

# Time Matters<sup>®</sup>

## Law Firm Practice Management Case Study

INNER CITY LAW CENTER

Maximizing their use of resources to provide free legal services to more of Los Angeles' homeless and working-poor.

Inner City Law Center (ICLC) was founded in 1980 when Nancy Mintie, a new graduate of UCLA Law School, moved to a Skid Row soup kitchen and began helping residents of Los Angeles' downtown neighborhoods with their complaints about miserable living conditions. From a "rusty trailer behind the soup kitchen," the organization began providing quality legal services to individuals and families with nowhere else to turn.

Executive Director Adam Murray says, "It's all housing and homelessness work." The firm provides its clientele with free legal services to assist them with fighting evictions, forcing slumlords to repair dangerous buildings, helping veterans and people with disabilities to receive benefits, ensuring housing rights, and more.

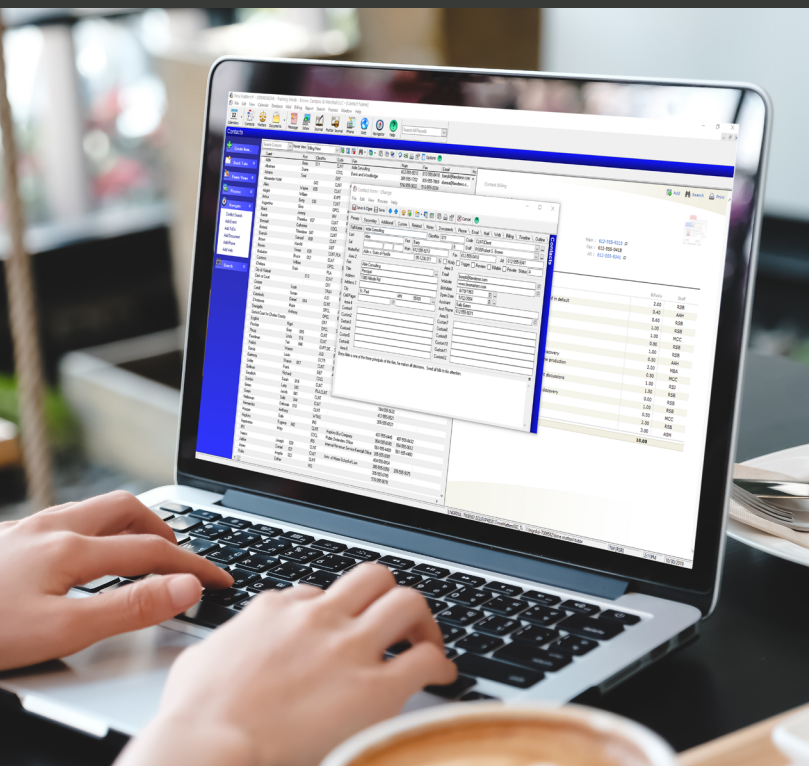
Focused on fighting for justice for working-poor families, immigrants, veterans, individuals living with HIV/AIDS, and low-income tenants, the organization is guided by the principle that "every person should always be treated with dignity and respect."

This principle, along with the talents and hard work of its staff and volunteers, contributions from benefactors, its ability to keep organized and efficient in its work, and to maximize the use of its resources, has driven the non-profit law firm's growth and increased its capacity to serve more clients.

### Helping More People and Managing Growth

Almost 30 years after its creation, the organization had reached a point where some of its systems and processes were no longer ideal for its growing team and client base. Case files, in 2008, were still being kept on paper, in folders, and the firm needed some new tools to enable efficiency and ensure that maximum staff time could be spent focused on their clients.

Working together with technology consultant Rick Hahn, the ICLC team began to explore software options to enable them to continue expanding their caseload. Hahn



had worked with legal aid centers at law schools, disability rights organizations and other groups that provide legal services to the community on a pro bono basis. Since these organizations were using Time Matters, and Hahn understood how its ability to be highly customized met their unique requirements, it became a natural choice for ICLC.

“There isn’t just one thing that has enabled us to grow,” says Murray, “but efficiencies in how we operate is definitely a piece of it. Time Matters enables us to do what we do and do it effectively. It’s how we manage our cases, it’s where we track information for clients... everything. Having that continuity over time and having it all in one place is important.”

