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*– Bob Manlowe, National counsel at Williams, Kastner & Gibbs PLLC*

# WILLIAMS, KASTNER, & GIBBS PLLC

## B A C K G R O U N D

*Like many firms, Williams, Kastner & Gibbs PLLC (WK&G) has often been forced to deal with the logistical problems arising from out-of-town trials. WK&G serves as National counsel for some of its clients and also has attorneys which serve on National trial teams. Based in Seattle, it is faced with the challenge of sending lawyers thousands of miles away to try cases, and in the past has encountered difficulties when attempting to maintain a reliable level of contact between the home office and traveling lawyers. But when Jeff Wolf, one of WK&G's National trial counsel came to San Francisco to assist in the defense of a high-profile toxic tort case in the San Francisco Civic Center Courthouse, concerns about communication and file access quickly dissolved.*

*“For Jeff, there were no problems staying connected in the courtroom,” said Bob Manlowe, National counsel at WK&G. “Not when he needed immediate access to our medical literature database for cross-examination of plaintiffs’ experts, nor when he needed to get PowerPoint slides off the office network to use in witness cross-examinations and closing arguments. Jeff was even able to take advantage of recesses in the trial to finalize and e-mail a status report to another client on a different case.”*

*Mr. Manlowe, who has since become something of an advocate within the legal community for the use of wireless technology, often stresses the larger implications of the eventual widespread adoption of wireless technology, which, as he explained in a recent article, run from streamlining scheduling court appearances to, like word processing and computerized research databases before it, empowering each lawyer with equal opportunities to effectively represent their clients. He is equally enthusiastic about the short-term applications to his own practice.*

## U S E O F S E R V I C E

“With this kind of connection, WK&G was able to make it appear to our adversaries that we had a cast of thousands providing instantaneous support to our trial team,” explained Mr. Manlowe. “In point of fact, we were able to convey that impression with just one paralegal and a supervisor through the key use of e-mail, online research, and our document database access . . . Net access enables any firm to deploy a large, diverse team “virtually,” even though only a single litigator may be present in court.”

The WK&G team eagerly embraced wireless as the solution to their communications difficulties. Courtroom Connect gave them the ability to maintain constant contact with the lawyers working in San Francisco, and both groups quickly recognized this to be not only convenient, but of immense strategic benefit. Wireless exponentially increased the attorneys’ pool of resources, giving them easy access to important documents, to the opinions and advice of other lawyers and of experts, and to the vast bodies of evidence stored electronically on sites like Westlaw. For WK&G attorneys, travelling suddenly seemed almost easier than working at home.

“If a technical question comes up during trial, as happened in our toxic tort case, the trial attorney can immediately send an instant message or e-mail to a technical expert off-site and get an answer back in real-time,” said Mr. Manlowe. “With this virtual presence, that team can have the same expertise on hand as one who can afford to keep experts in the courtroom, but at a fraction of the cost. Similarly, the ability to broadcast real-time transcripts from the courtroom via wireless Internet allows your home office trial team members to monitor proceedings and provide advice to the litigator in court, without the expense of physically being present.”

## E N D R E S U L T

Back in Seattle, Willams, Kastner & Gibbs' attorneys continue to recall the San Francisco experience as a promising sign of things to come. In their eyes, Courtroom Connect represents a new stage of trial preparedness, eliminating the isolation of trial lawyers and endowing them with unlimited reach. As the WK&G team experience shows, wireless can be a potent tool, to the point where it is difficult to see how one managed without it.

“The use of laptops and the Internet at the office is a given,” said Mr. Manlowe. “With the support of courts and professors and technological developments, high-speed wireless Internet appears to be well on its way to becoming an indispensable tool for litigators at court. The setup and ongoing costs are low, especially compared to the alternatives of fielding larger trial teams and using other support services such as couriers, and the benefits to both clients and firms are clear. For our San Francisco trial, I’m glad WK&G had this access first, because I know it's only a matter of time before our adversaries do.”