

Computerized Case Management Systems

Most courts have implemented or are implementing case management systems that provide real-time, single user updating. This means that only one user (usually the court clerk) needs to input information, and not multiple users on multiple systems.

For example, if a hearing date is altered by the court, when the clerk enters the new date, the judge, prosecutor, and all attorneys are automatically notified, and all court-administered calendars are updated. However, every court seems to have different priorities and requirements, resulting in different software and programs from county-to-county, and sometimes from court-to-court.

§ 12.3

The Tech Friendly Courtroom

It's Not Just PowerPoint Anymore

TRIAL PRESENTATION SOFTWARE

Today's "connected" courtroom incorporates multimedia tools for use by attorneys, and sometimes by the court itself. These tools enable trial lawyers to give presentations, show juries accident reconstruction schematics, play video depositions of witnesses, and even present exhibits in a digital format.

PowerPoint is still the most widely used trial presentation product, and it is easy to learn. Other more complex presentation software tools not only provide the ability to create demonstrations, but also allows for the creation of databases and deposition management (such as viewing and searching transcripts). Having these tools in one bundle has obvious advantages. But they can also be quite expensive. But good news: it will not be your decision!

A FEW NOTES ABOUT POWERPOINT

This pioneer in presentation software, *PowerPoint* is still a relevant and useful tool for making presentations to the court and to a jury. *PowerPoint* lends itself to linear presentations, meaning there is a start point and an end point with the rest in the middle. It makes it especially effective for storytelling, but not for popping in and out for individual pages or documents. *PowerPoint* is affordable and easy to create and use. It is also able to be exported to many other trial presentation software systems. However, it has its limits as a trial presentation software tool. Demonstrations are fixed at trial, and thus impossible to adjust "on-the-fly" during a presentation. Demonstrations must be prepared in advance of the trial.

ONCUE

Internet Address: oncuetechnology.com

Built for industrial-sized litigation, this powerful software tool can handle any size document database. It is especially designed to make depositions easier to manage by combining video and text transcripts in one system, allowing the presenter to eliminate unneeded testimony and focus on the most critical questions and responses.

PROS

Includes everything needed in a trial presentation system. Designed by trial presentation attorneys.

CONS

Expensive. Also, training is a must.

TRIAL DIRECTOR - 360

Internet Address: iprotech.com/trialdirector-360

Probably the best-known trial presentation software that is dedicated to courtroom use. It's a powerful tool and is easier to use than ever. An example of its use would be:

Attorney: I'd like to present the witness's deposition testimony given February 12, 2021. On page 15, it states:

Paralegal Software Operator: *Quickly navigates to the requested page and highlights the requested question and answer, then "shares" the page on the screen for all to see.*

PROS

Powerful and flexible

CONS

A bit pricey, but not as much as others.

SANCTION

Internet Address: *verdictsystems.com*

Sanction is an excellent presentation system designed specifically for courtroom use. Sanction delivers a compelling argument with a powerful multimedia presentation by incorporating audio and video testimony, animations and other demonstrative technology (such as *PowerPoint*), while handy organization and layout tools make jumping in and out of documents a snap.

PROS

Sanction has been acquired by *Lexis* which means the quality is excellent, the support is strong, and it can coordinate with other *Lexis* products, such as *CaseMate* and *Lexis+*.

CONS

Sanction has been acquired by *Lexis* which means it is relatively expensive.

§ 12.4

E-Filing

Convenience

Electronic filing of litigation documents is fast becoming the norm. Many jurisdictions now require that all documents (with a few exceptions) *after the initial summons and complaint* be filed electronically.

As with most of the technological issues we have discussed, the major obstacle for the paralegal (and his or her attorney) is the wide range of software systems used by the various courts. For example, many courts use a system by *Lexis*. The federal courts use tools called CM/ECF and PACER. Others have systems created and designed to suit their individual needs. In other words, proprietary software.

In federal courts, if you want to *file* a document, use CM/ECF (*Case Management/Electronic Case Files*), or NextGen CM/ECF. If you want to *find* a document, use PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records). Only those individuals recognized by specific courts can utilize CM/ECF for those courts, but anyone can use PACER (once they have registered for an account).

Both are now run under the umbrella of PACER at *pacer.uscourts.gov*.