

## **Eighth Circuit Case Management Strategies** **(Per Ted McFetridge, Trial Court Administrator)**

- (1) Civil cases are managed by the judges from the beginning of the case.
- (2) Civil judges are committed to setting a trial date early in the process, even if the trial date is far in the future.
- (3) Attorneys expect case management / status reports requests by the judge.
- (4) Attorneys are given ample time to prepare the case and conduct discovery.
- (5) In return for the ample time the civil judge is able to hold the trial date firm, with limited continuances.
- (6) Firm trial dates lead to settlements.
- (7) As a rule, the attorneys practicing before courts in the Eighth Circuit do not become embroiled in unnecessary discovery disputes which require hearing time. In fact, most local attorneys view hearings on discovery matters as indicative of a failure on their part. This is not universally true in other areas of the State. In some places, courts find it necessary to require attorneys to certify that they have tried to resolve their disputes before setting a hearing. We are fortunate that this is not necessary in the Eighth Circuit. As a result of not having to use hearing time on discovery disputes, more calendar time is available for substantive matters.
- (8) In Alachua County, we have a 2 week civil docket every month, but only one (on an alternating basis) of our two Alachua County civil division judges actually blocks off calendar time for both weeks. The other schedules hearings as usual for the second week. We have a county judge on back-up for our first week, and senior judges available to assist. As we approach trial, the judges work as a team and cases are assigned a trial judge without regard to which division the case is in. In this way we can ordinarily handle any leftover cases on the docket so that everyone goes to trial. The Bar knows that if their case is on the docket it will not be "passed." We plan for the inevitable settlements and unavoidable continuances, and realize that of the typical ~50 cases set on the docket only 1-3 cases will usually remain. Additionally, we will also set our non-jury trials for the same docket. This avoids having to use up calendar time outside of our trial docket.
- (9) Mediation is ordered in essentially all civil cases.
- (10) Good communication and relations with the civil bar.