

The Advantage of Tech-Savvy Law Firms

By Joseph P. McCaffery

The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin recently published survey findings indicating attorneys are overloaded by technology. According to the report, some 70 percent of respondents say they spend significant amounts of time sorting through irrelevant information to locate what they need.

We suggest, likely in agreement with survey sponsors LexisNexis, that these overwhelmed attorneys need to be more selective in choosing their electronic research tools, and need to better learn how to use their chosen tools.

Our firm has found technology resources have revolutionized the process of identifying current, relevant case law to argue our clients' cases. Unlike the apparent majority of firms, we embrace this technology as one more way to provide the most complete representation for our clients.

Legal databases also reduce costs. Legal fees, that a decade or so ago would have been generated by trips to the law library to sift through often-outdated pages of case law, far outweigh the online research charges. In addition, because the electronic legal databases are the most up-to-date sources of case law available, we know we can present arguments on behalf of our clients that are based on current rulings.

For example, that same issue of Chicago Daily Law Bulletin included coverage of state and US Supreme Court findings on search & seizure. The Courts' opinions on the issues were just made available five days prior. No printed law book would include these cases so soon, but a tech savvy firm like ours would find them.

So what does this mean to the average person in need of legal representation? It means that in selecting a law firm to represent you, be sure to ask about its research capability. Find out how they build their arguments and how they bill you for the time and expense involved. Choose a firm that is knowledgeable and efficient in both obtaining case law and managing your costs.

Mortgage Fraud Victims Relieved of Liabilities

As you previously may have read, JPMA represents a group of clients who are victims of mortgage fraud involving more than 50 properties in the Chicago metro area.

We are pleased to report that consent foreclosures have been granted on 80 percent of the properties, **relieving our clients of more than \$20 million in debt liability**. Similar agreements are being negotiated on the remaining properties. We anticipate soon being able to close the book on the liabilities and focus our efforts on the nearly \$200 million civil suit our clients are pursuing against the perpetrators of the fraud.



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The Law and the Internet

The Internet has revolutionized how we do just about everything. The practice of law is no exception and, naturally, there are a few bumps in the road.

Managing the terrain of this new legal landscape involves creating new case law and legislation. And unlike the missing 18-1/2 minutes of Watergate audiotape in the 1970s, today's technology allows nearly any electronic documentation to be recovered or at least traced.



For example, an attorney in another state recently was sanctioned and faces disbarment for "eavesdropping" on his wife's email and, having figured out the password pattern used by the law firm she worked for, the email accounts of several of her colleagues. The invasion of email accounts was easily traced to his computer.

In Wisconsin, a 42 year-old man and his 22 year-old son are facing criminal charges after posting a YouTube video showing them "roughhousing" with a couple of tasers — one of which was stolen from a police vehicle. Having virtually handed local prosecutors their case, the father has plead guilty as the son awaits his plea hearing.

YouTube drew international attention to the issue of equity in marriage and to the divorce of Shubert Organization President Phillip Smith from his actress-playwright wife, Tricia Walsh, when Ms. Walsh shared her side of the story through a series of posted video segments. Mr. Smith has since used the video postings as grounds for divorce, even though he filed for divorce months before Ms. Walsh's postings.

The Internet also has changed how we communicate our services and how clients find us. An estimated 90 percent of JPMA business stems from online research. In fact, the story about JPMA successfully overturning a multi-million dollar prenuptial agreement that headlined the first issue of this newsletter was found by one client within 45 minutes of its online posting and she quickly signed-on with the firm.

In early July, that same article was found online by Tricia Walsh, who has retained JPMA to provide counsel regarding her prenuptial agreement and the appeal of the finding on its validity. Her ex-husband's estate is estimated at roughly \$60 million.