

FREY • PETRAKIS  
DEEB • BLUM  
& BRIGGS

## Small Firm Outperforms Larger Rivals with Superior Client Service

### Overview

**Location:** Philadelphia, PA

**Industry:** Legal

**Customer Profile:**

Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs, based in Philadelphia with offices in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, is a full-service law firm that utilizes personal service, innovative technology, insightful research and expert legal thinking to represent its clients.

**Business Situation:**

The firm sought a way to win business from larger firms by providing superior client service.

**Solution:**

The firm turned to LexisNexis® Total Practice Solutions, using it for everything from practice management to litigation services, research and client development.

**Benefits:**

- Cuts secretary-to-attorney ratio in half
- Gains intelligence on opposing counsel, judges
- Expands business with existing clients
- Increases new business
- Provides better client service

### Product Summary

**Total Practice Solutions**

- LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage™, including:
  - CourtLink®
  - Martindale-Hubbell®
  - *lexis.com*®

Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs was a small law firm in search of a way to outperform its larger rivals. It wanted to provide superior client service that would enable it to win business from those larger firms, without it having to take on the administration and management of a larger firm. It achieved that vision thanks in part to Total Practice Solutions provided by LexisNexis®. The secretary-to-attorney ratio has been cut in half. Attorneys can access client files and conduct research from virtually anywhere. Integrated research and client development tools provide the information to gain new business and win more cases. The unified technology platform gives the firm “a comprehensive way to practice law,” according to its senior partner.

### Situation

When Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs was founded in Philadelphia in 1989 with three lawyers, the practice of law was, in many ways, quaint by today’s standards. Lawyers sent letters typed on paper and mailed through the postal service—and their secretaries were the ones who handled those tasks. Case documentation was kept in file folders—and they could work on their cases from anywhere, provided they happened to have their files with them. Lawyers were prompt about returning client calls—when they got back to their offices and picked up their messages.

In such a world, it was tough for a small firm to compete with the city’s legal goliaths.

“The old ways of doing business weren’t as effective; you couldn’t be as quick as you wanted to be,” says Joseph Blum, Senior Partner at Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs. “All the firms ran their practices that way but the consequence was that we couldn’t really say we were more responsive to our clients than the big firms were to theirs.”

Yet that was the ideal to which the firm aspired. Its founders had come from larger firms, as would many of the attorneys who later joined them. They wanted to avoid the bureaucracy of larger firms, and they preferred to serve their clients directly, rather than passing them off to junior associates after the retainer had been paid, as often happened at larger firms.

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Joseph Blum, Senior Partner

“We wanted to sell ourselves as the firm where the partner you meet is the partner who runs with your case, who’s always available,” says Blum. “It’s easy to say that—but how do you make it happen? You have to have a hugely successful way of managing information and workflow.”

## **Solution**

Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs found a tool that would allow them to manage information and workflow with Total Practice Solutions provided by the LexisNexis® services. Technology solutions provided by LexisNexis in client development, research, practice management and litigation services together offer a total solution that gives the firm the advantage it needs to compete and win against much larger firms.

### **Centralized Practice Management**

At the core of the firm’s solutions is LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage, a total practice solution with strong practice management capabilities that replaces paper file folders or computerized file shares with a central repository for all client information.

“We chose LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage because it was the only program very rich in its ability to do what we wanted—to document everything in a case,” says Blum.

LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage provides a single location to store or log the increasing range of documents that the firm’s attorneys need to access their work, including e-mail messages, e-mail attachments, documents created in-house, and paper documents. It also includes a contact directory that gives attorneys a single place to store phone, e-mail and other information about everyone with whom they do business.

An attorney first creates a file for his or her case in LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage and then is able to store virtually any document that will be created or acquired during the life of that case. A timeline in LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage allows attorneys to see when documents were added to the file and how they relate to each other.

In creating this central repository for each case or client, the integration of LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage with the firm’s other software is a big plus, says Blum. “Most of our people use Microsoft® Outlook®,” he says. “Being able to click on a ‘connect to LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage’ button in Outlook e-mail to send that e-mail to LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage means that the e-mails we need are always where we expect to find them when we need them. At the same time, being able to preserve the links between e-mail messages and attachments means we don’t lose any of our documentation, or the associations among those documents.”

*“By using Total Practice Advantage and other LexisNexis products, each lawyer at our firm has become more productive ...”*

Joseph Blum, Senior Partner

### **Integrating Legal Research & Client Development**

Much of the documentation that the firm creates is from legal research. The firm’s primary research vehicle is *lexis.com*®. “In addition to being a great research tool, the *lexis.com* service is integrated within our LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage solution, enabling us to store research in the same central location we keep all other documents related to a case,” says Blum. “That’s extremely important as cases go on for extended periods of time, because it means that we don’t have to rummage around looking for research created a year or more ago. Attorneys aren’t hostage to researchers who may be unavailable when needed. We don’t waste our time—and the client’s money—recreating research we’ve already done. We would not have achieved this integration with other research tools.”

A key research component provided through LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions at Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs is the CourtLink document retrieval service, available through both *lexis.com* and LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage. The firm’s attorneys can order dockets and documents from all federal and state courts, obtain litigation histories of opposing parties, attorneys, law firms, and of the judges assigned to their cases. They can also set the service to notify them when there is new legal activity with current or prospective clients.

Another element of LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions at Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs is Martindale-Hubbell®, the most widely used legal resource for reputation building and client development. The firm is peer review rated by Martindale-Hubbell and applies that certification “everywhere that Martindale-Hubbell allows us,” says Blum. That includes the firm’s Web site and its e-mail messages. Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs also publishes its attorneys’ biographical profiles to Martindale-Hubbell—and can update them through LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage.

