



GPSSF Section Chair's Invitation to Attend Success Conference and Section Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars

Success Conference and Section Annual Meeting—April 1, 2005, Holiday Inn Select—2200 Freeway Blvd., Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

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Please E-mail any and all comments and/or suggestions for newsletter topics to Jason P. Hoffman, Newsletter Editor, at hoffman_jason@hotmail.com.



By: Jason P. Hoffman
Newsletter Editor

The GPSSF Section Council has been hard at work finalizing the details for our Success Conference and Section Annual Meeting to be held on April 1, 2005 at the Holiday Inn Select, 2200 Freeway Blvd., Brooklyn Center, MN 55430.

This year's general theme is one our members should find particularly appealing: Succeeding in the 21st Century: Working Smarter Not Harder. As promised, this year's Success Conference offers a two-tiered CLE agenda loaded with both Law Practice Management topics and Substantive Law topics.

A complete agenda, faculty biographies, and registration form is attached to this newsletter, and members should also be receiving a separate

mailing with complete details.

"I'm very pleased with all of the hard work the Section Council has done to make this event a success, and I'm excited that our membership will be able to participate in this useful and informative event," stated Section Chair, Patrick W. Kelly, in a recent Section Council teleconference to finalize the details for the Conference. "I'm hopeful that our membership will realize what a tremendous event this has become and that our attendance this year will surpass all other conferences to date."

The GPSSF Section will have its Annual Meeting, including Council Elections during the Conference luncheon, so be sure to attend.

This year's Success Conference and Section Annual Meeting will have something for everyone, so check your calendars and get your registration materials sent in as soon as possible to secure your spot for this event!

GPSSF Section Reaches out to Law Students and New Lawyers



By: Jason P. Hoffman
Newsletter Editor

The GPSSF Section Council has appointed a subcommittee to outreach and establish mentoring relationships with current law students and new lawyers.

"It's no surprise that the majority of new lawyers entering the marketplace are deciding to enter private practice as solo practitioners or as associates in firms of less than five attorneys," said Section Chair, Patrick W. Kelly, "the GPSSF Section members have an obligation to assist these new lawyers in whatever way we can."

To that end, GPSSF Section Council has contacted the career services offices of all four Minnesota

Law Schools to open discussions regarding the development of mentoring relationships between practitioners and current law students. The intent is to develop a means for practitioners and students to identify each other for mentoring and clerkship opportunities.

The GPSSF Section Council has also contacted the MSBA New Lawyers Section to inquire as to how both sections can pool their resources to offer joint programming and facilitate networking opportunities.

The GPSSF Section Council recognizes that mentoring is crucial to the overall health of the MSBA and the quality of the bar in general because practical knowledge from experience simply cannot be taught in law schools. In order to properly prepare new lawyers for the future, the members of the bar must be willing to offer guidance and assistance in whatever way possible. Mentoring will continue to be a priority for the GPSSF Section Council.

“Today’s collaboration technology offers a wide range of options, from the simple to the complex, and from the all-but-free to the expensive.”

By Dennis M. Kennedy

Online meetings and long-distance collaboration are no longer the exclusive province of big-firm lawyers doing big deals or handling big cases. Many solos are finding situations in which they have discussions with attorneys, clients, and experts in other states and even other countries. Even in local cases, conference calls and other technological alternatives may prove more convenient, efficient, and inexpensive than bringing people into a conference room, whether at your office or elsewhere.

Business clients, in particular, have begun to use technology for online

meetings and prefer not to make a trip to your office for a meeting if it can be avoided. You may already have clients who do not like to come to your office, cannot take time off work to meet you during office hours, or simply think their matter can be handled without a face-to-face meeting. Similarly, you may have clients who are located at a distance. Collaboration technologies can help you make more profitable use of your time (especially if you don’t charge clients for your travel time to and from their offices).

Today’s collaboration technology offers a wide range of options, from the simple to the complex, and from the all-but-free to the expensive.

Some options are even available on a one-time or per-use basis. If you develop a toolbox of collaboration technologies, you can choose the option that works best for a given situation.

Collaboration Options

I like to think of collaboration technology in an expansive sense. I also want to move your thinking away from the sci-fi images of videophones and “virtual holographic meetings.” Let’s get practical and run through the range of options, starting with the simplest and cheapest.

Telephony. *Long-distance savings.* A great first step on the collaborative path is simply to minimize the cost of your long-distance calls. From ag-

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“You could try to sell your old computers for a few cents on eBay, or maybe you could donate them to charity.”

Any of these choices could cost you your law license.”

