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ExhibitView: User-friendly trial presentation software reviewed

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There are many programs in the PC world to assist attorneys in presenting documents and exhibits to a jury.

For the most part, these software packages - including Sanction, TrialDirector, Verdical and Visionary - try to be everything to everyone. This shotgun approach results in large, unstable software with so many features that two and three-day training sessions are needed to teach anyone how to use them. Tasks such as simply displaying an exhibit on the screen become difficult due to the complexity of the program, which also attempts to handle case management, document management, e-mail and note taking.

This has left the door open for an easy-to-use presentation package: ExhibitView by ExhibitView Solutions.

From the beginning, it is apparent that ExhibitView seeks to fill this void with a streamlined trial presentation experience. The company's motto, which is prominently displayed on the front page of its website, states: "The Only Presentation Management System You Can Learn in 30 Minutes that Lets You Organize, Create, and Present."

ExhibitView delivers on that promise. Having recently taken the plunge and used ExhibitView at trial, I found it intuitive and easy to use, with absolutely no problems. This is more than I can say for defense counsel, who had a number of problems with Sanction, including synchronizing video to text, connecting with the projector and a variety of other issues.

How it works

ExhibitView closely resembles TrialSmart, a presentation software available to Mac-using attorneys. The program presents the user with a catalogue of exhibits and/or videos that are imported into it. Displaying these items is as simple as dragging and dropping them into a staging area located on the right-hand side of the screen.

Markup icons are placed above the user's staging view; all cursor movements using these tools are invisible to jurors viewing the presentation until the final markup changes have been made. This eliminates the embarrassing situation where an attorney attempts to find what text to highlight while jurors watch the cursor moving about the screen.

ExhibitView allows the internal creation of PowerPoint slides as well. This way, new content can be created "on the fly" when an attorney is responding to unforeseen closing arguments or issues in cross-examination.

The software's proprietary projector-finding feature ensures ease with connecting and optimizing outputs to projector screens, resulting in fewer failures in front of the jury.

ExhibitView seeks to solve a major problem plaguing other trial presentation programs by storing all items imported into the application in one file. This feature makes the transfer of a presentation as easy as moving the file from one computer to another.

Having all of the files in one location avoids the problem many other programs have of using a database where the files are located across many folders, resulting in broken links to those documents when you try to move the project to another computer.

As would be expected with such a new program, ExhibitView handles almost every major video format from mp4 to avi, as well as all major image formats and pdfs, with no problems whatsoever. The inability to import various video formats and play them well has plagued many other presentation applications.

There is no doubt that ExhibitView will continue to be the PC presentation software used by my firm as well as my trial presentation consulting business. Its interface and ease of use not only result in a clean program, but one of surprising stability.

ExhibitView operates on Windows XP and Vista and costs \$699. A free 14-day trial is available at www.exhibitview.net.

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