### **Benefits**

#### **Attorney Efficiency Raised to New Level**

Thanks to LexisNexis Total Practice Solution, the attorneys at Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs have achieved a new level of productivity and efficiency.

“By using Total Practice Advantage and other LexisNexis products, each lawyer at our firm has become more productive,” says Blum. “When we’re out of the office, we can use practice mobility tools to operate on behalf of our clients in ways we never could before. And when we’re in the office, we can operate far more efficiently.”

*“We handle more cases, more effectively and with less stress thanks to LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions ...”*

Joseph Blum, Senior Partner

For example, virtually all the information that attorneys need for their cases is available to them from anywhere in the world with Internet access. Documents and information already in a client’s file can be accessed through LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage and additional research can be conducted through *lexis.com* and added to a file.

“That means an attorney can be at home, on the road, or with a client and continue to work for the client,” says Blum. “In the past, the attorney would have had to wait a day or more to return to the office to have access to that information.”

When the firm’s attorneys are in the office, they’re even more efficient. LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions has done more than eliminate the stacks of paper files that used to pile up on secretaries’ desks—the technology has also helped to eliminate the need for half of the secretaries. It has contributed to a 50 percent reduction in the secretary-to-attorney ratio, from 1-to-2 to 1-to-4 as attorneys can now immediately create, build, access and share files electronically, for which they formerly needed secretarial support.

“We handle more cases more effectively and with less stress thanks to LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions,” says Blum. “People here feel better about how we manage the firm.”

#### **More Effective at the Practice of Law**

Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs attorneys aren’t just more effective in the business of law thanks to LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions—they’re also more effective in the practice of law. For example, the lawyers routinely use the CourtLink service to profile opposing counsel and judges in their cases—and use the knowledge they gain in those profiles to shape their tactics and strategy.

“If you file a new case in federal court about, for example, religious discrimination, you want to know if the judge has written anything about the subject,” says Blum. “You want to know what expertise the opposing counsel has. Knowledge is power—and CourtLink gives us knowledge.”

#### **Greater Effectiveness Means Better Client Service**

Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs is putting its greater effectiveness to use to provide greater client service. “Years ago, we couldn’t really say we were more responsive than the big firms,” says Blum. “Now, we can.”

For example, several years ago, clients of the firm began asking for flat-fee arrangements for recurring types of cases, such as slip-and-fall and cigarette liability at retail stores that are accused of selling cigarettes to minors.

*“The bottom line is that LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions is a clear contributor to our growth ”*

Joseph Blum, Senior Partner

The firm’s attorneys used the timeline in LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage to analyze the pattern of work required to complete these cases. With this knowledge, they also created electronic forms that streamline such cases. As a result, they were comfortable accommodating client requests for fixed fees for such cases.

“We could easily see what it takes to go through these cases, thanks to LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage,” says Blum. “Using the timeline, we could see the whole course of events, what work had to be done, what documents had to be created, how much e-mail was generated. When the timeline becomes similar from case to case, you can accurately predict future costs. The knowledge we gained through LexisNexis Total Practice Advantage made it possible for us to calculate appropriate fixed fees for these repeatable cases. If you don’t have this type of system, your chances of efficiency in this arrangement are greatly diminished.”

#### **More Effective Client Development**

It isn’t only client service that’s more efficient at Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs thanks to Total Practice Solutions—client development is, as well. CourtLink, in particular, helps the firm to generate new business and to preempt competitors that may be eyeing the business of its existing clients.

By setting notifications in CourtLink, Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs attorneys know instantly when legal action has been filed against any of their existing clients. That enables the client’s attorney to instantly call the general counsel at the client company and offer the firm’s services. Frey Petrakis Deeb Blum & Briggs has used this tactic, for example, to expand the types of legal work it does for existing clients, both increasing its volume of business with those clients and forestalling entry by competitors.

Attorneys at the firm also use CourtLink to profile potential clients prior to meetings with them. “Anyone meeting with a potential major new client accesses CourtLink to get a comprehensive profile of the client’s litigation history and situation,” says Blum. “That makes us more effective than we could otherwise be in aligning our services to the client’s needs.”

“The bottom line is that LexisNexis Total Practice Solutions is a clear contributor to our growth,” he adds.

*“The solutions we get from LexisNexis work more powerfully for us because they work together as part of a single, fully integrated platform ...”*

Joseph Blum, Senior Partner

### Benefits of a Unified Platform

Blum acknowledges that the firm could go elsewhere for some of the technology solutions it gets from Total Practice Solutions—but he’s pleased that it hasn’t.

“The solutions we get from LexisNexis work more powerfully for us because they work together as part of a single, fully integrated platform,” he says.

“Total Practice Solutions gives us a comprehensive way to practice law. All of our solutions are in one place. We don’t hunt for information. We don’t train on a series of separate products. We can access, use, and build on our information from wherever we are. And every time the practice of law changes Total Practice Solutions changes to remain just as crucial to our firm and our growth.”

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## About LexisNexis

LexisNexis® ([www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com)) is a leading provider of information and services solutions, including its flagship Web-based Lexis® and Nexis® research services, to a wide range of professionals in the legal, risk management, corporate, government, law enforcement, accounting and academic markets. A member of Reed Elsevier [NYSE: ENL; NYSE: RUK] ([www.reedelsevier.com](http://www.reedelsevier.com)), the company does business in 100 countries with 13,000 employees worldwide.

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