By Ross L. Kodner and Courtney G. Kennaday

In a regular and predictable ritual, similar in level of irritation to the 17-year locusts but much more frequent, you need to replace your PCs, laptops, and network files servers. Not that they necessarily wear out, but they are simply no longer up to the task of running contemporary software. Sadly, using a three- or four-year-old desktop PC is a lot like driving a car with 800,000 miles on it—just barely limps along.

So what happens to all those elderly

PC systems once you’ve relegated them to the dustbin of techno-history in your firm or law department? What are your choices? Tossing them in the dumpster seems wasteful, and it is certainly not very environmentally conscious. Much of this equipment is considered hazardous to the environment and must be managed and disposed of in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. You could try to sell your old computers for a few cents on eBay, or maybe you could donate them to charity.

Any of these choices could cost you your law license.

Why? Because all those old computers are packed with confidential client information—information that you have an ethical duty to protect. Further, the computers undoubtedly have sensitive firm information, as well as software licensed to your firm or organization (for which you have specific obligations under the respective “end-user license agreements,” or EULA). Giving away control and access to these computers—through either the dumpster approach, the

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Software that Plays Well Together

By Wells Anderson

Most software programs do not play well with each other. They do what they do alone. But some are outstanding team players, connecting easily and sharing information with other software. Consider how the programs you already have—and some that may be worth buying—might work harder for you by playing well together.

Adobe Acrobat

Adobe Acrobat (www.adobe.com) creates electronic paper. It is simple

to use, showing up as if it were just another printer attached to your computer. You can “print” word processing documents, spreadsheets, and web pages to PDF (Portable Document Format). These files can be saved, viewed on-screen, or printed. Lawyers can use Adobe Acrobat to create courtroom presentations, electronic briefs, and paperless collections of exhibits. In many jurisdictions, PDF is the required format for e-filing.

Adobe Acrobat works extremely well with a host of other programs. It can create PDFs from just about every

application on the planet that can print something. It also lets you tap into special features you might not otherwise exploit in other programs. For example, Acrobat works with Microsoft Word to create hot-linked tables of contents and website addresses. Word can automatically generate a table of contents based on headings; then an Acrobat button on the Word toolbar creates a PDF file with special links. This feature makes it easy for your readers to jump to any section of your document by clicking the corresponding line in the table of contents. They

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“Most software programs do not play well with each other. But some are outstanding team players . . .”

Collaborating with Clients: Meet Your Clients Virtually Anywhere at a Reasonable Cost (Continued from Page 2)

gressive pricing plans to fixed-fee, unlimited long-distance plans, telephone companies have moved to pricing models that are attractive to small businesses. Explore what options you might have, especially if you commit to a one- or two-year service term or bring all your telephone services to one company. As an example, SBC is now offering unlimited long-distance calls for a flat fee of \$20 per month.

VOIP. Voice over IP (commonly, "VOIP") is a relatively new type of telephone service that uses your computer and Internet connection for calls. In essence, your Internet connection replaces your phone service. There are cost savings, but you may make some sacrifices in voice quality and reliability. However, many individuals and businesses are using VOIP with success, and its growth is impressive. You will often hear the name of Vonage in connection with VOIP services. They have a range of plans, including an unlimited local and long-distance plan for small businesses at \$49.99 per month.

Conference calling. The basic foundation for collaboration technology is, and probably will remain, the simple conference call. Do you still have only POTS ("plain old telephone service")? Get with the times. Three-way calling is a common feature with both cell phones and standard home or business services. If you add only that feature, you can at least speak with both spouses at work during an estate planning conference. As a practical matter, three-way calling will do the trick in most cases. However, if you expect to be doing multiparty conference calls on a regular basis, you will want to talk to your telephone company about adding a more robust set of conferencing features. Basic three-way calling costs about \$5 per month these days.

Conference call services. I am a little surprised by the number of my clients and colleagues who use third-party conference call services on a regular basis. There are a number of services that handle the technical details of conferencing for you. You simply set a time for your call, reserve a block of time, specify the number of users, and get a phone number and meeting number to give to the participants. At the time of the conference, you and the other participants call into the phone number of the service, enter the meeting number, and then get brought together for the conference call. You do not need to have any special conferencing features on your own phone.

There are a large number of these services, with a variety of pricing plans that reflect the level of services (do you want an operator present?) and features provided. An important consideration is whether to offer your participants an "800" number to call into the conference. While it is not necessary, the participants in your conference calls will appreciate it—especially if they would otherwise need to pay long-distance rates to call in. In general, unless you need specific advanced features, you can focus on reputation,

reliability, and cost when choosing among these services. Most of the services will offer you a way to arrange a conference call on a one-time basis or to set up an account. My research showed that prices tend to be about 20 to 25 cents per minute per line, with some flat-rate plans available. Providers include both the telephone companies and specialty services such as Conference Calls Unlimited and ConferenceCall.com.

