

# Case Management

## A Survey of Off-the-Shelf Software

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Jim Eidelman has been using PCs in his law practice in Ann Arbor, Michigan, since they were first available. Now a well-known computer consultant, he offers a detailed survey of some of the more popular case management packages used by trial lawyers.

### INTRODUCTION

When you reach the point that you are handling about as many cases as you and your current staff can competently handle, you have several choices: (1) hire a new associate, (2) hire a new paralegal, (3) reduce your caseload, or (4) get computer software that can help you handle more cases. **This article** is about choice (4).

Software to keep track of what is going on with the various cases in your office is case management software.<sup>1</sup> This software can help you handle more cases with your current staff. It also can help you be action oriented and move your cases along more quickly. Case management software can help you be better organized, better prepared, and more responsive. It can help you have better communication with your clients and achieve better results at trial.

### WHEN DO YOU NEED CASE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE?

Keeping your files on a computer is not always a good thing. Data entry takes time and computer data structures are often rigid. Generally, it is helpful to put information in a computer only when at least one of the following good reasons exists:

1. A number of different people need to have shared access to the information at different

places. For example, perhaps you want the receptionist, partner, associate, paralegal, secretary, file room clerk and bookkeeper to know the status of a case.

2. You need to search through large amounts of information, e.g., "In which cases are we using Jim Alexander as an expert witness?" or "In which cases should we follow up on a letter to a doctor requesting medical reports in which the doctor has failed to respond?"

3. You need to process information such as merging with word processing; sorting information; or calculating, e.g., "Prepare a settlement statement for this case;" or having the computer automatically notify you when actions ought to be taken, based on date calculations.

With a good case management system, you can do all of these things.

### SOFTWARE AVAILABLE

Each case management package on the market today has a different emphasis and flavor. Each is excellent in its own way; the choice of software should only be made after you consider your particular needs. Unless otherwise stated, all those mentioned in this article are designed for IBM PC-compatible systems, either as stand-alone systems or on a network

So many case management systems are now available that I cannot describe them all in the

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limited space available. What follows is a brief summary of several of the most popular systems.

#### PLAINTIFF'S PERSONAL INJURY SOFTWARE

##### Personal Injury Negligence System (PINS)

PINS was the first popular system for keeping track of due dates and sending letters in a personal injury case. It is easy to use, and has an interface that lets lawyers quickly check the status of any matter.

At the heart of the system is the diary. You can set up as many diary entries as you want for each type of case. These diary entries can be linked as a certain number of days before or after three key days: date of incident, file open date, and trial/litigation date. You can have many "open" reminders, as well. For each case type, you establish all steps to be taken and the sequence of those steps. The computer will display a list of the remaining steps.

If you put the cursor on the screen on the "Send letter requesting medical report" and select that item, the computer will ask you for the doctor's name, etc., and will create a letter to be printed or saved to an ASCII file. The diary entries can be recurring ("Review file every 30 days") or require multiple ticklers ("Remind me to request a medical report and remind me to check to make sure we have received it.").

The original PINS system was designed strictly for certain types of personal injury cases. The newer version accommodates up to 60 different types of cases. Thus, you can use the system for criminal, family law, or other areas of practice. Each of the case types can have its own set of standard diary entries. PINS provides many management reports that track financial information, length of time the file is open, inventory of open files with settlement *values*, actual settlements, and other information.

Systems range from \$1,500 for a single user with a hundred-case limit to \$10,000 for a network version with an unlimited number of users and cases. Maintenance costs \$1,200 per year, including telephone support and about two free updates per year. The programmers are regularly improving the program, using current clients' "wish list" requests for new feature designs.

For further information contact PINS (Personal Injury Negligence System), Chesapeake

Interlink, Ltd., 8E Music Fair Road, Owings Mills, MD 21117. Phone number is 301-363-1976. Contact Sherri Billig or Burton Banks, President.

##### Shepard's/McGraw-Hill System

Several years ago, Shepard's/McGraw-Hill introduced its personal injury case management system. What distinguishes this system is its emphasis on word-processing forms. Along with database files and screens, hundreds of well-drafted forms include complaints, letters, and discovery forms. Each document is programmed so that it can pull data out of the files. Each time you draft a document, it will prompt for data that is not in the database, and will pop up the tickler screen so that you can enter a follow-up date. There are databases and forms for general negligence, automobile, products liability, medical malpractice, and aviation.

The base price of the Shepard's system is \$2,625. Add-on modules for Automobile, Medical Malpractice, Products Liability, and Aviation are \$900 each. Active subscribers get free technical support.

For further information contact Personal Injury Case Management System, Shepard's/McGraw-Hill, Inc., P.O. Box 35300, Colorado Springs, CO 80935. Phone number is 800-458-8811, ext. 631.