## Inner City Law Center tripled their caseload in 10 years.

The ICLC team takes advantage of their AMP Membership to upgrade their Time Matters software to the latest available version and they customize Time Matters to meet their needs. As their team grows, the organization shifts direction, and their clients’ needs evolve, they are able to work with Hahn to mold the software for the best fit. The team has cycled through several contact and case forms and continues to utilize Quick Tabs and exports to maintain efficiency and uphold data standards.

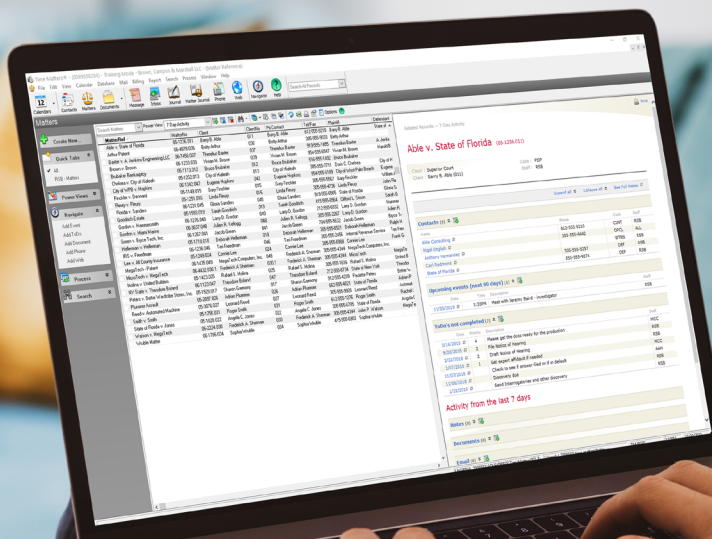
“In 2009,” which was the firm’s first full year of using Time Matters, explains Murray, “we processed 759 cases, and had 29 employees. Last year, we created 2,411 cases in Time Matters... more than 3 times as many cases than 10 years ago.” The firm now has more than 100 staff members and over 55 attorneys. The firm’s headquarters is located on Skid Row, providing convenient access for many of their clients.

## Efficiency Matters

There is no lack of individuals in need of ICLC’s help. The larger the organization grows, and the more efficiently they spend their time on client matters, the more work they can do for those in need. To reduce the amount of staff time spent on administrative tasks, and to ensure integrity in their records and data, ICLC takes advantage of Time Matters’ suite of tools and its highly customizable interface.

From client intake, through the entire case process until matters are resolved, the team maximizes its productivity, using Time Matters to eliminate the need for duplicate data entry.

“The conflict check is the beginning of every case,” says Stephanie Caridad, program analyst at ICLC, “and the key for us is the legal integrity that we are able to maintain, without the cost of additional steps. Conflict checks in Time Matters are a one-step process which ensure that we are meeting protocol, and then moving on to doing the actual client work. It is crucial, especially for a non-profit that needs to maximize use of resources.”



The firm also expedites data collection by using custom forms that they have created for different types of clients, contacts, and cases.

Time Matters has saved ICLC hours of non-billable time by reducing the need for internal communications regarding matters. Staff members can always use Time Matters to access the most up-to-date information without the need for phone calls or emails. Time Matters provides a centralized database for documents, notes, events, and tasks related to each client and case.

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## Improved efficiency at ICLC means helping more people.

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“It’s great that we can add notes to a case and track it without having to communicate externally. It saves us so much time and allows us to have an accurate view of where each case is, at any time. We don’t have to worry about lost emails, or someone falling out of the loop,” says Caridad.

In early 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic required the law firm to change its day-to-day operations, Caridad adds, “Time Matters was crucial to a seamless “work-from-home” transition. Records are digital and placed onto the platform which the whole team can access.”

Ian Musa, ICLC’s Chief Operating Officer says, “Over the years, Time Matters has served as a vital tool for standardization and centralization of our casework, driving consistency around intake processes, workload management, data and analytics.”

## Using Data for Strategy and Essential Reporting

As new trends and issues arise from their client base, the organization’s leaders rely on accurate data and the ability to view it in a variety of ways. Generating unique reports with custom data sets helps to inform and guide their strategy and policy. Murray explains, “With Time Matters, we have the ability to track the demographics of our clients, the outcomes of our cases, the results we get, in a way that we just couldn’t before.”