"Pumping up" technologies you already use. One of the easiest and cheapest ways to achieve online collaboration is to use the carbon copy ("cc:") feature of your e-mail program. If you send copies of every e-mail to every person involved in your project, you can keep everyone "in the loop" on conversations, report on news and developments, and even collaborate on documents by sending around drafts as e-mail attachments. Many lawyers already do this without realizing that they have moved into the world of "collaboration technology."

Carbon copying e-mails is an important illustration of how simple it can be to improve client service and get work done by turning what you might have thought of as a "one-to-one" vehicle into a group vehicle. Some lawyers have used other Internet applications such as chat, instant messaging, e-mail discussion lists, and newsgroups into platforms for simple group efforts. If you find that you have a project involving people who have comfort and capability with e-mail or another application of this type, you may be able to be a little creative and achieve good results at zero expense.

Text-based collaboration. Our next step up the ladder of collaboration technologies brings us to a group of programs and services specifically designed for and marketed as collaboration tools. What they have in common is that they are predominantly text-based. You will use e-mail, store and exchange documents and messages, and generally work with text. Their advantage over conference calls is that they, like e-mail, are tools for asynchronous communication. You do not have to find a time that fits everyone's schedule as you would with a conference call. If you happen to be involved in any international dealings, these tools give you a great way to deal with time zone issues.

Yahoo Groups. A good example from this category is the free Yahoo Groups from Yahoo.com. You must sign up for a Yahoo account. You may then create your own group or set of groups. In the simplest sense, a Yahoo Group gives you a private e-mail list. You define the rules for your group, choose the features you want, and invite the people you want to participate. Everyone can then send e-mail to a single e-mail address, and copies will be simultaneously sent to every member of the group. Copies of all the e-mails are kept on the web page for your Yahoo Group for members to review. You can also upload and store files and take advantage of several other helpful features.

Although the service is free, there are a number of catches to consider. The service is free because it is advertiser-supported and language is added to the bottom of each mail. The other members of your collaborative group must also sign up for their own Yahoo accounts. As a practical matter, Yahoo Groups work best when you have perhaps four or five people in-

involved and your project has an extended duration.

QuickTopic, Socialtext, Basecamp, and similar services. The category of collaborative services that has caught the attention of investors is the collaborative workspaces. QuickTopic, Socialtext, and Basecamp are three good examples. While these can be used in the same way as Yahoo Groups, they offer a much richer set of features. These services allow you to create and edit documents, keep notes, share to-do lists and calendars, and generally manage projects. If you expect a high level of collaboration, with jointly written documents or a need for project management tools, these services are excellent tools. They also give a more professional appearance to your efforts than the Yahoo Groups.

The companies in this space are continuing to build and evolve the tools of collaboration, and these services have a lot of potential. If you plan to use them in a meaningful way, however, they are not free. QuickTopic Pro is \$49 per year and another \$79 per year for the Quick Doc Pro document review and collaboration service. Basecamp costs \$59.95 per month for unlimited projects, but a 25-project plan costs \$19 per month. The price of Socialtext starts at \$995 per year for five users. You will want to compare services and find the tool that best fits your needs. From personal experience I can attest that these services are not intuitive—you will have to learn how to use them. Although they may reduce or eliminate the need for conference calls over time, you will be best served by using conference calls to get the project moving until people learn to use the tools.

Extranets and deal rooms. Extranets and deal rooms (actually a specific kind of extranet) can be best understood as private, secure web pages used for cases and deals. Traditionally, extranets have been tools that big firms hosted on their own servers and provided to specific clients. There are a number of extranet services that will host extranet sites for you. There are also legal extranets and deal rooms specifically designed with legal matters and requirements in mind; their features fit the needs of lawyers, and they reflect some experience in the legal area, especially with respect to security and confidentiality issues. Xerdict and TrialNet are examples of legal extranet providers. Basecamp, mentioned in the preceding section, is an example of a standard business extranet service, without specific legal features.

Extranets are difficult to price because the cost will depend on the features you want. Still, you may find them surprisingly af-

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Collaborating with Clients: Meet Your Clients Virtually Anywhere at a Reasonable Cost (Continued from Page 3)

fordable. For most solos and small firm lawyers, they will probably make sense only for a few important cases or deals, but they are definitely items that you will want to know about and add to your collaboration toolbox.

