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Trends in Video Technology

MOBILE COURT APPS

NACM & NADCP SHOW COVERAGE

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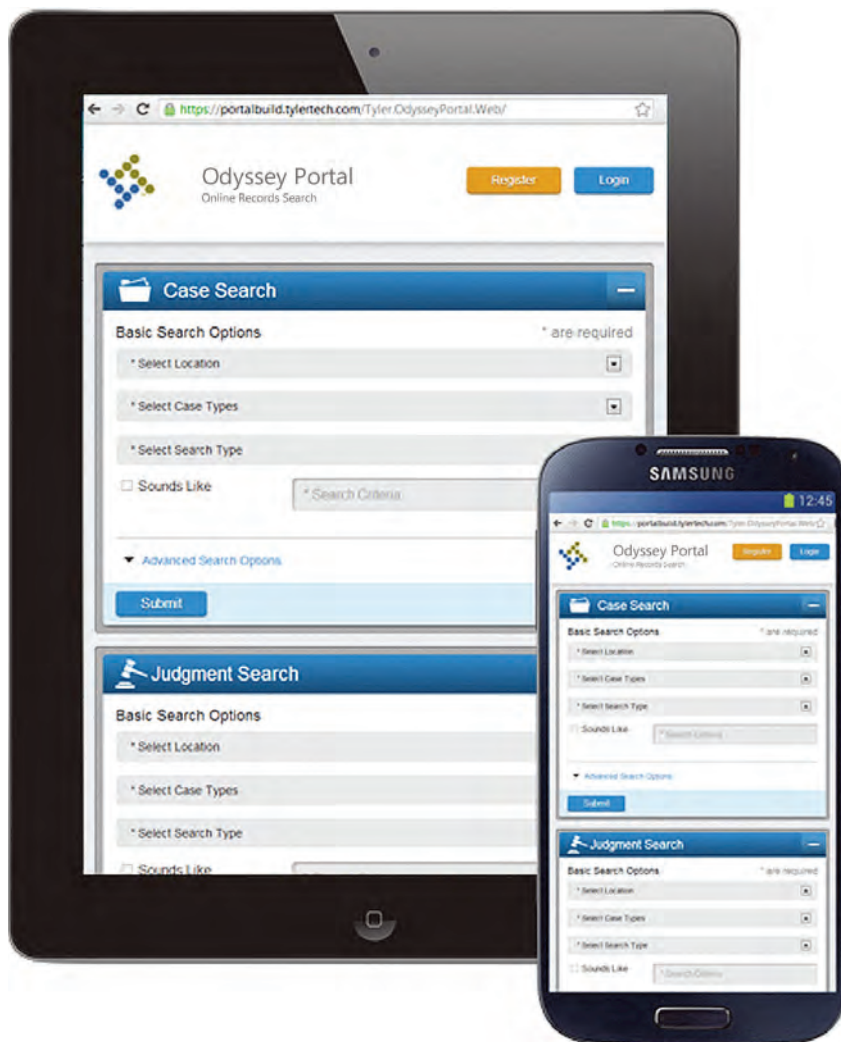BY MICHAEL GROHS, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

APPS FOR MOBILE ACCESS, EFILING, ANNOTATION, CASE REVIEW AND MORE.

IT SEEMS as if there is an application—an app—for everything, and this technological development has not been lost on the court system. The Center for Legal and Court Technology (CLCT) is a joint project of William & Mary Law School and the National Center for State Courts whose primary mission is "to improve the world's legal systems through the appropriate use of technology." Among the ways in which they accomplish this is to conduct experimental trials called "laboratory trials." In one of the more recent ones, participants relied largely on tablets and phones (participants brought their own) to present evidence and testimony.

