

Excel for Law Firms

Many lawyers know what Excel can do, but do not know how to use it. It is easy to understand this because Excel is not necessarily intuitive. But, the power “under the hood” is worth investigating further.

The first time you use Excel can be confusing as entering information is done differently than most programs. Information is organized into horizontal Rows (1-1,048,576 in Excel 2010) and vertical Columns (A-a bunch). The best way to get an idea of how to use Excel is to open a blank spreadsheet and get started. The [screen cast](#) this week should help you if you follow along.

Excel is great for organizing data in showing the results of that data in various ways. Excel is more than a glorified calculator, though it is great for crunching numbers. It can handle any type of text, make flow charts, and make great looking reports/charts.

For more ideas on how to use Excel in practice, take a look at these two articles:

- [Why Excel Is The Most Underappreciated Program In Your Law Office](#), Jeff Bennion (Nov 11, 2014)
- [‘Excel-erate’ your practice by learning Microsoft Excel](#), Seth Wilson (June 18, 2014)

Frankly, there is not much information on the web specific to law firms and Excel. However, there are great tutorial videos available on YouTube for almost any Excel related problem. In addition, you can utilize the Lynda.com subscription through the School of Informatics to learn more about Excel.

The key skills you will need for Microsoft Excel are:

1. Understanding Data Entry
2. Understanding Lists/Tables
3. Understanding Basic Formulas
4. Understanding Charts

For this week, watch the [screen cast](#) and comment on ways you would utilize Excel in a law firm environment. When does it make sense to use Excel versus using a table in Microsoft Word?