“Multimedia” collaboration. The next logical step up the ladder is to combine text-based workspaces with conference calling. We might also throw in the ability to show PowerPoint slides, use electronic “whiteboards,” collaborate in revising or marking up documents in real time, and other similar features. We can do this with increasingly familiar programs and hosted services such as WebEx and LiveMeeting.

Although you can host these services yourself, you will probably purchase the services from hosting companies that give you access. It is worth noting that these services are commonly used by software companies that want to demonstrate how their products work. Consider these services when there is a need to share information visually when a group of people is on a conference call. Depending on your practice, these services might either be quite interesting or something that you cannot even imagine using. Expect to pay a flat fee of about \$375 per month or a per-use rate of about 35 cents a minute.

You might also create a “poor lawyer’s” version of these services by creating a couple of web pages on your website and directing people to those pages during a regular conference call.

Video collaboration. Videoconferencing technology has advanced to the point where, on a broadband Internet connection, your results can be quite acceptable. You will need to make some investment in video cameras and create a “studio” setting to get the best results, but you are not looking at a lot of money. As you may know, many college students and their parents use \$50 “net cams” to videoconference with each other.

Perhaps the best approach for a solo is to use a third-party service. In large metropolitan areas, you might find videoconferencing companies that sell you the use of their facilities on an hourly basis. Some large law firms have built videoconferencing facilities and may let you rent their facilities.

The key issue is whether you have projects or matters where videoconferencing helps you or your client. Saving travel costs while still “attending” depositions might be one example. Handling the screening or initial interview of a busy or expensive expert witness might be another. Videoconferencing may in fact be a reasonable alternative—don’t dismiss it out of hand. MIVNET provides access to videoconferencing rooms for rent in 671 cities, with rates starting at \$175 per hour.

Special Concerns You Must Weigh

Now that you have a sense of the various collaborative technology options, let’s weigh their benefits against their risks. As with any technology, there are the normal risks you always must consider. The technology might not work well or even work at all. You might not be able to learn how to use it. Your collaborators might not be able to learn how to use it. You or others might not have the appropriate hardware or software. You might also find that the method you have chosen really does not work well once you get into the project.

There are also special concerns when using collaboration technologies in the practice of law. In most cases, you can effectively deal with each of these potential problems, but if you charge forward without thinking carefully about them, you may create significant risks for yourself and your clients.

Security. If you meet with a client in your office, you can close the door. When you go home at night, you can lock up your filing cabinet, your file room, your office space, and your office building. In many of the collaboration technologies listed above, you don’t have this kind of immediate control over access. Often, you are attached to and using the Internet. Important information may be stored on a website hosted on a third-party server (which might be physically located in another state or country). Whenever the Internet is involved, you have security issues. You will want to look into how information held or transferred online is secured, including the physical security of the server. You will want to consider whether you and your collaborators use good enough computer security practices, including appropriately strong passwords, to make the use of Internet services advisable.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality and security issues are intertwined. Who might have access to a client’s confidential information if it is stored on a third-party service? Do you have appropriate controls over access and use of passwords and accounts? Even though I would argue that information is much better protected on a third-party hosting site than it is on computers at most law firms, malpractice insurance companies and disciplinary committees might have a different view. Can you satisfy yourself that client confidentiality will be adequately protected and attorney-client privilege will not be blown by the collaborative technologies you use? These issues obviously argue for the use of providers with legal industry experience when available.

Storage and backup. What happens if the entire project is on a website and the website is unavailable or the provider goes out of business? What backup and disaster recovery procedures are in place? Can you easily make copies of what you need when you need it? You might find that some services conveniently record your conference calls for you. Does that have implications under civil or criminal laws in your state? If you want to move

to another service, can you obtain and transfer your data easily?

Incorporation into your files. Many law firms are already having a difficult time incorporating e-mail and voice mail into their clients’ master files. Collaboration technologies raise the ante on this issue because they add to the volume of non-traditional material generated and they add to the number of places it can be located. Perhaps most important, if you use collaboration technology well, the most important and necessary documents, notes, and other information will be found in these tools and services. How will you make sure that anyone working on the file will be able to see the whole picture?

Conclusion

Recent surveys suggest that clients, especially business clients, are well ahead of lawyers in using non-paper approaches and new technologies. There is a growing expectation that many meetings can be handled electronically. If a client videoconferences with her child in college and her parent in a nursing home, she will wonder why she must drive to your office for a routine meeting.

It makes good sense to prepare for these types of client expectations. The good news is that there are a number of ways to collaborate using the phone, the Internet, and other technologies. Even better, many are quite inexpensive. Best of all, not only will these technologies cater to your clients’ wishes, but they may also make your life and your practice a little easier.

