

# Law Firm Keeps Attorneys Connected in the Office and on the Road with 8x8

*McDonnell and Associates, general practice law firm, with a focus on real estate*



McDonnell and Associates' stated objective is to provide efficiency by incorporating technological advances into its business model. By implementing a cloud-based solution from industry leader 8x8, McDonnell united offices and remote workers across several states onto one telephony platform, eliminating ongoing maintenance charges. Sometimes it pays to put your money where your mouth is.

McDonnell and Associates operates as a general practice firm, with headquarters in Columbia, South Carolina, and eight additional offices in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Their focus is on real estate law, auto accidents and personal injury law, business formation, criminal defense, domestic issues and family law, wills/estate planning/probate, general civil law, civil litigation, and creditor's rights.

Since its inception, real estate law has been a major strength for the practice. The firm's 35 attorneys and 85 staff members all have experience with the closing process, including title work, title insurance, and settlement. McDonnell maintains a statewide network of title searchers and traveling attorneys so that it can complete real estate transactions anywhere in South Carolina.

## Outdated Key System Could Not Support Mobile Attorneys

Initially, the firm had one main office in Columbia that consisted of two buildings across the street from each other. An NEC key system provided phone service, and tie lines united the two buildings.

But by 2011, McDonnell had maxed out its key system. The firm's mobile attorneys who work from home, or travel to complete real estate closings, were not supported. Provisioning new office workers took weeks, required on-site service calls, and incurred significant installation charges. The firm's ongoing maintenance contract for the system was also costly. The search for a replacement phone system was on.

**Customer:**

McDonnell and Associates

**Industry:** Law firm

**Location:** Charleston, South Carolina (headquarters); additional offices in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina

**8x8 Product:** 8x8 Virtual Office

**Current Setup:** 122 extensions

**Favorite 8x8 Features:**

- Self-service administrator portal
- Desktop interface with centralized corporate directory

**Connectivity type:** Fiber from a tier 1 carrier

**Vendor replaced:** NEC

**Reason for choosing 8x8:**

- Reduced IT maintenance
- Support for remote and mobile users
- Easy provisioning of new users

**Website:**

[www.mcdonnelllawfirm.com](http://www.mcdonnelllawfirm.com)

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—Paul Siskin  
CIO, McDonnell and  
Associates

## 8x8: The Most Robust Cloud Solution in the Industry!

According to McDonnell CIO Paul Siskin, several factors differentiated 8x8 right from the start. “8x8 has the most robust cloud solution and the best references in the industry,” he says. “The mobile app is ideal for our users, because we have people traveling to banks and homes to sign off on closings—sometimes multiple closings in one day. The self-service administration portal also gives us the ability to make changes and maintain the system by ourselves.”

McDonnell began rolling out the new 8x8 system to the firm’s Columbia offices and remote users. Full deployment took less than 30 days.

“It was an easy transition for us,” recalls Siskin. “Once we ported over our existing phone numbers, we just pulled out the old phone equipment and plugged in our new 8x8 phones. The phones were already preconfigured, and there was no inside wiring to install because 8x8’s system is IP-based.”

## Internet Phone Service Expedites Expansion

With 8x8 successfully deployed at its headquarters, McDonnell began a planned expansion into several other states. As each new office opened, it joined the firm’s 8x8 telephony platform. Every employee has their own 8x8 extension, enabling easy extension dialing and call transfers. Each remote office has one main number answered by an auto attendant. A centralized corporate directory lets callers reach firm employees by dialing a name or extension.

Siskin notes that 8x8’s cloud-based solution allows McDonnell to open new offices much more quickly than a more traditional phone system would.

“Opening a new office with a traditional phone company service takes weeks,” he says. “Plus you need to pay for equipment and labor to put the system in. With 8x8, all you need is the Internet—the phones are ready to go. We can open a new office in a couple of days now.”

