

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT



CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

LONG RANGE PLAN

March - 1998

Honorable Geraldine Mund
Chief Judge

Jon D. Ceretto
Executive Officer/Clerk of Court

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INTRODUCTION

In April 1994 the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California issued its first Long Range Plan. It took more than a year for the Court to develop, discuss, and finalize the Plan. The result of this effort was a large, comprehensive, and detailed document that contained hundreds of goals, objectives, and issues.

In the almost four years since the issuance of the Plan, the Court has accomplished many of the goals and objectives set out in the Plan. An accounting of the Court's efforts to implement the plan is found in the annual reports of the Court for the years 1994 through 1996. A summary of this accounting is attached as Exhibit "A."

Despite this progress, the Court believes that the planning process is one that never ends. Hence, the Court is undertaking a significant revision and updating of the Plan to be effective in April of 1998. The basic structure of the Plan will remain. The 1998 iteration will differ significantly, however, in two respects: (1) the Court will focus its energies primarily in the case management area; and (2) issues have been deleted as superfluous or modified to reflect more accurately their nature as aspirational rather than operational issues.

In addition, the Court has assigned the highest priority to the following objectives:

- CM2E: Convert to one uniform automated case management system for the entire District.
- CM2B: Determine the feasibility of, and develop an approach for, creating a "paperless" Court through the use of an electronic case filing system.
- CM4C: Review and determine the feasibility and desirability of accepting filings by fax.

- CM4B: Implement an electronic files system within the Court to make documents available on-line to all interested parties.
- CR3D: Initiate and maintain a regular liaison with local members of Congress.
- CR4A: Create and staff an ombudsperson position in each division to assist the public with legal or procedural questions that the Clerk and his staff are prohibited from answering.
- CR4B: Establish a *pro bono* program at each divisional office location.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission as the Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California is to serve the public by:

- ! Resolving all matters referred to the Court in a just, efficient, and timely manner;
- ! Supplying prompt and accurate information in an understandable manner;
- ! Responding to the needs of the entire community fairly and courteously;
- ! Providing leadership in the administration of justice in the bankruptcy system.

In fulfilling our mission, we recognize the importance of:

- ▼ Demonstrating respect for the dramatic impact that bankruptcy has on the lives of our users;
- ▼ Instilling confidence in the competence, impartiality, and ethics of the entire Court.

ASPIRATIONAL ISSUES

ISSUE : LEADERSHIP (LD)

- GOAL LD1: Enhance leadership skills throughout the Court.
- GOAL LD2: Increase effectiveness of the Court's communication and working relationships with other federal courts, agencies, and Congress.
- GOAL LD3: Improve communication and relations with state courts and legislative branches.
- GOAL LD4: Initiate and formalize cooperative efforts with professional organizations and groups.

ISSUE : ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT (ES)

GOAL ES1: Provide an impartial Court environment to all users.

GOAL ES2: Foster a workplace free of bias.

GOAL ES3: Foster a courtroom environment free of bias.

GOAL ES4: Foster civility within the courtroom environment.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

ISSUE : CASE MANAGEMENT (CM)

GOAL CM1: Maximize the Court's efficiency in case processing, while maintaining or improving quality and accuracy.

Short Term Objectives

CM1A: Institute ongoing communication among judges, judicial staff, and Clerk's Office regarding expectations, progress, and case processing performance.

Long Term Objectives

CM1B: Develop and implement District-wide quality control program to monitor and evaluate case management functions.

CM1C: Develop and implement a fully automated and integrated bankruptcy fiscal system.

GOAL CM2: Reduce delay in all phases of case processing.

Long Term Objectives

CM2A: Expand and enhance automated docketing.

CM2B: Determine the feasibility of, and develop an approach for, creating a "paperless" Court through the use of an electronic case filing system.

CM2C: Develop and implement “file anywhere, anytime” policy.

CM2D: Develop and implement “Windows-based” case management system.

Ongoing Objectives

CM2E: Convert to one uniform automated case management system for the entire District.

CM2F: Review and evaluate performance of all case processing functions: opening, docketing, noticing, filing, calendaring, handling correspondence, conforming copies, recording proceedings, retrieval of and routing files to judges, and closing.

CM2G: Eliminate or reduce redundancies and delay points in the processing of cases.

GOAL CM3: Improve efficiency in calendar management for the Bench and Bar.

Short Term Objectives

CM3A: Implement court-wide, uniform self-calendaring system.

Long Term Objectives

CM3B: Develop uniform system for early publication of tentative rulings.

GOAL CM4: Provide automated access to Court services and information.**Ongoing Objectives**

- CM4A: Implement video conferencing pilot project in at least four divisional offices within the District.
- CM4B: Implement an electronic files system within the Court to make documents available on-line to all interested parties.
- CM4C: Review and determine the feasibility and desirability of accepting filings by fax.
- CM4D: Develop and implement an automated system to provide case information.
- CM4E: Develop and implement an automated system to provide calendar information and self-calendaring capability.
- CM4F: Develop an on-line universal forms catalog.
- CM4G: Develop a cross-referenced topical index system for Court committee and Board of Judges discussions and actions to track issues, decisions, and implementation.