Dennis M. Kennedy is a solo practitioner in St. Louis, Missouri, who concentrates his practice in computer law and provides legal technology consulting services for law firms and corporate legal departments. He can be reached at dmk@denniskennedy.com and www.denniskennedy.com.

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Dumpster Disasters: Tips for Ethically Retiring Your Old Computers (Continued from Page 2)

eBay sale, or the well-intended charitable donation—can lead to malpractice claims and ethical violations at worst, and, at best, serious embarrassment. And not to further ruin your day, but potentially there could even be violation claims as a result of HIPPA (for disclosing employee or client healthcare information) and Sarbanes-Oxley (for giving away corporate documents that you must maintain). So what should you do?

You Need a D.U.M.P.: A Disposal Un-Malpractice Plan

The key to a D.U.M.P. is ensuring, to the greatest extent reasonably practical, that you remove confidential client information, firm or organization information, and all licensed software that you do not intend to formally transfer. This means using a technical process that will remove this information in an effective manner, rendering the information as unrecoverable as you can reasonably accomplish. It may not be possible to delete information so that no one could ever recover it. Practically speaking, if someone wants to spend enough money and enough time, they could probably find a way to recover at least some of your data, no matter what you do. But the reality is that the standard to meet is one of reasonableness. What steps would a lawyer need to take to ensure the reasonably effective removal of this information?

Well, here's what *doesn't* work:

- Deleting files using Windows Explorer or the Windows My Computer functions. Even the great mass of techno-peasantry knows they can click the Recycle Bin and undelete these files in short order. It's fairly well known that deleting files using Windows or even "DOS" command line functions doesn't remove the files. It merely removes the "directory listing" so that Windows can no longer "see" the file. Think of it as removing the address numbers over the front door to your house. Visitors from out of town may not know it's your house if they're looking for your address, but the house is most assuredly still there. Even reformatting a hard drive or removing a storage "partition" yields easily recoverable information—cheap or free utilities abound that can perform such recoveries.
- Deleting the files and emptying the Recycle Bin. A little more clever, but the files are still recoverable by even "entry-level experts" in about 30 seconds.
- Throwing the hard drive in your building's incinerator. Still not good enough. Just ask the data recovery experts at

companies such as Kroll Ontrack (www.krollontrack.com) or Drive-savers (www.drivesavers.com). Give them a couple days (and a few thousands dollars) and they can probably recover most, if not all, of the information from utterly scorched hard drives.

- Letting David Letterman throw your computers off of a 40-story building. Entertaining, but equally ineffective.

Now for what *does* work:

Electronic "File-Shredding" Software

These software systems delete files in a number of ways that you cannot accomplish using Windows alone. They typically will run a routine that deletes the files and then overwrites the areas of the hard drive with repeated patterns of random characters. The more "passes" made by the overwriting routine, the harder it becomes to recover the original information. The product and methodology used should comply with the standards promulgated by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). Deleting information pursuant to this standard should satisfy the "reasonableness" requirement.

The U.S. Department of Defense has a set of published guidelines related to the clearing and sanitizing of PC media (DoD 5220.22-M). This set of guidelines recommends that you "overwrite all addressable locations with a character, its complement, then a random character and verify" for all writable media (i.e., hard drives, floppy drives, backup tapes, ZIP disks, flash drives, etc.). One example of such an "electronic shredder" is the DataEraser software system, produced by zDelete. Its website (www.zdelete.com/dod.htm) displays the DoD's table prescribing the specific methods required for adequate and compliant information destruction on all sorts of media types in common use in law practices today.

Be sure to understand all the places where data may be located. These include but may not be limited to:

- Hard drives in PCs
- Old hard drives sitting on your shelves that may have failed and were removed but still have recoverable information
- Floppy disks (all sizes—don't forget the old ones in your building's basement)
- ZIP disks and other removable data cartridges
- Backup tapes
- The newer "flash drives"

There are many software products that will accomplish electronic file shredding to DoD standards. A Google search of "file deletion software" will yield a treasure trove of capable utilities. Products such as DataEraser, CyberScrub (www.cyberscrub.com), and many others are suitable. Look for the specific DoD 5220.22-M certification as a sign of competence. Then be certain to use the product correctly. In other

words, *read the instructions!*

Finalizing Your D.U.M.P.

It is also imperative, from a legal and ethical perspective, to comply with your software license agreements. You must remove all licensed software that you do not intend to formally transfer with the PC system. Read each end-user license agreement to learn precisely what must be done with each software product on the hard drive of any computers or any other electronic media you plan to get rid of.

Then, a "best practices" approach would involve the creation of a formal written computer usage policy detailing the goal of the D.U.M.P. process, the process itself, and a written requirement that the process always be used when disposing of PCs or electronic media. This is the most complete way to CYA—Cover Your Assets.

