

## Information Sources Impacting Courtrooms

“No independent research.” This is the directive jurors are hearing in the nation’s courtrooms as web-based technology makes it easier to access information that could unfairly influence a verdict. But not all jurors are listening. In many states, mistrials have occurred.

“We spend a good deal of time with the jury explaining to them why they are restricted in their cell phone usage,” reflects Hamilton Superior Court 3 Judge William Hughes regarding Indiana’s efforts to deal with this issue.

Julie McDonald, an attorney at the Indiana Judicial Center (IJC), which offers educational resources to judges across the state, shares that “one thing we’ve done in addition to kind of expanding the scope of our jury instructions with telling the jurors not to use those types of technologies is to tell them *why*.”

The IJC is working on a full-scale revision of civil jury instructions by translating them into plain English to make

them easier to understand (the goal is to release them in 2010.) Additional revisions incorporating rules involving technology such as laptops and social networking will be published this year. Instructions involving jurors’ use of technology are currently under consideration by the Criminal Instructions Committee.

Reflecting on the legal ramifications of technology misuse, Judge Hughes observes, “Jurors are subject to the same rules and contempt sanctions as anyone else in the court. When the use of technology impacts the actual trial or the case, the consequences become more severe. For instance, if a witness is texting another witness, the court could strike that person’s testimony. It could result in a mistrial.”

**Resources: Judge William Hughes, Hamilton Superior Court 3, at [www.in.gov/judiciary/hamilton](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/hamilton)**

**Julie McDonald, Indiana Judicial Center, at (317) 232-1313 or [www.in.gov/judiciary/center](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/center)**

## Nature, Nostalgia Attracting Residents to Rural County

Who says you can’t go home again? Pulaski County, a small community in Northwest Indiana with a population of 14,000, is reaching out to potential residents with its “Welcome Back Home” campaign. Launched last year, it targets people of all ages after initial efforts focused on retirees.

“I’ve always been told you never want to tell anyone you’re a retirement community, because you won’t attract industry,” asserts Daniel Dolezal, executive director of the Pulaski County Community Development Commission in Winamac, “but retirement is an industry just like tourism is an industry.”

Graduates (between 1960 and 1975) of local high schools received letters and promotional brochures inviting them to return to the area. In addition, television ads, as well as a web site presence, appealed to a wider audience.

Dolezal says the response has been positive.

When considering some of the county’s biggest enticements, he cites nature-oriented offerings such as Tippecanoe River State Park, Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area in Medaryville and a new rails-to-trails program. Proximity to Indianapolis and Chicago – despite no nearby interstates – is another.

Perhaps the biggest draw is what Dolezal describes as its “Mayberry R.F.D. persona.”

“We have a sense of a different way of life ... and as trite as it sounds, people just like that,” he emphasizes.

**Resource: Daniel Dolezal, Pulaski County Community Development Commission, at (574) 946-3869 or <http://pccdc.pulaskionline.org>**

## Say What? A Lesson in Workplace Lingo

During a conversation with a colleague about a project, he suggests “talking to the dog” and advises you to “boil the ocean.” Have you entered the “Twilight Zone”?

The above quirky terms are among those highlighted in “12 Workplace Phrases You Probably Don’t Know ... But Should,” an article written by a pair of national consultants. A sampling:



- **Boil the Ocean:** The scope is too big to do in one project. Break it up into more than one.
- **Going Native:** When a consultant stops acting like a consultant and starts thinking they are part of the client organization.
- **Holistic:** A big picture view or a solution that includes upstream and downstream impacts.
- **Strawman:** Final draft of a solution or proposal intended to provoke discussion. It is an object, document, person or argument that temporarily stands in for and is intended to be “knocked down” by something more substantial.
- **Talking to the Dog:** Thinking it through by talking it through out loud.

Spice up your office lingo with some of these phrases. Just be prepared for a few raised eyebrows.