Fred Lederer, director of CLCT, notes that the U.S. District Court in Philadelphia presents evidence using tablets and video streaming. They report that the use has been successful, and Lederer points out that while this tactic may not be mainstream yet, there is worldwide interest. The days of hauling boxes of files are over. Now all the infor-

Tyler Techology's Odyssey Portal and File & Serve (e-filing) have both been transitioned to HTML5. This means that users accessing information from courts using Odyssey will be able to do so seamlessly and automatically from any device—tablet, iPhone, Android, etc.

Apps and Functions

Journal Technologies has developed such software as ECourt and JustWare, which were also created with justice in mind, and they have since released JustWare Mobile to every JustWare customer free of charge. In conjunction, the two offer mobile access to cases from any mobile device with a modern web browser. JustWare allows a user to view active cases, create and edit notes and tasks, and see charges and involvements. With the app, a user can see and access contact information, place calls, and start e-mails. The data is instantly saved to the user's JustWare database and made available to the user's traditional JustWare client as well as oth-

Court personnel can use their smart phone to activate video capture with this VIQ Solutions app.

mation needed can fit in a user's pocket.

There are myriad apps for lawyers to use, and some such as DocketLaw, which calculates deadlines and event dates based on the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, are free. Court Days is used for calculating deadlines for briefs and calculating the number of calendar days, court days, (or both) before or after a specified date and costs about a dollar. Other prices range, but scores of apps can and are being used in the legal arena. One of
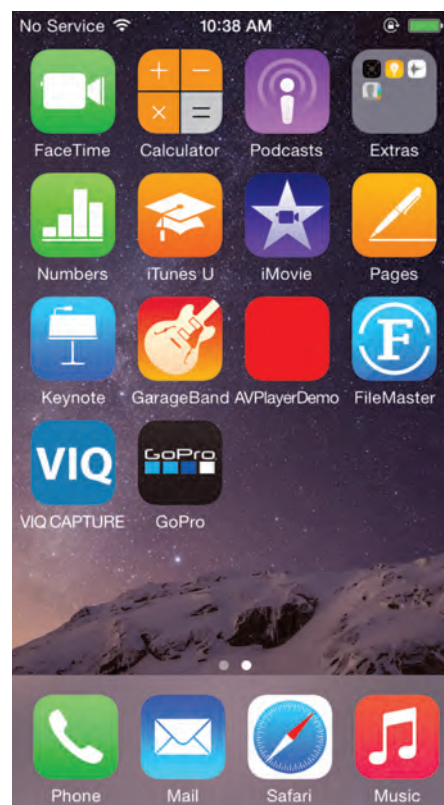
CLCT's upcoming projects is to conduct a survey about which apps that are not being used in court could be. Then there are those that have been specifically designed for court use.

TrialPad fits this category. Tara Cheever, products manager at Lit Software, notes that some judges have requested iPads loaded with documents and use TrialPad to organize them, track admission status, etc. "For the most part, however, it is lawyers that are bringing iPads and iPad apps to court rather than the Court bringing it to the

Jurors during exercises called laboratory trials at the Center for Legal and Court Technology try out tablets for possible use.

ers in the organization.

Riley Miles, director of development at Journal Technologies, explains that eCourt is a browser-based configurable case management solution for courts of all jurisdictions. ECourt's graphical user interface is natively touch screen enabled. Users can access cases from anywhere on their browser-enabled device: desktops, laptops, smart phones and tablets. Because eCourt is browser-based, it's very fast and designed for high speed performance. Information may be updated in eCourt from the bench, for example, using configurable judges' tools. Calendars and views of each day's docket—configured by person, by judge, by courtroom, by time—are all available with eCourt.

Cheever explains that Lit Software has developed apps for trial presentation (TrialPad) and transcript/deposition annotation and digestion (TranscriptPad). "We are also releasing an additional app for document review called DocReviewPad, which will be used to organize and categorize documents and evidence before a case goes to trial. TrialPad and TranscriptPad have become the standard for courtroom presentation with an iPad. We hope DocReviewPad will do the same for case preparation and document review."

