The term “practice support” has come a long way within the legal industry. What was once primarily referred to as “litigation support” has evolved into what we now recognize as practice support — a legitimate, increasingly profit-focused department within many law firms that is tasked with supporting lawyers with leading-edge technology in case and information management. While the allure of utilizing the latest technology — trendy apps, fancy data mapping models and convenient litigation preparedness checklists — cannot be denied, the scope of practice support also includes less headline-making, but undeniably vital, applications and functions.

Take calendaring and docketing, for example; while keeping court dates and attorney schedules straight may seem like a standard function within the firm, when taking a closer look, the importance of calendar management becomes more apparent. This is particularly true when it comes to:

- Conflict checking
- Risk management (calendar-related errors are the leading cause of legal malpractice claims)
- Business continuity (in terms of being able to access electronic calendar/deadline back-ups during disasters and outages)

In many respects, the establishment of a docketing system and an automated, centralized calendar is at the core of a comprehensive practice support strategy. Keeping firm attorneys on track with court deadlines and rules is in the best interest of the firm as a whole. In fact, a growing number of malpractice insurance carriers now require that firms have an automated docket/calendaring system in place as a condition of insurance. Making sure the entire practice is supported by a centralized, automated calendar is a necessary part of effective law office management.

Law firm library services and information management, knowledge management, marketing operations and new business development are other unsung heroes of the practice support role. While docketing might be the most basic function, it can have the most profound, and often negative, effect if not properly managed or automated. ILTA

JOSEPH C. SCOTT is an LA-based attorney and Vice President/General Manager of CompuLaw, LLC and Deadlines.com, providing legal rules-based calendaring software and services for law firms. He is a recognized industry expert on the implementation of innovative technologies to the business and practice of law. Joe is a regular speaker and CLE presenter on the topic of risk management, legal industry calendaring and related business continuity. He has authored numerous articles on the application of technology for attorneys and law firms. Joe can be reached at jscott@compulaw.com.