##### PI Expert from Mitrtech

Mitrtech's PI Expert is a sophisticated case-management system because of its database and reminder capabilities. The program is easy to use, incorporating advanced windowing techniques to permit one screen to contain much more information than most other systems can display. The system is comprehensive and can store huge amounts of information about a case, with as many parties, witnesses, experts, motions, and medical providers as you want.

The most important aspect of this program is that it keeps track of a wide variety of dates. It uses these dates to print reminders in the lawyer's diary based on rules in the system and information in the database. For example:

1. If the field for the lawyer's initials contains no data, the diary report will remind you that the case has not yet been assigned.
2. The program will automatically send a letter of representation to each defendant on your request, and will update the field in the

defendant's file with the date the letter was sent. Most importantly, it will print an entry in the lawyer's diary report noting any defendants who have not yet received a letter of representation.

3. The program will automatically remind you about any dates that are overdue or any actions that should have been taken, based on the combination of rules in the system and data in the databases.

There are several preprogrammed form letters that automatically extract data from, and update the date fields in the database. They merge with WordPerfect. You also can set up additional letters. However, you do not have access to the databases with letters you add, and there are no programming commands to program document assembly commands.

Mitrtech also offers a system for general litigation and for workers' compensation. The software is available for PC networks and for Unix systems.

For further information contact PI Expert, Mitrtech, Inc., 3000 Ocean Park Blvd., Suite 3005, Santa Monica, CA 90405. Phone number is 213-396-8004.

#### **Pleas**

Pleas is an acronym for Personal Injury Litigation Evaluation and Accounting System. Unlike other systems, Pleas's goal is not to merge letters and forms, nor to keep track of every witness, doctor, and motion. Where Pleas shines is in its handling of financial information. It is a complete accounting system for a personal injury practice. It keeps track of expenses advanced, client accounts payable for litigation costs and damage items such as medical costs, items of damages for which a third-party payment has been received, etc. It prepares sophisticated settlement statements and provides a spreadsheet you can use to allocate the settlement breakdown. Also included are utilities to calculate the settlement value of a case and to calculate wage losses.

The publishers suggest using TurboSoft's Overdrive program to merge letters with WordPerfect, or you could use Blankity-Blank, Law Practice Management Section's *Fast Forms with Macros* (WordPerfect) by Kline Strong, or a more sophisticated document assembly "engine."

There also are many management reports about opened and closed files, including

anticipated fee income reports, and a good tickler system, which does not include linked dates.

The complete system, ready for network use, is \$995, including free support for one year.

For further information contact Personal Injury Litigation Evaluation and Accounting System (Pleas), Lawyers and Judges Publishing Co., 1095 Klisch Way, P.O. Box 2765, Del Mar, CA 92014. Phone number is 619481-5944.

#### **LawBase**

LawBase is several packages in one: case management, case accounting including check writing, document assembly for more than 300 legal documents, and time and billing. The package is customized by the publisher, so that the screens and fields can be set up to your liking. You can merge the data from the databases into word processing.

This outstanding system has three unique features. First, it has a built-in document assembly language that can include programming statements. (If . . . THEN include . . . AND create a tickler . . .) Second, the language can link the tickler system and the document assembly system automatically; it can change dates in the tickler system. Third, the system has a "query by example" facility, making it easy to create ad hoc queries and reports by interacting with the data entry screens.

LawBase is available on a wide variety of systems, including PC networks, Unix, Xenix, and Wang VS.

For further information contact LawBase, Apogee Computer Systems, Inc., 6825 E. Tennessee, Suite 500, Denver, CO 80224. Phone number is 303-320-6378.

#### **CCT (Client Case Tracking System)**

Client Case Tracking System, called CCT, runs on a network of PCs, and offers a comprehensive set of databases and reports. The system also integrates with WordPerfect, WordStar, and Microsoft Word to assemble letters and other documents. It is a specialized version of a generic case management system called CMA, which also is marketed by SAGA and described later in this article. Hundreds of forms are provided with the system, as are special reports to prepare for trial or for settlement discussions. Case accounting is also included.

related sections. The calendar portion of the program has a docket manager that tracksevents including information as to date adjourned, people involved, etc. Actually, this part of the program has two databases of dates, one of which is managed by the firm's docket clerk or someone else with a high level of security. The second is used by each individual or his or her support staff members to manage less critical dates.

The calendar portion is linked to the case manager, so that you can jump between the two. The case manager includes case number, names, addresses, and a "notes" field in which you can enter text about witnesses, experts, settlement discussions, etc. The notes fields can later be searched. There are databases of related parties and their counsel, an automatic phone dialer, and a report writer.

