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SECRETARIAL SERVICE TO GO: LAWDOCS XPRESS REVIEW

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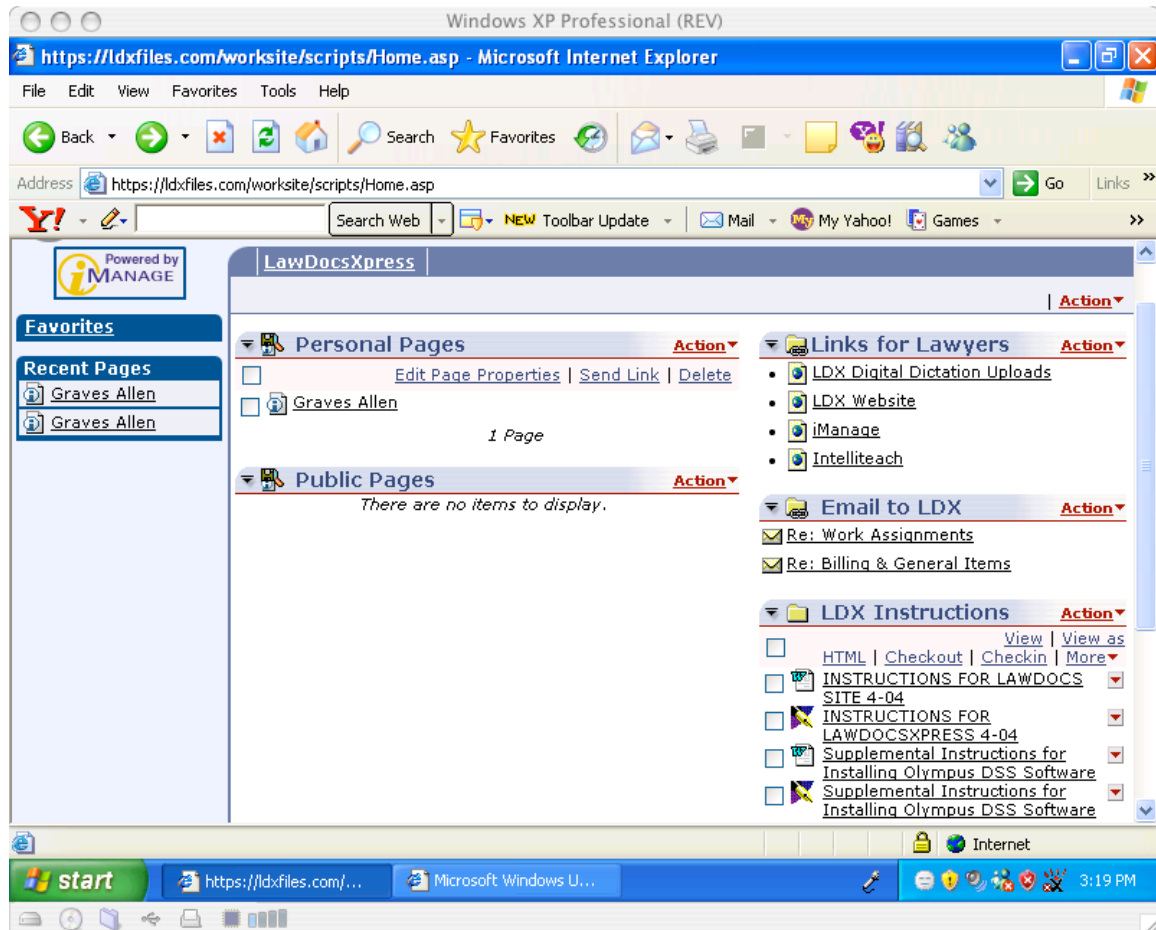
LawDocs Xpress (www.lawdocsxpress.com) offers attorneys secretarial service on an as needed basis through the Internet. This rather clever concept takes as its basis the fact that all attorneys need or can benefit from secretarial services from time to time. Some of us have full-time secretarial assistance at our offices, others have part-time. Some attorneys have no secretary working at their office. No matter which group you fall into, at some time you will likely wish you had secretarial assistance not available in your office.

That need might arise because you are on the road and need to produce a document for a client, or because your regular secretary called in sick (or with some other reason he or she could not come to work), or because you have a rush that your secretary simply cannot get done in time. If you work in a larger office, you may fill the need by borrowing another attorney's secretary to help out. In a smaller office, that luxury may not exist. You could always call a temp agency and hope they had a competent legal secretary available (sometimes they do). OR, you could call LawDocs Xpress.

