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Sutherland Utilizes CompuLaw Vision to Automate Litigation Calendaring

By Joy Akens

In 2004, the Sutherland law firm was dealing with a large enforcement matter that included scheduling many court dates. While working to effectively manage the many aspects involved in this unique case, we looked into using CompuLaw Vision, which draws on CompuLaw's vast databases of court rules and jurisdictions and automatically calculates deadlines, saving time and reducing the risk of error.

Vision was so successful that we began considering it for other aspects of the firm's calendar. A team of attorneys tested the product to see how Vision would perform in various scenarios. The team included holidays and weekends to ensure that the automated rules would catch everything, and they checked the rules in different jurisdictions and practice areas to ensure all of the relevant ones were included. Vision performed very well. Attorneys and staff considered other programs, but were most comfortable with Vision: it was easy to use, and it integrated well with the firm's other software programs.

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The firm launched CompuLaw in its Intellectual Property Litigation Department, starting with a small number of jurisdictions and adding on as needed. In 2005, we purchased the Enterprise Version of CompuLaw Vision, which includes every rule in every jurisdiction of CompuLaw's Rules Databases™.

As our firm has grown, with nearly 500 attorneys in seven major practice areas, we've increased our use of Vision and CompuLaw's other offerings. In our years of use, CompuLaw's programs have never crashed, they are technologically reliable, and I have yet to research an event and receive incorrect information.

The ability to color code events would be beneficial, as would the ability to link Web accounts to the master account, which would save us considerable time. But overall, Vision has undisputedly saved us significant amounts of time and has been reliable in flagging court dates and filing deadlines.

SUTHERLAND'S PROCESS

I'm based in Atlanta and support attorneys here and in our Washington, DC, New York, and Houston offices. Initially, I oversaw IP litigation docketing. Recently, the entire litigation department came on board with Vision.

My team's calendar function is completely electronic, which means that I do not need to interact with the mailroom or deal

with paper. I can therefore docket remotely to verify that everything is being handled on schedule. This technology ensures the calendar is always covered, and attorneys don't need to worry when docketing staff take time off.

Documents sent to Sutherland regarding particular matters are delivered to the lead secretary or paralegal working with that client. Paper documents are physically date stamped by the secretary or paralegal; electronically submitted documents already are dated. A PDF version of the document is created and e-mailed to me at a designated IP docketing mailbox. I review the document, upload it to Vision, stamp it via Adobe Acrobat®, and then electronically return it to the secretary or paralegal. All of the documents and information are then placed in our database and iConnect® collaborative tool. With Vision and our electronic documents, we strive for a turn around of no more than four hours. Usually, it's a matter of only a few minutes.

With appropriate training and core knowledge about the litigation process in general, CompuLaw Vision is easy to use. Those who docket need to understand discovery and interrogatories, dispositive and non-dispositive motions, and the appellate process in order to ensure they input all of the critical information to help the program work effectively. Like any other technology, you get out what you put

in. When questions arise, I send an e-mail to CompuLaw's support staff, who are attorneys, and receive an answer within a couple of hours.

COMPU**LAW'S REACH**

Vision also integrates with many of our other software programs, including Microsoft Outlook®, so attorneys receive daily calendar updates. Events entered on the calendar are uploaded into attorneys' Outlook calendars by 6:00 the next morning. Not only are all court-related dates in the docketing system, each attorney has a copy.

We've also expanded our use of CompuLaw's other products. Recently, we began working with CompuLaw Collaborate™ and the CompuLaw Vision Web Portal™. The Web Portal gives attorneys and staff around-the-clock access to their schedules, and we can grant some of our clients secure access to certain information about the calendar.

CompuLaw Collaborate allows us to integrate the Web Portal with the Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server. With Collaborate, we can take the *Event List* aspect of the Web Portal and integrate it with any SharePoint 2007 Web site, which creates an *Event List Web Part*. With that, we have direct access to important information on all of the events that relate to a specific client, matter, attorney, team or department. Our attorneys and staff can filter their portal views to see exactly what information they need, and they can access the most updated versions of their schedules and calendars.

TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

While CompuLaw is easy to use, regular training and updates help me stay on top of the latest

developments. I received training through the CompuLaw Certification Program, which culminates with a two-day, one-on-one class and certification exam.

The certification program is extremely helpful because I now better understand the many details of the program. It also certified me to train others on Vision. I regularly instruct attorneys and staff at Sutherland on CompuLaw's capabilities. I provide a basic overview that shows associates what the program is, what it can do for them, and how they can view their matters or see events contained within them. I inform newer attorneys that Vision isn't just about dates — it provides the authority, tells what the rule is, and explains where the rule originated.

I offer basic training classes for secretaries so they know how to view CompuLaw, pull up matters, prepare docket reports and view events as they and the attorneys need them. I've also taught paralegals how to review their cases and prepare reports. Beyond the staff and attorneys at Sutherland, I also communicate regularly with other CompuLaw users at different firms through CompuLaw User Groups. The user group meetings are designed to enable support and interaction between law firm users. We share knowledge and help make each other's jobs better and easier. Sutherland hosted a meeting at our Atlanta office in October 2008. A representative from CompuLaw attended and discussed the Web Portal and SharePoint collaboration with us, which was very enlightening. About 12 people attended, and others were able to participate virtually.

While the instruction was helpful, what happened after the meeting may have been even more useful.

Afterward, attendees shared how their firms manage their court calendars. We talked for nearly an hour, and some attendees even came to my desk to see how I personally manage Sutherland's calendar.

The firm values the Vision program, and my supervisor has been very supportive of my training and certification. It makes all the difference to work with people who buy in to the program, because it allows those of us in the docketing department to become greater assets to our firms, our departments and our attorneys.