GOAL CM5: Make the Court rules more user friendly.**Ongoing Objectives**

- CM5A: Revise, simplify, and renumber the Local Rules. Coordinate with the District, Circuit, and National Advisory Committee on Bankruptcy Rules projects regarding local rule organizational structure.

ISSUE : COMMUNITY RELATIONS (CR)

GOAL CR1: Recognize and serve the needs of our demographically diverse community.

Short Term Objectives

CR1A: Establish relationship with minority and culturally diverse bar organizations.

CR1B: Make frequently-used informational documents available in multiple languages.

Long Term Objectives

CR1C: Determine information needs of community via surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Ongoing Objectives

CR1D: Make translation services available, as feasible.

GOAL CR2: Improve communications with the public.

Ongoing Objectives

CR2A: Initiate periodic, outside input on Court operations.

GOAL CR3: Develop public education program.

Short Term Objectives

CR3A: Conduct evaluation of public education needs concerning bankruptcy-related issues and recommend solutions.

Long Term Objectives

CR3B: Establish regular communication with and provide appropriate bankruptcy-related educational materials and programs to community groups and educational institutions.

Ongoing Objectives

CR3C: Explore opportunities and make available Court representatives to participate in the education of the public concerning issues related to bankruptcy.

CR3D: Initiate and maintain a regular liaison with local members of Congress.

GOAL CR4: Make all Court procedures/processes accessible to all users of the Court.

Long Term Objectives

CR4A: Create and staff an ombudsperson position in each division to assist the public with legal or procedural questions that the Clerk and his staff are prohibited from answering.

CR4B: Establish a *pro bono* program at each divisional office location.

ISSUE : HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)

GOAL HR1: Attract and retain a fully competent, well-trained, and highly motivated employee force.

Long Term Objectives

- HR1A: Establish accurate, specific, uniform, and comprehensive job descriptions and recruitment bulletins.
- HR1B: Develop training programs to instill problem-solving orientation.
- HR1C: Develop and implement an on-line training system covering all automated system applications used by the Court.
- HR1D: Create a training program for all employees regarding the Code of Conduct for United States Court Clerks.

Ongoing Objectives

- HR1E: Develop in-house training programs to prepare employees for broader technical, analytical, and managerial responsibilities.
- HR1F: Continue the development of training programs to further develop employee job skills.
- HR1G: Increase training and development of leadership skills at all levels.
- HR1H: Increase training to develop written communication skills at all levels.
- HR1I: Train employees to recognize and effectively deal with cultural diversity.
- HR1J: Train employees on providing helpful and courteous service.

HR1K: Provide increased staff education about importance and role of bankruptcy system in general economy and legal system, tying that education to importance of job performance for real-life concerns of users.

GOAL HR2: Improve performance and productivity efforts.

Long Term Objectives

HR2A: Improve the performance evaluation process.

HR2B: Establish performance standards.

HR2C: Develop procedure manual for each position as training tool to encourage uniformity and facilitate establishing performance standards.

HR2D: Establish consistent performance expectations and measurements for all positions.

HR2E: Establish job performance self-evaluation as part of performance review process.

Ongoing Objectives

HR2F: Monitor and support the transition to automation.

HR2G: Develop and implement a program to enhance employee job satisfaction.

GOAL HR3: Improve employee communications and relations.

Short Term Objectives

HR3A: Create employee feedback mechanisms.

Long Term Objectives

- HR3B: Clarify role definition for chambers and courtroom staff, including Courtroom Deputies, Judicial Assistants, Law Clerks, Electronic Court Recording Operators, and Relief Courtroom Deputies.
- HR3C: Develop and implement employee orientation program for Clerk's Office and Chambers staff.

Ongoing Objectives

- HR3D: Improve upward and downward communications among divisions and between divisional offices.
- GOAL HR4: Provide equal employment opportunity, and maintain an employee force that reflects the diverse population we serve.

Short Term Objectives

- HR4A: Provide multilingual service capability (e.g., bilingual staff).

Ongoing Objectives

- HR4B: Improve human resource programs that ensure parity between the employee force and the labor force.
- GOAL HR5: Update human resource practices.

Short Term Objectives

- HR5A: Compare current personnel practices to personnel practices of other organizations and identify possible improvements in each practice.

ISSUE : SPACE AND FACILITIES (SF)**GOAL SF1: Make facilities more accessible to users.**

SF1A: Establish automated information systems in Court lobbies for tentative rulings and Court calendar information.

SF1B: Establish *pro bono* lawyer consultation rooms in Court intake offices.

SF1C: Factor technology needs of public users into the development of facilities (for example, space for portable terminals, copiers).

GOAL SF2: Increase effectiveness of long-range planning efforts for space and facilities.

SF2A: Advocate revision of **A.O. Design Guides**, and **GSA Standards & Guidelines** regarding employee break rooms and restrooms, size of courtrooms, public space areas for high volume Courts, *pro bono* lawyer consultation facilities, and handicapped access (including hearing and visually impaired).

SF2B: Develop procedures to create a security system that protects Court documents and property.