



Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project



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Kathleen Brockel,
Executive Director,
Legal Services
National Technology
Assistance Project

Key benefits

- Saves tens of thousands in travel and lost productivity costs
- Facilitates training of remote legal aid program branches
- Expedites training on new legal issues
- Helps legal aid programs serve more clients

Nonprofit firm helps 80 legal aid programs and courts with GoToMeeting

The Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project (LSNTAP) is a nonprofit organization that helps 80 legal aid programs across the U.S. improve client services through effective and innovative use of technology. LSNTAP support is available to hundreds of legal aid programs funded by the Legal Services Corporation, courts and other legal service organizations. These programs collectively help millions of low-income and disabled people with free legal services, primarily related to family law, addiction, domestic violence, landlord-tenant disputes and predatory lending. The organization has five employees and three contractors, and is based in Santa Monica, California.

The challenge: improving ease and simplicity of remote technical training

Through its LegalMeetings program, the organization delivers a range of technology trainings – from the basics of Microsoft® Office tools, to Web site development, to applying cutting-edge technologies such as Basecamp project management software. The goal is to help legal aid programs use technology to increase their efficiency and optimize their limited resources.

With only limited staff to carry out its broad mission of assisting legal aid programs across the U.S., many located in rural areas, LSNTAP became an early user of Web-based training tools. However, the service LSNTAP initially used for its Webinars and online meetings did not measure up to the organization's wish list for ease of use, rich functionality and flexibility.

“We became dissatisfied with our existing solution and decided to look at other options,” said Gene Donney, project coordinator. “As technology experts, we were able to conduct a very careful and thorough evaluation of several solutions. We chose GoToMeeting with GoToWebinar for superior ease of installation, simplicity, advanced functionality and overall dynamic technology.”

Implementing GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar for remote collaboration and training

LSNTAP implemented Citrix® GoToMeeting® and Citrix® GoToWebinar® in early 2007. GoToMeeting is used on a daily basis for a variety of scenarios, including meetings with volunteer advisory boards across the country and technology consultations between LSNTAP administrators and staff at legal aid programs. And as a virtual organization without a physical headquarters, LSNTAP staff members use GoToMeeting internally to collaborate with each other.

GoToWebinar is used by LSNTAP to host up to 40 LegalMeetings technology training sessions per year, which typically last 90 minutes each. In 2007 alone, LSNTAP trained more than 1,200 registrants comprising legal aid program staff and volunteers.

Further, LSNTAP enables legal aid programs to use GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar so they can remotely train and collaborate with their own staff and volunteers, particularly those in rural or remote

offices. Typical scenarios include law review sessions, advocacy brainstorming sessions, mentoring of new attorneys and volunteers, and one-on-one document reviews. For example, some legal aid programs used these Citrix Online collaboration tools to bring attorneys up to speed quickly on foreclosure legal issues to help the ballooning number of clients who needed help in this area.

Using online meetings and Webinars to optimize scarce resources

Because legal aid services are free to low-income and disabled clients, and because these organizations operate on very limited funds, there is always more demand than can be met. Therefore, the use of online meetings and Webinars is crucial to conserving money and staff time that could be better spent on direct client service. This approach also makes it feasible for overworked and geographically dispersed staff and volunteers to get the training they need to improve their operations.

“Both LSNTAP and the legal aid programs we support are achieving tremendous cost savings and efficiencies through the use of GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar,” said Kathleen Brockel, executive director of LSNTAP. “LSNTAP realizes hard cost savings in physical overhead and monthly in-person staff meetings of \$85,000 annually. But the more important impact is our ability to provide our national training platform to legal aid programs – which is our core mission. These national trainings, which would be cost-prohibitive to conduct in person, have an impact that cannot be measured in dollars alone.

“Because of the enormous demand for legal aid services, these programs are always looking for ways to do more with less so that funds can be used to help clients. Remote training, meetings and collaboration save our organizations tens of thousands every year in travel expenses and lost productivity.”

One example of the substantial cost benefits of using GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar is the Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP). In 2006, GLSP conducted 47 sessions to train 37 advocates from 15 different offices on their new case management software, Legal Server. By replacing on-site training with Web conferencing, GLSP saved an estimated \$23,000 in lost time alone, not to mention costly travel expenses.

Combining ease of use and powerful functionality

The ability to conduct online meetings and Webinars has proven extremely popular with the legal aid programs that LSNTAP works with, thanks to the ease of use and robust functionality of GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar. Features that are especially popular include the ability to launch an impromptu meeting immediately with the Meet Now functionality; switch presenters with the click of a button; conduct post-conference surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of online training; and record meetings for later use. Plus, new users can learn to use the tools very quickly, thanks to the intuitive interface design.

Donney said, “This year we are conducting a quarterly contest to see which legal aid program is the heaviest user of Citrix Online services. The most recent winner, California Rural Legal Assistance, conducted 104 GoToMeeting sessions during the quarter.”

Brockel concluded, “GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar are ingrained in LSNTAP and the legal aid community. They are strategic technologies that help us fulfill our mission.”

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