For further information contact **DiaryMaster II**, Litigation Technologies, Inc., 651 W. Mt. Pleasant, Livingston, NJ 07039. Phone number is 201-535-3282.

#### LSS Case Management System

Legal Support Services (LSS) offers case management and docket control software written in dBase III/Clipper. The case management module includes **Conflicts** of Interest, and can be purchased separately or as part of the Legal Support System, with calendar and litigation support.

The system lets you track cases by court, judge, topic, lawyer activities, and other key factors. LSS also offers Litigation Support System to index evidence and Calendar and Docket System.

For further information contact LSS Case Management System, Legal Support Services Corporation, 104 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02110. Phone number is 617-350-0460.

#### CMA (Case Management Advantage)

This package is a generic case management system **from** SAGA and it is similar to the CCT system described earlier. Modules are available for PI, criminal, probate, and other areas of law, and for different states. You can even modify or create your own modules.

Integrated so that information needs to be entered only once, CMA lets you access the information as you need it. Information can be gathered in a variety of ways, in the form of

reports, worksheets, word-processing documents, and screens. It tracks correspondence, adjusters, settlement discussions, and a wide variety of other information. It merges letters and pleadings, and outputs to its **own word** processor or your choice of WordPerfect, WordStar, or Microsoft Word.

For further information contact CMA, SAGA N.A., 576 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1103, New York NY 10036. Phone numbers are 212-768-3531 and 800-222-3066.

#### Litigation Expert

This is the generic version of Mitratech's PI Expert. It can be used by **plaintiffs** or defendants in any kind of case. It is similar to the PI system, but some of the fields have been changed; it also contains an automatic timekeeping capability. It cannot be modified, but may be used for different kinds of cases.

For further information contact Litigation Expert, Mitratech, Inc., 9763 West Pico, Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA 90035. Phone number is 213-396-8004.

#### Automated Legal System

Written to run under Unix and Xenix, this system provides case management, automated calendar, and form letter generation. The calendar part of the program incorporates the California Fast Track court rules, and automatically calculates deadlines based on court rules.

Modules are included for government, state agency, corporate, general litigation, and personal injury for workers' compensation defense or applicant.

For further information contact Automated Legal System, Attorney Management Systems, 3434 West 6th Street, Suite 400A, Los Angeles, CA 90020. Phone number is 213-386-9400.

#### Law Firm Litigation Package

Also written for Unix, this system can be used by both plaintiff and defendant litigators to track case information. It stores full employment histories on all clients and their coworkers and can cross-reference coworkers with other clients. It also contains medical histories and includes case accounting.

For further information contact Howe Turnkey Systems, Inc., 761 Poplar Street,

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Lebanon, PA 17042. Phone number is 717-273-3703.

#### InTouch

This system is an object-oriented, completely cross-indexed system using Advanced Revelation. There are pictures on the screen that represent common objects one would see in an office. You can select these icons and access various information about cases, all of which is linked to other information in a very powerful and easy-to-use way.

The software house customizes the application for each firm, and has set it up for some very large personal injury firms.

For further information contact Dan Kelly, InTouch Technologies, 32 Ross Common, P.O. Box 806, Ross, CA 94957 (415-461-3600).

#### LegalEdge

Also programmed using Advanced Revelation, this outstanding system was developed in conjunction with a CPA firm, and tracks not only all of the witnesses, dates, and parties, but also all of the accounting information. It is extremely powerful, and can be licensed for from \$5,000 to \$18,000.

Contact LegalEdge Software, 1150 First Avenue, Suite 700, King of Prussia, PA 19406 (215-337-5835).

#### IN-HOUSE LAW DEPARTMENT SOFTWARE

Most corporate law departments and government agencies are interested in managing cases actually being handled by outside lawyers, rather than by the lawyers in the law departments. Budgeting, managing outside legal fees, spotting trends, and acting in a supervisory capacity are

the important issues. They are designed more for information management needs of senior management, auditors, and risk managers.

Some of the packages that perform these functions are as follows:

Corporate Law Pak:	ComplInfo
LawTrac:	LawTrac Corporation
ModuLaw Corporate Module:	Inslaw
Darwin Case Management:	CompuTrac
CLMS:	Digital
Legal Claims:	Human Tech Systems, Inc.
Power of Attorney:	Corporate Management Solutions

Automation Partners (313-769-1500) also offers a case management system designed for municipal and county law departments.

#### CONCLUSION

Any of the software packages described above can help you handle more cases more effectively with fewer staff members. It takes a major effort to implement any of these systems, but once you do, like word processing, you won't know how you got along without it.

#### ENDNOTE

1. Designed to help you move your cases along on a timely basis, case management software is different from litigation-support software. Litigation support is the computer's use to keep track of and to search a large number of documents in commercial litigation or in other cases that involve thousands of pages of documentary evidence.

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