

DOCKETING & CONFLICTS

Risk Management

Adding conflicts staff and technology can protect your firm.

By *David Kalmick*

COURT calendar-related errors are the leading cause of legal administrative malpractice claims, according to "Profile of Malpractice Claims," an American Bar Association study conducted between 1996 and 1999.

Not surprisingly, legal liability insurance carrier costs have skyrocketed, and malpractice carriers now audit law firm practices. Most carriers will ask if your firm is using court rules-based calendaring, and some require a court rules-based system before they will write a policy. Other insurance companies give a discount or may reduce a rate increase.

Automated court rules-based calendaring systems are available to firms of all sizes, and every firm can find payback in lower insurance rates and/or the better use of billable time. The systems are flexible, and can fit the technical infrastructures and working styles of nearly every firm.

Here are typical features:

✓ **Deadlines:** Users can apply court rules

for various jurisdictions to automatically calculate deadlines. When trigger events are moved, (such as trials or hearings), the court rules software automatically recalculates the entire calendar.

✓ **Centralized calendaring:** Firms can establish a central calendaring system, where attorneys and staff send all pleadings and/or docketed items to a central docket clerk or department for processing. A trained docket administrator then takes the information and applies it to the master calendaring software system, which is integrated with the rules database(s). The docket department can issue regular reports for each attorney to keep them abreast of case dates and deadlines.

✓ **Customized calendaring:** Some large matters and/or practice areas have one operator creating the calendar for all the lawyers. Some lawyers do not want centralized calendar administration, so those matters are centralized in terms of where the data is kept and accessed, but de-centralized in terms of who uses the data so that a secretary or paralegal can prepare the calendar.

✓ **Standalone:** For small environments, software can be installed on single



or multiple stand-alone PCs. The individual secretary, paralegal or lawyer who has access to this standalone system can then create or modify the calendar.

✓ **Client-server:** The software is installed on the firm's server, and can be accessed by individual secretaries/paralegals — or the central docket department can access on their PCs. Software also can be made accessible via a firm's wide area network from a central server.

✓ **Remote access:** Attorneys can access their court calendar at anytime via a Web browser using an Internet connection.

✓ **Integration:** Many programs can be integrated with your existing calendar systems, such as Microsoft Outlook, Novell GroupWise and Lotus Notes. **L T N**

David Kalmick is president and CEO of CompuLaw.

E-mail: dkalmick@compulaw.com.

Web: www.compulaw.com.

This article is reprinted with permission from the July 2003 edition of LAW TECHNOLOGY NEWS. © 2003 ALM Properties, Inc. All rights reserved. Further duplication without permission is prohibited. For information, contact American Lawyer Media, Reprint Department at 800-888-8300 x6111. #010-07-03-0002