

Using Multimedia in Legal Proceedings

Computer Equipment & Software in the Courtroom

COURTABLE PORTABLES

Someone once said, "Computers can never replace lawyers, but lawyers with computers can replace lawyers without computers."

A lawyer who uses a computer effectively in court has a significant advantage over one who doesn't. A computer can help a lawyer in many ways.

While litigators would like to anticipate every bit of information they will need, every attorney who has spent time in court knows that it is impossible to anticipate every bit of information that will be needed during trial.

The intended use of courtroom technology falls into two primary areas:

- A practitioner's access to legal and factual material in his case;
- Presenting trial exhibits, demonstrative evidence and other material to the factfinder during trial.

The type and amount of technology equipment that is used in the courtroom to access one's legal and factual material will depend upon:

- Court's consent to the use of the technology;
- Technology equipment already available in the courtroom;
- Practitioner's capability to bring in equipment and technical assistance;
- Complexity of the case;
- The comfort level of the practitioner.

If the intended use of courtroom technology is to access your own legal and factual material, it requires, at a minimum, a laptop or desktop computer (preferably with a CD-ROM reader) and a small printer. This will provide complete access to any of the legal or case information that is in a digital format. The printer provides the capability to print out hard copies of imaged exhibits,

graphics, notes, jury instructions, settlement agreements, closing arguments, or other material for the judge, witnesses, or opposing counsel. The printer should be equipped to print either paper or transparencies. For example, if a document becomes in issue, locate it on the CD-ROM, print it out on a portable printer and attach a trial exhibit sticker to it. Transparencies of exhibits would be used with an overhead projector for witnesses, opening statements, or for closing arguments. The basic system described above provides the capability to access your entire legal and factual case if it is in an electronic format.

Tips on using computers in the courtroom:

- The computer must be unobtrusive;
- It must be small;
- Bring along extra charged batteries;
- Bring along a substitute computer with the same programs and legal and factual material on both computers;
- Have your case material backed up on tape, Zip, or regular disks;
- Print a copy of your trial outline, witness notes, etc.;
- Bring extra printer toner cartridges;
- Print transparencies of documents, charts and graphs for use with an overhead projector;
- Make sure your keyboard is quiet;
- Turn off the sound on the computer.