

UNVARNISHED REVIEWS

Clio vs. MyCase vs. Smokeball: The Legal Practice Management Verdict

Unvarnished Reviews Research

Market Position: Practice Management Meets Legal AI

Legal practice management software tracks cases, deadlines, time, bills, client trust money, and documents for law firms. The category has moved from a record-keeping system to a platform that also drafts, researches, and answers client questions with artificial intelligence (AI), and the vendors are consolidating to afford it.

Clio announced a \$1 billion acquisition of the legal research company vLex in June 2025 and announced completion in November 2025, alongside a \$500 million Series G round led by NEA at a \$5 billion valuation and a \$350 million debt facility led by Blackstone and Blue Owl. Clio reports \$400 million in annual recurring revenue and 400,000 legal professionals. Its Vincent AI research assistant covers more than 110 jurisdictions, and the product family now includes Clio Work, Clio Draft, Clio Grow, and Clio Operate, which came from the ShareDo acquisition in March 2025. Pricing for Vincent AI and Clio Work is not disclosed.

The payments company AffiniPay rebranded as 8am in August 2025, and MyCase became 8am MyCase, a sister to the LawPay payment product and the Docketwise immigration software. The company says pricing and support are unchanged. Smokeball remains a focused vendor that sells a Word-centered system, with AI features, branded Archie, in its higher tiers. For a buyer, the question is whether a firm needs an AI-first platform that is still being assembled or a stable system that handles the billing and trust accounting basics.

Clio: The Upside

Clio has the strongest reputation and ecosystem. Users rate it 4.6/5 across 997 reviews and 4.7 across 1,750 reviews in a second directory, and score ease of use 9.0, ease of setup 8.7, and quality of support 9.1. Users praise ease of use and efficiency, and implementation takes about one month, according to review data. Its integration marketplace is the broadest of the three, and it reports 400,000 legal professionals as users.

It is investing heavily in the product. The vLex acquisition adds a legal research library and Vincent AI, and the funding gives Clio the capital to build. Clio Operate adds enterprise matter management for larger firms, and Clio Grow handles intake and client relationship management and is included in the Elite plan. The chief executive, Jack Newton, described the deal as growth-oriented and said no significant layoffs were expected.

The entry price is published. Clio's pricing page shows plans starting at \$49 per user per month, which gives a small firm a number to start from. Payment processing rates are also published: 1% for eCheck and ACH bank transfers, 2.95% for cards (3.75% for American Express), and 4.95% for Affirm installment payments.

Clio: The Downside

Only the entry price is published. The page shows the lowest plan and sends buyers to a form for the rest. Plan names and prices vary by source: Clio's current page shows Starter, Core, Signature (marked as popular), and Elite, while third-party lists use other names and report different figures, such as \$49, \$89, \$119, and \$149 in one and \$39, \$79, \$109, and \$139 in another. Treat those as unconfirmed and get a written quote.

AI features and billing draw complaints in public reviews. Clio scores 3.6/5 on 298 consumer-site reviews, with 66% five-star and 13% one-star. Recurring complaints include AI features enabled or pushed without consent, a reviewer's claimed 34% per-user price increase, accounting sync errors with QuickBooks and Xero, long support holds, and difficulty cancelling or getting refunds for licenses that renewed while inactive. Clio replies to about 10% of the negative reviews, and its replies include offers of a full refund of an initial payment and explanations of account-security limits. These are customer accounts on a public site, and Clio's replies are part of the record.

Costs beyond the subscription add up. Clio Grow is an add-on below the Elite plan, a third-party source reports AI add-ons at \$39-\$59 per user per month (unverified), and the same source puts implementation at \$10,000-\$25,000 for mid-sized firms. Users cite missing features and limitations among their cons. Ask which AI features are on by default and how to turn them off before signing.

MyCase: The Upside

MyCase publishes a full price list. Plans cost \$50, \$100, and \$130 per user per month for Basic, Pro, and Advanced when billed annually, or \$60, \$120, and \$150 when billed monthly. That is the clearest pricing in this comparison, and the plans bundle a client portal, secure messaging, document sharing, and online payments. A free trial is available, though there is no free plan.

It is built for small firms. Users rate it 4.4/5 across 404 reviews and 4.6 across 807 in a second directory, and score ease of use 8.9 and ease of setup 8.5, with implementation taking about one month. Users praise ease of use, and the platform's client portal is a core strength.