## 8x8 Supports Everybody’s Preferences

At the same time, many McDonnell attorneys began working from home regularly, or dividing their work time between home and office. 8x8 keeps them connected to the firm no matter which location or device they choose.

“Our attorneys like the convenience of being able to work at home, especially those who travel during the day,” says Siskin. “8x8 lets them work remotely or be mobile but still have access to all the system features. They can also choose the device that’s most convenient for them. Some attorneys prefer to use an 8x8 desk phone in their home offices, and others exclusively use the 8x8 mobile app on their smartphones. 8x8 supports everybody’s preferences.”

Traveling attorneys who work out of executive suites are also supported by 8x8. Siskin overnights them a phone to use, and they simply plug it in at the suite. This saves the firm from paying typically high per-minute phone costs while the attorney is using the suite and keeps the attorney connected to the rest of the firm on the same 8x8 telephony platform.

## Chat, Phone and Meeting Features Increase Employee Productivity

Since implementing 8x8 cloud communications across the firm, Siskin has noticed a number of productivity improvements in the way McDonnell employees work.

For example, 8x8 gives users a chat capability that allows them to contact coworkers while on a client call. Instead of putting the client on hold, users can multitask—saving time while on the phone.

Siskin also points to 8x8's "find me, follow me" feature, which allows attorneys to take important calls even when they are away from their desks.

"The real estate industry is very fast-paced," he explains. "Sometimes a document or a signature is needed right away, and you can't afford to miss that call. With our old NEC key system, we had to be at our desks to answer calls. Now we can use 8x8 to find us at home, on the road, or even in a meeting. We're no longer tied to our desks, and we can respond more quickly to urgent requests."

8x8 meeting features such as conference bridges and web conferencing help McDonnell promote efficiency across its multi-state organization. Recently the firm selected a new provider for its healthcare plan. Rather than give the same presentation seven times in each of the firm's offices, the HR department used 8x8 web conferencing and desktop sharing features to present the information at one firm-wide meeting.

## Remote Access Enhances Business Continuity

Record-breaking snow- and ice storms that hit the Eastern seaboard this past winter shut down many businesses. 8x8 helped McDonnell maintain its business continuity despite the bad weather.

"When a storm hits and our office has to close, employees can work from home just as if they were in the office," explains Siskin. "I can also log in from home and change our auto attendant greetings to let clients know our office is closed for the day. You don't have those capabilities with an old-fashioned analog system—callers just hear ringing with no answer and have no idea what's going on."

## Reduced IT Maintenance Saves Time and Money

While McDonnell's monthly fee for 8x8 cloud-based service is certainly affordable, the firm's most significant cost savings comes from the elimination of maintenance charges. For Siskin, this is one of the most important advantages of the 8x8 system.

"We used to have a maintenance contract for our key system," he says. "Whenever we wanted to make a change to it or add something new, we had to call a service tech and pay an installation fee. 8x8 service is completely different. The self-service portal lets us maintain the system on our own, and make changes on the fly when we need to. I don't have to wait for the phone company to send someone out or pay any extra charges."

Provisioning new users is now so easy that Siskin does it by email. "The best thing about setting up new 8x8 users is that it doesn't take IT time," he says. "I can send them an 8x8 phone with email instructions explaining how to activate it. In a few minutes they can install it themselves."

8x8 has also streamlined the repair process for Siskin and his team, because the only equipment they have to maintain is the firm's 8x8 phones. They keep a few in stock as spares, and simply swap them out when a user drops and breaks one.



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**—Paul Siskin**

CIO, McDonnell and Associates

## One System for All Users

In Siskin's view, what makes McDonnell's 8x8 deployment so successful—in multiple offices, users' homes, and executive suites—is the system's ease of use and installation.

"We're all on one system, no matter where we are," he says. "8x8's platform keeps us connected as a team while we continue to add new users and locations."

Find out how 8x8 can help your business. Call **1.866.862.2811** or visit **[www.8x8.com](http://www.8x8.com)**