## New Mobility Vehicle to be Manufactured in Mishawaka

**A**ffordability. Heightened comfort. Enhanced quality. These are among the benefits offered in a new vehicle designed for the disabled community. What sets it apart from others meeting Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines is that it is built from the ground up (eliminating conversion expenses) rather than retrofitted.

The MV-1 will serve the paratransit, taxi and consumer markets. Accessibility features include a manual wheelchair ramp, optional power wheelchair ramp, anti-slip ramp, wheelchair restraint track system and ramp lighting. Production is slated to begin in the second quarter of 2010 at the Mishawaka AM General plant where the Hummer H2 line is currently



assembled. The purchase price has not been finalized.

“With the MV-1, you end up with a higher quality, safer vehicle for less money,” explains Don Apruzzese, executive vice president and chief marketing officer of The Vehicle Production Group (VPG), the Miami, Florida-based designer and marketer of the MV-1.

He says it’s difficult to estimate the number of new jobs the MV-1 will create. Marketing efforts will be concentrated throughout North America and Canada.

**Resource: The Vehicle Production Group LLC, at (786) 230-2100 or [www.vpgautos.com](http://www.vpgautos.com)**

## Valparaiso Web Site’s ‘Spreading the Good News’

**C**hris Mahlmann was raised to view the proverbial glass as half full. That lifelong attitude inspired him to create ValpoLife.com, a comprehensive web site unveiled this spring covering positive news and events occurring in and around Valparaiso.

Connecting all aspects of the city, it provides information in five categories: business, sports, health, community and entertainment. Media include articles, blogs, photos, videos and podcasts. In addition, the site promotes local businesses with free listings and coupons. Every Friday, a companion electronic newsletter shares the week’s top stories.

“We wanted to make sure there is no company or organization in Valpo that can’t get exposed to everyone even if they don’t have a marketing budget,” explains Mahlmann (also publisher of the site).

Organizations seeking more visibility pay a fee in exchange for an expanded business profile feature.

At the time of this interview, ValpoLife.com’s audience was growing an average of 15% weekly. “The photo and video parts of the site ... have really exploded,” Mahlmann reveals.

Strongly appealing to residents, he notes, is the site’s optimistic tone.

“That’s probably the piece that has resonated the loudest,” he reflects. “It’s been extremely satisfying to get the kind of reaction we’ve gotten from the community. There are so many positive stories to be told. We’re never going to run out.”

Ultimately, he hopes to bring the ValpoLife.com concept to more Hoosier communities.

**Resource: Chris Mahlmann, ValpoLife.com, at (219) 707-5022 or [www.valpolife.com](http://www.valpolife.com)**

## The Scoop on State Legislatures

**D**espite a shared mission to serve their constituents, there are notable differences among state legislatures across the country.

There are 7,382 legislators in the United States. Popular occupations include full-time legislators (16%), attorneys (approximately 15%) and retirees (about 12%). The average age, which has been rising due to an increase in retired legislators, is 56.

Regarding size, Alaska’s Senate is the smallest. It’s comprised of just 20 people. Conversely, New Hampshire’s House totals 400.

And while Indiana’s lawmakers convene annually for the General Assembly session (and sometimes special sessions), that’s not the case universally. In five states (Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon and Texas), the legislature only meets every other year. In addition, 10 states meet essentially year round.

Across the country, women account for 24% of legislators, according to a *State Legislatures* report. Leaders in this area are New Hampshire (the first with a female majority in the Senate) and Colorado (which has the highest percentage of women legislators – 39%).

In a separate report from the Center on Women & Politics at Rutgers University, Indiana’s 22% of female legislators ranks it 31st among the 50 states. That ranking has held remarkably steady over the past 30 years. There were 20 women (13 Democrats and seven Republicans) in the House and 13 (six Democrats and seven from the GOP) in the Senate during the 2009 session.

Shorts written by Symone C. Skrzycki