DA Spotlight: DDA Explains iPad Software on Presenting Evidence in the Courtroom

Deputy DA David Grapilon demonstrates an iPad application that presents evidence to jurors during trials. Presenting evidence electronically replaces bulky poster boards.

Gone are the days of giant poster boards depicting evidence to jurors in a trial that later end up clogging storage areas at the courthouse. The District Attorney's Office is using an iPad application called TrialPad to present evidence in a more dynamic way than ever.

Deputy DA David Grapilon, who is helping train other prosecutors on the application, said presenting evidence electronically allows for agility, more detail, higher levels of scrutiny and more creativity. The application allows the trial attorney to zoom in, highlight, call out and draw attention to specific items in an exhibit.

"When you can compare diagrams side to side, it really provides for much more powerful exhibits," Grapilon said. "Also, I can respond more quickly to witness statements for rebuttal or cross examination."

In response to a San Diego Superior Court rule that says poster boards could no longer be used in trials except for in homicides because of storage issues, prosecutors began exploring new ways to present important evidence.

"This is not going to take the place of physical exhibits -- the guns, the knives or the drugs," Grapilon said. "It's for photos, diagrams, text documents or anything you want the jury to see that is written."

Prosecutors in the the Chula Vista, Vista and Hall of Justice branches are already using the new application. The El Cajon and Juvenile branches will start training soon.

Using an iPad to show evidence in the courtroom has already gotten good reviews from jurors in after-trial interviews, Grapilon said.

"Older jurors are impressed they can see an exhibit on a T.V. monitor," he said. "The younger ones are impressed an iPad can be used for more than entertainment."

So far, San Diego is the only DA's Office using the application. The Public Defender's Office became interested in using it after seeing it used in a high-profile hearing and the U.S. Attorney's Office has shown an interest as well, Grapilon said.

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