LawDocs Xpress has experienced legal secretaries working in shifts on a 24 hour a day, seven day a week basis. When you sign up with LawDocs Xpress, they assign a group of 2 or 3 secretaries to your account. Generally those secretaries will do most, if not all of your work. That gives them the opportunity to become familiar with your preferences and your dictation style if you use them with some frequency.

LawDocs Xpress claims special expertise in dealing with intellectual property matters (patent applications, patent search summaries, etc.), civil and criminal litigation, corporate transactional and workers' compensation law.

When you sign up for LawDocs Xpress, they set up a web site for your work. They request that you upload to the web site examples of your work that will serve as models or forms for work they do for you. Generally, you will want to upload a mixture of work. When I set my account up with them, I forwarded a memorandum, a pleading, a contract and a couple of letters.



To send work to LawDocs Xpress, you dictate it onto a digital recording device (they prefer the Olympus DS-330). The Olympus DS-330 comes with software to upload the DSS formatted audio files from the recorder to your computer. Once you have transferred the DSS files to your computer, you then log onto the LawDocs Xpress site and upload them. LawDocs Xpress transcribes the files and leaves the finished documents in electronic format on the web site for you to download. Normal turn around time is 24 hours, but LawDocs Xpress will turn the work around in 12 hours for an additional fee and for a larger additional fee provide super rush turn around.

LawDocs Xpress bills for its services on the basis of a quarter of an hour. They use \$8 per quarter hour as the base rate for guaranteed 24-hour completion. For \$9 per quarter hour, you get guaranteed 12-hour turn-around. Billing for rush jobs is at the rate of \$11.50 per quarter hour.

Each firm pays a license fee of \$350 per year to cover the cost of the iManage license to access the secure website created for the firm by LawDocs Xpress. Each person doing dictation for the firm receives a separate dictation ID, but, generally, everyone in the firm shares the same LDX ID, so only one iManage license is required.

With the exception of the annual iManage license fee, all charges to the firm relate to the work actually submitted and all other billings are on the basis of the time used to create the document.

While LawDocs Xpress' primarily transcribes DSS files into electronic word-processing files, they also provide other services as well. For example, you can transmit a rough draft of a brief and they will put it into final form, including the creation of a table of contents and a table of authorities. They can prepare simple PowerPoint presentations (you create the content and transmit it to them and they make the slides); they can also create Excel spreadsheets. The secretaries type fluent Word and Word Perfect, be sure to tell them your preference.

Once they have finished the documents, you simply log onto your LawDocs Xpress website, download them and either email them or print them on your

own printer. If you have changes or corrections to make, you can fax them to LawDocs Xpress and they will enter them and return the corrected file to you. Alternatively, you can simply open the document and make the changes yourself.

LawDocs Xpress makes customer service available virtually 24 hours a day. Although the two women who own and operate the service, Sharon Quaintance and Connie Massey do not work every day all they, the often answer the phones and handle customer service themselves. Occasionally when you call, you will get an answering machine. They are very good about following up on callbacks, quite knowledgeable, very helpful and friendly. They actually do something very rare in my experience as they manage to make calling for technical support enjoyable.

I found myself impressed with their thoroughness and attention to detail. I uploaded a number of files which did not have consecutive numerical designations created in the transfer to the computer from the Olympus recorder. I received an email inquiry confirming the receipt of the files and asking whether some files had been lost in transmission or if they had everything I had sent.

To give you the opportunity to try out their service, LawDocs Xpress offers a 30-day trial program. For the first 30 days, you do not pay the annual iManage license fee, but, instead, you only pay for the time required to do the work you submit to them.

Depending on what part of the country you practice in, you may find the basic rate of \$32 per hour and the increased rates in excess of that reasonable, low or high. In considering the analysis, however, remember the savings from not paying payroll taxes and benefits for a full time secretary. Here, you only pay for the time you actually use. I sent files containing three multiple page letters, a single page letter and a seven page interrogatory response. Time charged came to .25 hours for each letter and 1 hour for the interrogatory responses. Total cost based on the \$8/hour basic rate: \$64. Actual turn around time was less than 12 hours.

The work I received back was well done, acceptably accurate and properly formatted. It compared favorably to the work I get from my own secretary. The work was quite satisfactory and I would not hesitate to send overflow work or work while I am on the road to LawDocs Xpress.

Verdict: LawDocs Xpress offers a useful and valuable service at a reasonable cost by San Francisco-Oakland bay area standards, especially after you take into consideration the fact that you do not acquire an employee, even on a part time basis and the fact that you have secretarial help available on a 24/7 basis. If you need the rush service, it becomes somewhat pricey, so try to avoid that and keep within the basic service rate and 24-hour turn around. By all means sign up for the 30-day trial program and take LawDocs Xpress for a test drive.