Tyler Technology's Odyssey® Portal and File & Serve (e-filing) have both been transitioned to HTML5. This means that users accessing information from courts using Odyssey will be able to do so seamlessly and automatically from any device—tablet, iPhone, Android, etc.—without the court having to make any adjustments.

Odyssey also has the ability to do sophisticated assignment of rights and roles to access information. This means two things:

1. Security, even when accessing information from outside the courthouse or VPN, is such that only the information that an individual has authority to view can be accessed.

2. Courts have a great deal of flexibility in determining and controlling what information can be viewed by whom.

Requests for Apps

Amy Puckett, senior product director at Tyler Technology's Courts & Justice Division, says, "We're predominantly seeing apps that handle and store information—those that provide access to schedules, documents, and specific pieces of data." She furthers, "The big focus and where we get the most requests is with expanding access—to data, to documents, to digital recordings and their accounts with the courts. Citizens appreciate transparency and want convenient access to as much information as possible. Many of today's citizens are tech savvy and accustomed to performing a variety

of tasks on the Web and their smart phones. So, they're asking for the same level of accessibility and inter-activity with the Courts."

Cheever also notes that efficiency and ease of use are what many users are looking for. A law technology advisor asked if a user needed to be an expert to use the app, to which she answered, no. An app, she says, should be like a pacemaker…it should just work. A smart phone and iPad, she points out, could be given to a three-year-old who could figure it out fairly quickly. Years ago, in order to print something, it took a disk, loading the drivers, etc. Now it is a push of a button, which is what users want in apps. "There is a large demand for convenience in every market…technology is supposed to be just as effective, but much more efficient. To reach that goal, we first make sure that lawyers can be pro-ductive while on the go. This means that we aren't a cloud solution that you have to be online to use. Documents and transcripts live in the apps, not in the cloud, allowing you to be productive independent of an Internet connection."

One thing that agencies wanted that was accommodated, says Miles, was paring the functions down to what matters most and to be able to use the most heavily used features in the most functional way, so func-tionality was pushed to the browser. One of the benefits JustWare Mobile has is it strips away some of the complications of the full JustWare to give the most important and pivotal information to the mobile user who is looking at a small screen. Miles adds that this has resulted in a ground-up approach, and it boils down to "real estate." A smaller screen will have the fundamental pieces. As the screen grows, so does the amount of fundamentals.

Mobility

Mobility is important. As Cheever points out, for years a laptop was the closest one could get to true mobility, but "The iPad makes all that possible, in a much smaller, lighter container, with a lot fewer cables, much shorter startup time, and a longer battery life. Not only that, but with an iPad, you can walk around the courtroom while pre-senting wirelessly, like you'd walk around with a legal pad. Because of that, iPad presence has eclipsed lap-top presence in the courtroom."

Puckett suggests that mobility and efficiency are closely related. "Going mobile is important for court use to increase efficiency, enhance productivity, expand access to jus-tice, as well as provide convenience and potential cost savings." Web and mobile apps offer attorneys and the public the option to self-serve and conduct court business from any-where and at any time. This saves the time and expense of visiting the courthouse. "For court staff, it can provide the flexibility of accessing information and working remotely while also reducing congestion on their workload since many requests have shifted to self-serve."

The growth has been fast. Miles recalls that just a few years ago, if court clients were posed the ques-tion, "What if you could do A, B, C, and D on a mobile?" there was not a great deal of interest. Now they have expectations, and the response is, "I want this. Deliver it as soon as possible." In an article by Sharon D. Nelson and John W. Simek written for the American Bar Association (ABA), the authors discussed an incident in which a webinar called *The iPad for Litigators* was sponsored by the American Law Institute and the ABA, and so many attorneys registered that they had to break the webinar into three sessions so as not to overload the technology. And in January 2014, for the first time, the Internet was accessed more by tablets and smart phones than by PCs and laptops. Says Puckett, "We're seeing both interest and a commitment from many of our court clients to upgrade technology to provide mobile access."