The family is growing. The 8am rebrand ties MyCase to LawPay payments and the Docketwise immigration software (\$79 per user per month, or \$69 billed annually, as an add-on). MyCase includes AI discovery tools, with 5,000 pages per user per month pooled across the firm and extra pages at \$30 per 5,000.

MyCase: The Downside

Consumer-site ratings are the weakest in the comparison. MyCase scores 2.1/5 across 327 reviews, though only 15 were posted in the last 12 months, and the star split on the page (67% five-star) does not match the score. The visible reviews are mostly one-star and describe unresponsive support, charges after cancellation, refunds refused, a surprise \$39 accounting fee, and reliability bugs. The company has not replied to the negative reviews. On the professional review site, users give support 8.7, close to the other two, so the experience varies by source. Verify with references in your practice area.

Add-ons change the price. MyCase Accounting is \$39 per user per month, which raises the Advanced plan to \$169 per user per month with accounting, and payment processing through LawPay costs about \$7,500 a year on \$250,000 in card payments, according to a third-party estimate. Extra AI pages cost \$30 per 5,000.

Contract terms favor the vendor. Plans renew automatically and cancelling early is not refunded. Users list missing features, billing, and document management among their cons. Ask for the cancellation process in writing and confirm the accounting fee before the trial ends.

Smokeball: The Upside

Smokeball has the highest satisfaction scores. Users rate it 4.7/5 across 388 reviews and 4.8 across 360 in a second directory, and score ease of use 9.1, ease of setup 8.8, and quality of support 9.5, the highest of the three. Users praise ease of use and organization.

It is built around Word and Outlook. The hybrid design works offline and integrates deeply with Microsoft Word and Outlook, and automatic time tracking captures billable work from email and document activity. A third-party review counts more than 17,000 forms and more than 250 practice-area templates for document automation. Smokeball says its system covers client and trust accounting, invoicing, and payments, and Prosper+ adds lead management, intake, and profitability reporting.

Entry pricing is visible for the first plans. One source lists Bill at \$49 per user per month and Boost at \$89, with Grow and Prosper+ priced on request. Archie AI and AI-assisted intake sit in the higher tiers.

Smokeball: The Downside

Pricing is mostly quote-only and sources conflict. Smokeball's marketing comparison page contains no prices. Third-party lists range from \$49 to \$179 per user per month, and one analysis reports a flat \$149, so the price you pay depends on the plan and the negotiation. Add-ons such as electronic signature, payments, virtual receptionist, and LeadPro carry extra fees.

The contract terms are unclear. One source says monthly billing is available with no long-term contracts, and another says annual terms are generally required with 30 days' notice for non-renewal. Get the term and cancellation clause in writing before signing.

The learning curve and reporting draw complaints. Users report a steep learning curve, reporting limits, time capture that records too much, and confusing batch invoicing, and users cite missing features and software bugs. Implementation takes about two months, twice as long as the others. A third-party review says the product does not support macOS, but it is unverified for the current product, so confirm it if your firm uses Apple computers.

Platform Ratings at a Glance

Platform	G2 Rating	G2 Reviews	Capterra	Trustpilot	Note
Clio	4.6 / 5	997	4.7 / 5 (1,750 reviews)	3.6 / 5 (298 reviews)	Largest ecosystem; AI and renewal complaints on Trustpilot
8am MyCase	4.4 / 5	404	4.6 / 5 (807 reviews)	2.1 / 5 (327 reviews)	Published prices; support and cancellation complaints
Smokeball	4.7 / 5	388	4.8 / 5 (360 reviews)	No meaningful Trustpilot presence identified	Highest support score; two-month implementation

The professional review sites cluster at 4.4-4.7 and rank Smokeball first, Clio second, and MyCase third. The consumer site reverses the spread for MyCase and Clio, and it shows the complaint themes: billing, cancellation, and support. Trustpilot reviews skew toward dissatisfied customers, so the score reflects the firms most motivated to write, but the specific accusations are worth testing in a reference call.