Be sure to inform your clients of their need to take the same precautionary measures when they dispose of their PC systems and media. The last thing you need is a corporate client tossing backup tapes into the dumpster—packed with damaging information about a matter in litigation—and a digital dumpster diver hired by the opposition finding it and using it against them. This happens—it's not fantasy.

Technical Assistance

If you don't understand, or don't want to acquire and learn to use electronic file shredding software, hire an expert to handle the process for you—it will be money well spent. Be certain to get a written statement from the service provider documenting its destruction of the information, the methodology and software used, and its compliance with the DoD standards. Ideally, such a written statement would also indemnify your lawyers from liability for the service provider's failure to adequately destroy the information.

Retirement Options

Once the critical step of removing the data and licensed software is accomplished, you can look at your disposal options. The chief options include sale, donation, and recycling.

Sale or donation to employees. For all practical purposes, the sale of computers is limited to employees because few law firms would want the hassle of selling computers in the marketplace. If you have relatively recent PCs that are still usable for home/college/student use, offering them to your employees may make a lot of sense and be seen as an employee benefit. You can either sell them at a very low price or simply donate them.

Donation to a charitable entity. Let us be clear: Charitable donations should not be a way to foist your computer disposal problems on someone else. Because charities often have the same software needs as you, trying to unload 15-year-old '486-class or older PCs, or even your early generation Pentiums 4s, may not be very easy. It is possible a charity would want to use them for some type of vocational training or cannibalize them for parts. But many well-known charitable organizations have stopped accepting computers and

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Dumpster Disasters: Tips for Ethically Retiring Your Old Computers (Continued from Page 5)

monitors altogether. The best thing to do is to ask the organization before you donate.

If you cannot find a donee locally (i.e., church groups, municipal agencies, homeless shelters, etc.), think national. One group to consider is the National Cristina Foundation (www.cristina.org). It matches companies and individuals interested in donating computers and related equipment with nonprofit organizations and schools that serve people with disabilities in the United States and abroad. Donors send equipment directly to the beneficiary. Many more donation sources are available if you run the Google search "donating used computers."

Recycling. Taking up space in landfills is one problem, but few people realize that computers and monitors contain high levels of lead, mercury, and other environmental contaminants. The good news, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is that 50 percent of the materials in a personal computer can be recycled. There are avenues for recycling old computers to ensure they don't harm our already oppressed environment—you just have to know where to look.

To find a reuse and recycling program in your area, contact your state or local waste management agency, or try the EIA Environment page at www.eiae.org. For basic information on how to reduce electronic waste, along with related web links, see the Environmental Protection Agency's website, www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/ecycling/basic.htm.

One more option: Some computer manufacturers (including Dell, Gateway, HP, IBM, and Apple) are offering product take-back services to their customers for recycling, trade-in on a new product, or donation to the needy.

For those of you who prefer to think of old PCs as antiques or historical relics, there's a website for you, too: www.old-computers.com. Wax nostalgic for your old computer among more than 800 examples in their computer "museum." If you don't find your computer there, try Google's collection of historical computers at <http://directory.google.com/Top/Computers/History>. You never know, your old PC might be just the one some museum is looking for.

The bottom line is simple. PC in the dumpster = potential malpractice claims, ethical violations, embarrassment. Imagine the community embarrassment that happens when your local vocational retraining institution calls you to ask if you intended to donate a network server containing your entire time and billing system (this actually happened). Develop a D.U.M.P. for your firm or law department, then make it official policy and

use it.

Ross L. Kodner is president and founder of MicroLaw, Inc., a national legal technology consultancy based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He can be reached at rkodner@microlaw.com, via www.microlaw.com, and at 414/540-9433. Courtney G. Kennaday is the practice management advisor for the South Carolina Bar, where she helps lawyers deal with myriad law office issues. She can be reached at courtney.kennaday@sbar.org.

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can also visit any website by clicking the web address shown in your document. Acrobat also works with scanners, creating either electronic images of pages, editable text via OCR (optical character recognition), or files that contain both. PDF files are interchangeable, too, working on computers running Microsoft Windows, Apple Macintosh, or LINUX.

GoToMyPC

You cannot take everything with you. How often do you want to access information or use programs that are on your office computer or network when you are away from the office? With GoToMyPC (www.gotomypc.com), you can spend less time at the office—and less time commuting there and back. At home, in hotels, and wherever you have an Internet connection and a computer, you can use GoToMyPC to work on the computer back at the office. Just log on, and it appears as if you are actually looking at the computer screen on the desk in your office, rather than your laptop at the Ramada Inn in Boise. You can access the files on your server, check your e-mail, and do everything you could do at an office PC. You do not need to install special software to use GoToMyPC. It works well with Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Firefox, and other web browsers. It will even work on a Pocket PC.