Musa elaborates on how data helps them understand their populations and new developments, saying, “The customizable functions of Time Matters allows ICLC to construct a detailed image of our client base. Unique reports on client demographics and biographical data inform our team policies and refine ICLC’s approach to our client-centered services.”

Nimble data reporting helps ICLC in another way, too. The organization gets funding from a variety of sources and provides detailed updates to several organizations on a regular basis.

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## Custom reporting leads to better strategy, continued growth, and new opportunities.

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“With more than 10 different funding streams, all with differing reporting requirements, ICLC is able to expeditiously and accurately meet our reporting obligations due to the flexibility of Time Matters, especially around data management and extraction,” says Musa.

Having the ability to quickly generate specific reports has also enabled the firm to participate in certain media opportunities related to issues associated with their work. The information plays a key role in helping them shine a light on specific situations within the community and in promoting the admirable work that the ICLC team is doing.

## Telling their clients' stories

The individuals and families that ICLC serves have unique and powerful stories that are also often intertwined with their legal matters. Some clients will have multiple, multifaceted legal issues over the course of many years, well beyond the simplicity of some linear legal cases.

By tracking all their case and contact information in Time Matters, the ICLC team has tools to help communicate the narratives of their clients' situations in an effective way.

“Case management and data collection can run the risk of being reductive of the work, forcing you to shape your case to the data that is being collected,” says Caridad. “With Time Matters we can do the opposite; we customize the software to the needs of the case and the organization, to capture the complex image of our clients' legal needs.”

Caridad explains that the professionals at ICLC come from a variety of backgrounds including law, social work, psychology, public benefits, and others, and look to provide “a more holistic, wrap-around service.”

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“The most rewarding thing is seeing the results we achieve for our clients, without a doubt.”

– Adam Murray,  
Executive Director of Inner City Law Center

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With a wider perspective on housing issues, the organization looks to connect individuals with other services, like financial advice or secure banking for example, to help its clients get into and maintain safe and stable housing. Through notes in Time Matters, several team members with expertise in a number of areas can see a broader picture, and tailor solutions for its clients.

“If we had to focus solely on isolated legal issues, and weren't able to create a more complex narrative around the case, we wouldn't be as successful at securing stable housing for our clients.”

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## Case Study Summary



### ADAM MURRAY

Executive Director  
Inner City Law Center

#### CUSTOMER PROFILE:

Inner City Law Center is a nonprofit law firm that provides free legal services to the poorest and most vulnerable residents of Los Angeles. ICLC promotes access to decent, safe, and fully habitable housing for the enormous number of homeless and working-poor families and individuals residing in Los Angeles' inner city neighborhoods.

Since its inception in 1980, in a rusty trailer behind a soup kitchen, ICLC has been guided by the fundamental principle that every person should always be treated with dignity and respect. As the only full-time provider of legal services headquartered on Skid Row, ICLC's staff of 100, including 55 attorneys and 500 volunteers, provides quality legal representation for people who have nowhere else to turn.

Inner City Law Center fights for justice for low-income tenants, working poor families, immigrants, people who are living with HIV/AIDS or are disabled, and veterans.

#### BUSINESS SITUATION:

As a non-profit organization looking to help as many people as possible, ICLC had outgrown antiquated practices for matter management and communication of case information. The organization also has unique requirements for reporting and needed a solution that would allow them to customize intake, procedures, and view their data in multiple ways.

#### SOLUTION:

Time Matters offers an incredible spectrum of customization options that allows the team at Inner City Law Center to shape the software to its processes, its reporting requirements, and its growth and evolution. In ten years, since first implementing Time Matters, they have more than tripled their caseload and helped multiple thousands of clients who had nowhere else to turn.

#### PRODUCT SUMMARY:

Award-winning Time Matters customizable client, case, and document management software helps law firms of all types streamline workflow and improve productivity in the office and on the go. For more than 30 years, Time Matters has given attorneys and support staff centralized, searchable access to everything from documents to docketing information, contacts to calendaring, and so much more. Time Matters helps attorneys devote more time to legal work by minimizing work on administrative details.

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