Pricing (October 2026)

Platform	Entry Tier	Mid Tier	Top Tier	Pricing Model
Clio	Starting at \$49 per user per month (lowest plan)	Quote-based; third-party lists report \$89-\$119 for two middle tiers (unconfirmed)	Elite, quote-based; third-party lists report about \$149; includes Clio Grow	Per user per month; payment processing 1% for eCheck and ACH, 2.95% for cards, 4.95% for Affirm
8am MyCase	Basic, \$50 per user per month annual (\$60 monthly)	Pro, \$100 annual (\$120 monthly)	Advanced, \$130 annual (\$150 monthly)	Per user per month; Accounting add-on \$39; Docketwise \$79 (\$69 annual); extra AI pages \$30 per 5,000
Smokeball	Bill, \$49 per user per month (single source)	Boost, \$89 (single source)	Grow and Prosper+, priced on request; one source reports up to \$179	Per user per month; add-ons for electronic signature, payments, virtual receptionist, and LeadPro

Clio's entry price and processing rates come from its pricing and payments pages; the MyCase figures come from its published plans, the 8am rebrand announcement, and third-party summaries; the Smokeball figures come from third-party listings and the vendor declined to publish them on its comparison page, so treat them as directional. Prices exclude taxes.

TCO Comparison: 10-User Firm, One Year

Scenario: a 10-user firm on annual billing, buying case management, billing, and trust accounting, with \$250,000 in card payments a year.

Line Item	Clio	8am MyCase	Smokeball
Subscription, lowest plan	$10 \times \$49 \times 12 = \$5,880$	$10 \times \$50 \times 12 = \$6,000$	$10 \times \$49 \times 12 = \$5,880$
Subscription, highest plan	$10 \times \$149 \times 12 = \$17,880$ (third-party tier price, unconfirmed)	$10 \times \$130 \times 12 = \$15,600$	$10 \times \$179 \times 12 = \$21,480$ (third-party upper figure, unconfirmed)
Accounting add-on	Included or quoted	$10 \times \$39 \times 12 = \$4,680$ on the highest plan	Included or quoted
Card processing on \$250,000	$2.95\% = \$7,375$	About \$7,500 via LawPay (third-party estimate)	Quoted separately
Implementation and training	Quoted; a third-party source reports \$10,000-\$25,000 for mid-sized firms	Not itemized in sources	Not itemized in sources
Year 1 subscription total, modeled	\$5,880-\$17,880	\$6,000-\$20,280	\$5,880-\$21,480

The subscription ranges overlap almost completely, so the vendor is a weaker price signal than the plan tier. Card processing adds about \$7,400-\$7,500 at the same volume for Clio and MyCase and would be the second-largest line for a firm on the lowest plan, so compare processing rates with the same weight as plan prices. MyCase's published prices make its range the only one without an unconfirmed endpoint; Clio's and Smokeball's top figures are third-party numbers that a quote could change.

Costs the Pricing Table Misses

- **Payment processing.** At \$250,000 in annual card payments, 2.95% is \$7,375, and one estimate puts LawPay on MyCase at about \$7,500. Negotiate the rate and ask about ACH and eCheck, which cost 1% at Clio.
- **Accounting add-ons.** MyCase Accounting costs \$39 per user per month, or \$4,680 a year for 10 users, and users in public reviews cite it as a surprise.
- **AI features.** Clio's Vincent AI and Clio Work pricing is not disclosed, a third-party source reports AI add-ons at \$39-\$59 per user per month, MyCase charges \$30 per extra 5,000 discovery pages, and Smokeball places Archie AI in higher tiers.
- **Implementation and data migration.** A third-party source reports \$10,000-\$25,000 for mid-sized Clio firms, and Smokeball implementation takes about two months per users.
- **Auto-renewal and cancellation.** MyCase renews automatically with no refund for cancelling early, and public reviewers describe licenses that renewed after going inactive at Clio. Calendar the notice dates.
- **Escalators.** A Clio reviewer claims a 34% per-user increase. Cap annual increases in the contract.

Complexity Comparison

Dimension	Clio	8am MyCase	Smokeball
Implementation	About one month; setup score 8.7	About one month; setup score 8.5	About two months; setup score 8.8
Admin dependency	Low to moderate; large ecosystem of integrations to manage	Low; all-in-one with a client portal	Moderate; Word and Outlook integration and templates to configure
Learning curve	Easy for core tasks (ease of use 9.0); AI and enterprise products add surface	Easy (ease of use 8.9)	Steep for advanced use per users, though ease of use scores 9.1
Integration friction	Broadest marketplace; accounting sync errors reported by reviewers	Narrower ecosystem; LawPay and Docketwise within the 8am family	Strongest with Microsoft products; works offline
Support experience	Support score 9.1; long holds reported by reviewers	Support score 8.7; unresponsive support reported by reviewers	Support score 9.5; no consumer-site presence to cross-check
Contract flexibility	Cancellation and renewal complaints in public reviews	Auto-renewal and no refunds for cancelling early	Sources conflict on monthly versus annual terms

Smokeball takes the longest to implement and has the highest support scores. Clio is the easiest to expand and the most exposed to scope growth, and MyCase is the simplest to start and the one with the sharpest gap between review sites.