Speech Recognition

Speech recognition software converts spoken words into text in a word processing program or other program on a computer. ScanSoft's Dragon NaturallySpeaking (www.scansoft.com), the leading product, not only inserts text into word processing software using a microphone, it also works with e-mail messages, notes in practice management software, and with almost any program that would normally use a keyboard. It quickly learns to recognize dictated words and to handle commands you use to navigate programs in Microsoft Windows.

Timekeeping, Billing, and Accounting Programs

Unfortunately, you may need to devote a fair amount of time, effort, and frustration to the process of getting financial software to work with other law office programs. The idea is to enter client information once into one program and have it accessible and automatically updateable in another program. In addition, efficiencies can be realized by creating time records within a practice management application and transferring them to the timekeeping, billing, and accounting software. Problems can arise in a variety of ways. The information entered in one program can show up in the wrong places or not at all in a linked program created by a different company. Currently, the players in the area of practice management and financial software are each seeking to add the features commonly found in their competitors' products. The resulting all-in-one applications have several advantages; among them complete control of the environment for processing data, opportunities for analyzing information, and a single company to contact for assistance. But before replacing a product you are currently using, check to see that its replacement has all the features you have come to rely on.

Microsoft Word

Everyone knows that Microsoft Word creates printed documents. Because it dominates its product niche, other programs that relate in some way to word processing make an effort to work well with Word. Some go well out of their way to ensure compatibility.

For example, when Adobe Acrobat is installed, it adds two menus and puts a special button in Word. Click the button to create a PDF file from the current Word document. The menus give you options for creating links within the PDF file based on the headings and web page links from the Word document. Acrobat supports collaborative editing of Word documents. You send out PDF files with a request that other users add their comments using the Acrobat comments tool. When you receive the commented PDF files, you can merge the comments into the original Word document.

Word has a Send To function that can convert a Word document into a set of Power-Point slides. If the Word document uses heading styles, each major heading in the Word document becomes a slide title, and the subheadings become bullet points. If you prepare continuing legal education or seminar presentations requiring both written materials and slideshows, use Word first to create an outline of your talk. Use Heading 1 for each major point and Heading 2 for supporting points. Send this outline to PowerPoint to create a set of slides, then fill the Word document with text paragraphs to create your written materials.

If you occasionally need to post an article on a website, Word can save a copy of your document as a web page. In many cases, however, the document is not suitable for posting. Either the website has a method of defining pages that is not compatible with Word's formatting, or the formatting is just too elaborate to fit well into the site. Nevertheless, you do not need to rewrite the article. Word will save your document as a plain text file, then you can use a web page editing program to format it properly for the website.

Practice Management Software

Programs such as Amicus Attorney (www.amicus.com), ProLaw (www.elite.com/solutions/product-fam/prolaw) and Time Matters (www.timematters.com) pack broad collections of tools that put even thick Swiss Army knives to shame. And they are not limited to what comes in the box. They link in powerful ways to other software packages.

Time Matters software places three buttons in Microsoft Word. The TM Insider button lets you paste client and matter information into any Word document or merge information to assemble documents from templates you have created. Clicking the TM Save button in Word creates a document form that you use to name, save, and link the document to the appropriate matter in the Time Matters document management system.

Amicus Attorney and ProLaw also merge information into Word documents.

Amicus Attorney works with e-mail programs such as Microsoft Outlook, allowing you to link e-mail messages to contacts and matters. It also synchronizes information with Palm devices and, with a Blackberry or cell phone, allows you to retrieve information over the air. ProLaw and Time Matters synchronize with Palms, Pocket PCs, Blackberries, and Outlook. Time Matters's new version (6.0) now offers real-time synchronization of contacts, tasks, and calendars through Microsoft Exchange Server.

By combining a practice management program such as Time Matters (www.timematters.com) with a document scanner and an e-file program such as Adobe Acrobat or ScanSoft's PaperPort, you can reduce the amount of paper you need to grapple with. You start within the practice management software by creating a document record. From the record, you select Scan and choose a profile for the type of document, the scanning software, and the scanner you are using. A button from within the program fires up the scanner, which converts the paper document into an image file or a PDF document. Back at the document record, you click the save button to connect the electronic version of the document to the proper legal matter or contact in your practice management system.

