Law Practice Strategy
Practice Management Solutions for Solos and Small Firms

TrialPad: Your Path to Streamline Litigation

February 21, 2011

If I had to name the #1 priority of redesigning your law practice business model to stay competitive in today's environment, it would be cost containment. It is THE fundamental principle in Law Practice Strategy's trainings and consultations, as it affects every decision you make to incorporate the features of a 21st century law firm model. In LPS's most recent webinar on Alternative Fee Arrangements, Hank Turner told us that one step in the ability to successfully "price" your legal services is to review how past matters similar in scope were priced, and determine if the process could be made "leaner" (eliminate the unnecessary in project management speak), thus reducing cost. This not only reduces the risk of underpricing your work, but also creates the potential for greater profit margins.

The primary way to contain costs is to automate anything that can be. And with the proliferation legal technology, more and more of what we do fits into that category. So let's take a look at an awesome application that fills in a few gaps.

If you think it's possible that a tech app can make you feel all warm and fuzzy, TrialPad is the one. Seriously. One look at this interface on an iPad, and I had a flash of wanting to return to trying cases just so I could use it and look really cool.

Appearances aside, TrialPad's ease of use makes your tech fears disappear. When you open the application, you see something really familiar: a manila folder with your case's name on it. You are also able to write notes on the outside of the folder by clicking edit, and a keyboard appears. To open the folder, you tap on it. We're good so far.

In the open case view, your documents are listed on the left sidebar, and the review pane next to it. Organizing the documents is simple and common sense, and navigating around them is logical and clearly apparent. Again, the functionality displays an ease of use that becomes familiar quickly.

TrialPad recently integrated with Dropbox to upload documents. The alternative is to upload adobe acrobat pdf's via email or iTunes. Documents can be uploaded either individually or in batches. It offers standard annotation tools, and annotations are not automatically saved. This allows for ease of preparation, where you can rehearse your presentation of evidence without permanently marking the document. TrialPad also offers a redaction tool, although it is preferable if the documents is redacted before upload.

Because of its simplicity and iPad's mobility, TrialPad works great for depositions, mediations, and arbitrations as well. But remember: just as the iPad is not a computer, so TrialPad is not TrialDirector. The functionality of TrialDirector goes well beyond what TrialPad offers (i.e., use of video, exhibit overlays, and much more), and is the software of choice for complex trials with numerous witnesses and lots of documents. Just as you need to

assess when you need your laptop or when your iPad will work, so you need to determine: can you be effective with TrialPad or do you need to go big?

TrialPad's genius is that it hits a common mid-range where it is more frequently useful. It enables you to have the technology support that will make you more efficient in many environment, and is another step you can take to streamline your practice at a cost you can afford. And remember, it's cute. OK, now I must go find a trial firm that needs a lawyer!