Red Flags

Every finding below is independently documented and material enough to influence a purchasing decision.

Clio	8am MyCase	Smokeball
• AI features are reported as enabled or pushed without consent. public reviewers say AI features were turned on or promoted without their agreement, and Vincent AI and Clio Work pricing is not disclosed. Ask which features are on by default and how to disable them.	• public reviews scores 2.1/5 on 327 reviews. Reviewers describe unresponsive support, charges after cancellation, and refunds refused, and the company has not replied to negative reviews. Only 15 reviews are from the last 12 months, so test with current customers.	• Pricing is mostly quote-only. The vendor publishes no prices on its comparison page, and third-party lists span \$49-\$179. Get the full plan price in writing.

- **Only the entry price is published.** Plan names and prices vary across sources, from \$49 to about \$149. Get a written quote naming the plan and the features.

- **Cancellation and renewal complaints.** public reviewers describe inactive licenses renewing and refunds refused, and Clio replies to about 10% of negative reviews. Calendar the notice date and ask for refund terms.

- **The company is absorbing a \$1 billion acquisition.** The vLex deal closed in November 2025, and the chief executive said no significant layoffs were expected. Ask what the integration changes for price and support.

- **A \$39 accounting add-on surprised reviewers.** The fee is per user per month, or \$4,680 a year for 10 users. Get the accounting fee in the quote.

- **Cancelling early is not refunded.** Plans renew automatically. Get the cancellation process in writing.

- **The rebrand came with a sister-product push.** 8am says pricing and support are unchanged. Confirm the plan terms were not altered at renewal.

- **Contract terms conflict between sources.** One says monthly with no long-term contract, another says annual with 30 days notice. Confirm in the agreement.

- **Steep learning curve and reporting limits.** Users report a steep learning curve, over-recorded time capture, and confusing batch invoicing. Pilot with a real billing cycle.

- **Implementation takes about two months.** This is twice the others per users. Plan the migration and training.

The Decision Framework

Choose Clio if:

- You want the broadest integration ecosystem and a platform that is expanding into legal research and drafting.
- You have a written quote that names the plan and features, caps the annual increase, and states which AI features are on by default.
- You have calendared the renewal notice date and confirmed the refund terms.

Choose MyCase if:

- You are a small firm that wants published prices and an all-in-one client portal with payments.
- You have confirmed the accounting add-on fee and the cancellation process in writing.
- You have spoken with current customers about support responsiveness, given the public record.

Choose Smokeball if:

- Your firm works in Microsoft Word and Outlook and wants automatic time capture and document automation.
- You have the full plan price and contract term in writing, because the sources conflict.
- You can plan for a two-month implementation and a learning curve.

Key Decision Factors

Design decides where the work happens. Clio and MyCase are cloud platforms with a browser at the center, and Smokeball is a hybrid that centers on Word and Outlook and works offline. Clio adds the broadest ecosystem and a growing AI suite, and MyCase adds the all-in-one client portal.

Audience decides which one fits. Clio suits firms of many sizes that want an ecosystem, MyCase suits small firms that want simple published pricing, and Smokeball suits Microsoft-centered firms that want automation of documents and time.

Price depends on the plan, the add-ons, and payment processing. A 10-user firm models at \$5,880-\$17,880 for Clio, \$6,000-\$20,280 for MyCase, and \$5,880-\$21,480 for Smokeball before card processing, which adds about \$7,400-\$7,500 on \$250,000 in payments. The ranges overlap, and only MyCase publishes the full list.

The Bottom Line

- A firm that wants an ecosystem and AI roadmap should shortlist Clio and get a written quote with default AI settings and an increase cap.
- A small firm that wants predictable pricing should shortlist MyCase and verify cancellation terms and support with references.
- A Microsoft-centered firm should shortlist Smokeball and get the plan price and contract term in writing.

No product in this comparison is perfect. Clio has the largest ecosystem and the most expansive AI plans, and its pricing is partly hidden and its renewal and AI complaints are on the public record. MyCase has the clearest price list and the weakest consumer ratings, with support and cancellation complaints. Smokeball has the highest satisfaction scores and the least visible pricing, with conflicting contract terms. Every vendor here carries pricing friction. The choice is which risks and costs your firm can absorb.