutions interact with many devices, whether they are MFPs, printers, copiers, scanners or computers. A good solution will be tightly integrated with

the hardware and software in your firm and a good vendor will be able to support that infrastructure. Look for vendors with good relationships/partnerships with the device manufacturers and whose solution can integrate with your IT infrastructure.

Purchasing Options

Choice is very important when it comes to purchasing a cost recovery solution. Good vendors will offer a variety of purchasing options and vehicles to the law firm. These can include selling directly to the firm, through an office equipment hardware manufacturer, through an equipment dealer, or through a facility management company such as Pitney Bowes or Merrill. Purchasing options give firms the flexibility to buy the right solutions that fit them best.

Cost recovery solutions go far beyond simply tracking, accounting and billing for copies, prints and scans. They are core for the business of law and critical to workflow, security and budgeting for most legal firms. When they are working well, you hardly notice them. When they don't work properly, office productivity will be impacted. Since your vendor will be instrumental in keeping your cost recovery system up and running, they are not just part of the purchasing process, but also an integrated part in the success of that solution.

This makes it doubly important to make the right choice. By utilizing the criteria above to evaluate your vendor, you can ensure the long-term success and return on your investment in cost recovery solutions.

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