

Chapter 1 - The Necessity for Automating the Practice of Law

Conclusion

Digital technology will transform the practice of law and allow us to “practice” law. Digital technology will free us from the drudgery of locating and organizing paper and the large cost and the ineffective time consuming search for cases will end. It will enable a practitioner to settle from a position of strength. It will give you control of the facts and law of your case and the time to analyze those facts to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your case. The capital investment in computers is cheap compared to investment into additional employees. The cost of accessing the law has dropped sharply. The time to search for legal precedent and statutes is minutes instead of hours or days. Corporate attorneys are demanding better services for less cost. Discounted legal services are being demanded based on volume, value-based billing, task-based billing and blended billing. There are tremendous opportunities for growth and for reduction.

Technology for the next several years has already been invented. The chips for the computers and their capacity have been already been designed for the next decade. Technology will change but the computerized lawyering process of handling of information will remain the same. The concepts of full text, databases, images, hypertext linking will remain static. The tools will become more sophisticated, but the objectives will be the same – to provide quality service for your clients. The application of the technology process is not easy and does not result from chance - it must be learned, practiced and upgraded. Think in terms of information technology tools and the people that can actuate those tools for your cases. Think in terms of your clients’ needs and how application of technology can meet those needs.

However, the computer is only a tool. It does not have a brain and think like a lawyer. It can free you from the paper shuffle. It can assist you in digging out facts quickly and efficiently. It cannot prepare a clear opening statement. It cannot judge the demeanor of a witness, when to make objections, how to sell your case to a jury, or the most effective way to present your evidence. It will never take the place of the lead attorney. The computer is only a tool and will not replace you as an attorney. However, it can assist you in each phase of the trial, and it can free you to use your considerable skills as a trained trial attorney, thereby making this impossible job of ours a lot easier. Even though computers will not replace lawyers, an attorney who uses a computer may replace one who doesn’t.

But how can I as a busy practitioner implement digital technology solutions in my practice?

The focus for the remainder of this book will demonstrate how implementation of existing computer based solutions, with an ever-watchful eye toward the future, can assist you as a practitioner in representing your clients.

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