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Please check back each month for updates on the NDA Resource Library. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions or would like to contribute to the NDA Resource Library, please email us at resourcelibrary@nationaldocketing.org

Until next month- Happy Docketing!

-The Resource Library Committee

Three Tips for Mastering Docketing and Court Rules During the Pandemic and Beyond

As the spread of COVID-19 led to global lockdowns in March of 2020, courts ceased in-person operations and docketing professionals rushed to abide by the resulting tsunami of emergency orders. At the time, most believed that the changes would last only for a few weeks or, in the extreme, a few months. Nearly two years later, it has become apparent that courts are not going back to "business as usual" any time soon; rather, the legal industry has begrudgingly accepted a "new normal" comprised of virtual court proceedings and remote workplaces.

Like most other workers, docketing professionals had to adopt new procedures to keep up with the evolving pandemic environment. A combination of vigilance and flexibility has been vital for docketing teams working tirelessly to keep their firms running efficiently.

The pandemic has added an extra dimension to the already complex world of docketing; not only do courts often change their rules, but their Covid safety policies change frequently as well. The pandemic has brought constant change to the docketing and court rules process, and now with vaccination and testing deadlines added in, those changes have increased exponentially.

The only reliable method for law firms to stay on top of their jurisdictions is through the continual monitoring and updating of court rules and dates. Whether a firm relies on internal staff, uses an external court rules and docketing provider, or utilizes a combination of the two, monitoring these rules remains an overwhelming endeavor.

For firms looking to stay on top of docketing and court rules during the pandemic and beyond, the following tips can serve as a universal starting point:

Create a Centralized Information Center for Court Rules

Centralized documentation is a tremendous resource for firms looking to keep staff informed of changes to a court's procedural rules or Covid policies. Establishing a consolidated information center or knowledge base to post all relevant documentation is a great way to stay organized. As policies change,

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new documents (or links to them) can be posted to replace obsolete ones. With constant updates, it creates a trustworthy resource for a firm's docketers to use. Some firms may have sufficient internal staffing to devote to this research, while others may prefer to rely on an outside service.

Build Stamina and Resources for Another Busy Year

Because courts issued so many Covid-related rules in 2021, there was no docketing downtime— only one long, hectic season. Since 2022 looks like it will be similarly overloaded, this year will provide few opportunities to exhale. Docketing teams will need to juggle and prioritize to get their work done and may need to consider hiring more staff or enlisting external assistance. The more stamina the docketing department can build, the more successfully the team members will endure another intense year of volume.

Gain Control by Expecting Change

For docketing professionals, the inability to control or prevent coming changes can be a stressful reality. By learning to expect change and having a flexible attitude, docketers can gain a sense of preparedness. On New Year's Day, courts implemented a myriad of updates across hundreds of jurisdictions, and there will be even more to come. Some courts are back in person for certain proceedings, while others are still relying on remote conferencing options such as Zoom or Teams. Additionally, a state may set its Covid rules and then be forced to completely alter them only a few weeks later due to a surge in infections. This combination of circumstances is anxiety-provoking, to say the least. Docketing professionals can feel less anxious and more in control of the process by acknowledging that the landscape is ever-changing and will likely continue to be this way for the year ahead. By increasing their vigilance and flexibility, docketing professionals can serve their firms more adeptly while also reducing their own stress and anxiety.

--Cheryl Siler and Linda Maroko

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Updates on The European Unitary Patent and Unified Patent Court

By Matthew Howell

After years of delay caused by legal challenges in Germany to ratification of the Agreement on a Unified Patent Court (also known as the "UPC Agreement" or "UPCA"), it now seems that the Unified Patent Court (UPC) and the European Unitary Patent (UP) will come into effect in 2022. Indeed, the UPC and the European Patent Office are indicating that the UPC is expected to