XMLmind XML Editor

For you true geeks, here is a program designed to create documents and web pages in a format that will never become obsolete: XML. The Extensible Markup Language is a very flexible text format designed for electronic publishing that plays an important role in the exchange data on the web. XMLmind XML Editor (XXE) harnesses the power and flexibility of XML in an interface that mere mortals can use (www.xmlmind.com). The editor saves documents in a universal format and can produce PDF files, web pages, and RTF files that are compatible with Microsoft Word and other word processors. Because the XML format separates content and meaning from formatting, it can be translated into virtually any other format. Doing so may be easy or hard, depending on the desired format and appearance, but at least it is possible. If you like experimenting with leading-edge, visionary tools designed to work well with other players in the computing universe, you may want to give the free version of XXE a spin.

Conclusion

Opportunities for making better use of your computers may be right under your nose. A program you currently use for one purpose may easily save you more time and effort through a connection to another program. If you are stumped in your initial efforts to get two programs working together, help is available. You can join an e-mail discussion list and get a fast answer to any question. Solosez (www.abanet.org/soloseznet/solosez.html) or LAWTECH (www.abanet.org/tech/trc/lists.html) are two good ones. You may also find a discussion

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Software that Plays Well Together
(Continued from Page 7)

list for your particular product by checking the vendor's website. The prevalence of high-speed Internet access allows many consultants to work directly with law offices throughout North America and the world. They can provide focused assistance with one issue or work with you to implement more far-reaching improvements.

Wells Anderson, based in Minnesota, works with law offices throughout the continent in person and via virtual meetings to implement and customize software for specific practice areas. He can be reached at info@activepractice.com.

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**Minnesota State Bar Association
General Practice, Solo and Small Firm Section
Success Conference and Section Annual Meeting
Registration Form**

Date: April 1, 2005

Costs:

Place: The Holiday Inn Select
2200 Freeway Blvd.
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

GPSSF Section Member **\$135.00***
MSBA Member Only **\$165.00***
Non-MSBA Member **\$220.00***
Guests (Dinner Only) **\$45.00**

*** includes all meals and CLE**

Conference Agenda

Our Faculty

8:30-9:00 Registration, Continental Breakfast and Product Demonstration - West Group

9:00-9:30 The Future of the Practice of Law - Robert Woodke and LaVern Pritchard

9:30-9:45 Break and Vendor Showcase

9:45-10:45 LPM Track: The Small Firm Staff - Tips for Success - Patrick W. Kelly and Rana L. Severson
Substantive Track: Bread and Butter Law - What Every Small Firm Attorney Should Know - Diana Longrie-Kline

10:45-11:00 Break and Vendor Showcase

11:00-12:00 LPM Track: Obtain, Train and Retain Associates - Jodi Standke
Substantive Track: Effective Motion Practice - Joan Hume

12:00-1:30 Lunch (included) and Annual Meeting Including Council Elections for Solo and Small Firm Section

1:30-2:30 LPM Track: Effective Marketing to Improve the Bottom Line - Roy Ginsburg
Substantive Track: Teaching Electrons to Dance - The Fusion of the Art and Drudgery of Trial Practice - Charlie Hvass, Jr.

2:30-2:45 Break and Vendor Showcase

2:45-3:45 Ethics in the 21st Century - Conflicts of Interest and Other New Traps for the Unwary - Tim Gephardt

3:45-4:00 Break and Vendor Showcase

4:00-5:00 50 Tips in 60 Minutes - Technology Tips for Practicing Lawyers - Mike Trittipio, Thom Miranda, LaVern Pritchard, Todd Scott and Robert Woodke - Moderator

5:00-6:00 Reception and Social Hour (cash bar) and hors d'oeuvres

6:00-? Section Dinner and Guest Speaker - Honorable Sam Hanson

Tim Gephardt VP of Claims at Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Co.

Roy S. Ginsburg Is a noted expert on marketing ethically. He is the 2003 recipient of the President's award from the MSBA and a member of the Hennepin county Ethics Committee

Joan Humes Assistant U.S. Attorney - Chief of the Civil Division

Charlie Hvass, Jr. Certified Civil Trial Specialist - Board Member International Society of Barristers

Patrick W. Kelly Current Chair of the MSBA General Practice, Solo and Small Firm Section

Diana Longrie-Kline Attorney and Council Member of the MSBA General Practice, Solo and Small Firm Section

Thom Miranda CEO Miranda Legal Systems, Technology Consultant

LaVern Pritchard Owner of Minnesota Law Moose and noted technologist

Todd Scott VP of Member Services at Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Co.

Rana L. Severson Paralegal for Patrick W. Kelly & Associates

Jodi Standke Owner and President of Legal Liaisons, Ltd.

Mike Trittipio Director of Technology for the MSBA

Robert Woodke Nationally known author and speaker on Law Practice Management

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