

The Verdict Is In

Verdict 9.0

Micro Craft Inc.

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www.micro-craft.net

Price: \$1,295, single-user; \$1,495 for 10 users,
\$100 per additional user over 10

Windows 95/98/2000/Me/NT/XP

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You can be the nation's most prolific law practice, but if you can't track your client billing hours quickly and accurately, it's likely your revenues will suffer tremendously. That is why a program such as Verdict 9.0, from Micro Craft Inc., can be so important to practicing attorneys.

Verdict 9.0 is versatile. A small office can use it as a standalone system, and larger firms can network it for a multi-user environment.

As a timekeeping system, Verdict 9.0 does its job remarkably well. I was able to enter several timekeepers, set up account codes, enter new clients, add time and billing information, and post and produce a bill in less than an hour.

Initial system navigation can be a little awkward because there is no setup wizard to guide you through the appropriate steps for system setup. The information is in the manual, which is comprehensive, but I did find the page numbers in the manual index don't correspond to the topics in the manual.

Setting up the system can be tedious, especially for larger firms because there are various tabs that need to be accessed and information entered. There also is an option to enter

Categories of Practice if your firm so desires. If you don't want to use this option, or find it unnecessary, just enter the word "None."

Entering Client/Accounts information is streamlined for ease. The screen is split in two with a "Clients" tab on the upper left and an "Accounts" tab on the upper right side. After entering client information in the "Client" tab, just click on the "Accounts" tab, and you can enter all account information as well. This setup also makes it easy to track large clients that have multiple accounts. And because Verdict is a client-based system, you can view all of the information for that particular client in one centralized location. Different timekeepers

Verdict 9.0 is versatile and can work in both a small or large firm.

can be entered for each particular account within the client base.

A convenient feature in Verdict is the "Search" option, which displays your data in a Tree view. It shows the entries (i.e., services, expenses, payments received and adjustments) for any given account, and all the accounts (i.e., matters) for the selected client. Double-clicking on any of these will take you directly to that item.

You can customize each timekeeper's default billing increment (e.g., 0.25 hours for a timekeeper that usually bills in 15 minute increments). Also, each timekeeper has a default rate and 10 additional rates so you can specify which of the timekeepers' rates to apply to a given account.

Bills can be viewed on screen or printed for review before they are finalized. Once they are finalized, you can go back and adjust billing if necessary, adding new charges, adjusting current charges or deleting erroneous ones.

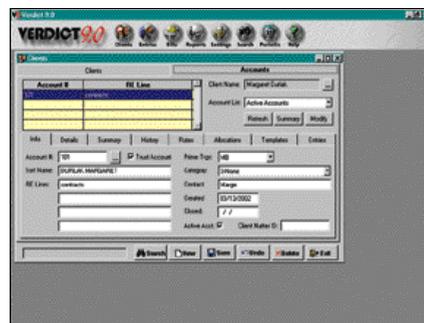
Old billings also can be reprinted easily. Header lines can be customized to appear on firm billings, if necessary. And to insure that billings go out with-

out any embarrassing typos, Verdict also includes a spell-checker.

Verdict also will process Ledes Bills, producing system files in the Ledes 98b format. You can specify American Bar Association task codes and Activity codes for services and task codes for expenses.

With an updated month-end closing process, you now can choose when you wish to close out your billing month. Prior versions of Verdict would not allow you to post future charges until the current month was closed. This is no longer the case, as only entries posted through the close out date will be included in your monthly transaction summaries. All new costs, payments and time and billing allocations dated after your month end close will be posted to the next accounting period.

Reporting options also have increased with Verdict 9.0. Some of the reports available include a "Timekeeper Productivity Report," an "Aged Account Report," "Category of Practice



You can enter all account information for each client in the 'Accounts' tab.

Summaries," (if applicable) and "Posting Registers" for both billed and unbilled charges.

For a more complete package, Micro Craft offers several add-ons that integrate seamlessly with Verdict 9.0, including General Ledger 8.0d, Check Write 8.0 and Legal Pad 9.0. **E.I.**

Closing Argument

Pros: Easy time tracking and customization, a combined Client/Accounts screen makes data input less cumbersome, and bills can be adjusted after posting, making charge adjustments and additional billings easier to enter and track.

Cons: A substantial amount of data entry is necessary to get the system up and running. The product manual index doesn't list the correct page numbers.

Verdict: Verdict 9.0 is efficient, easy to navigate and easy to setup. Once basic timekeeping information is entered, Verdict 9.0 is ready for use.



The 'Client' tab lists all your clients in one easy to access table on the left side of the Verdict 9.0 window.