Chapter 6 - Computer Concepts and Legal Applications

Introduction   The purpose of this book is not to find and recommend the "best" software

Applying technology to the practice of law requires that one have a basic understanding of computer concepts. In this section, basic computer concepts will be defined and illustrated. Discussions will focus on the primary components of these concepts, as well as a general discussion of their application to legal functions. The next sections will apply these concepts in greater detail to a variety of legal applications that can be used in your firm.

For example, once you understand the concept of "full text", you will discover that one can locate information in an electronic deposition or trial transcript within seconds using "full-text" software. You will also discover that any firm or case information which is in a "full text" format, such as office policies, work product, interrogatories, interviews and so on, can also be searched in seconds.

The key is to understand the concept and then apply the concept to specific lawyering functions that provide value to your firm. The bottom line is to look at the technology choices and pick the ones that work for you. Don't have the technology dictate your choices, but have your work needs and technology skills choose the technology for you. For example, if you do not type, voice recognition may be an application you decide upon or maybe a handwriting recognition tool. It is important to maintain the simplicity of your work desk as you focus upon the oftentimes-complex work needs of our clients.

Whether it is an outliner to set up a blueprint of your case or graphics for presentation of your trial themes, all computer concepts have a place within the practice of law. Unfortunately, there is not a "killer" software program that incorporates all of these concepts. Instead, there are many "standalone" products that can fill your needs. However, the "integration" of these packages to work together has taken a major step forward with the introduction of OLE, DDE and more recently, HTML language used in Intranets, Extranets and the Internet. There is a significant trend of these standalone packages "integrating" with other standalone packages. For example, we are seeing case management programs "integrate" with litigation support software and with billing and accounting software.