

Civica teams up with beta site for costs management project

Made live on 1st April 2013, costs management is an essential part of the Jackson reforms as a means of controlling escalating costs in litigation matters

This new discipline demands that solicitors play a pivotal role in managing litigation costs. Case management software suppliers also have a duty to introduce new functionality which enables users to adhere to the legislative changes.

Recognising their mutual responsibility, Civica enlisted the help of long-term client, Anthony Gold Solicitors, as a beta site to test and refine costs management features as stipulated by the reforms.

Lorraine Smith, Managing Director of Civica Legal, explains the importance of "getting the software enhancements absolutely right for litigation practitioners".

"Case management systems must contain costs management tools for completing, agreeing and tracking costs budgets alongside actual spends", Lorraine affirms. "As demonstrated by recent news headlines, judges are adopting a tough stance on compliance with costs budgeting rules. Non-compliant firms could face serious penalties and relief from sanctions seems extremely unlikely".

"We understand that no one knows the ins and outs of costs management reforms better than those working on the coalface – litigation solicitors. That's why we recruited Anthony Gold Solicitors as a beta site using a special release of Prescient+ and with their support we've reconfigured our software".

David Marshall, Managing Partner at Anthony Gold Solicitors, echoes Lorraine's sentiments about the "importance of the mandatory costs budgeting process and need for solicitors to find compliant solutions"

"As litigation specialists, we know all the nuances of this new reform", David adds. "By working closely with Civica, we've thoroughly tested and validated changes to Prescient+".

"The enhanced software is excellent and is, in our view, both one of the best and one of the only costs management systems in place right now".

Expanding upon the changes introduced to Prescient+, Lorraine continues: "Following Anthony Gold Solicitors' valued input and extensive internal Quality Assurance checks, our software now incorporates such items as flags to denote at the outset that a matter is subject to costs management requirements, costs budgets screens for estimates, subsequent mandatory capture of time and disbursements on phases, warnings when actuals are approaching estimates, and detailed reporting in the form of Precedent H".

"Spreadsheet statistics can be entered either in-house by the legal practice or externally by costs draftsman firms".

"Upgrades are completely free of charge to existing users", concludes Lorraine. "We've produced a dedicated e-learning module and user guide for step-by-step instructions to the costs management features from an administrator and user perspective".

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David Marshall
Managing Partner
Anthony Gold Solicitors