

Docket Management; Art and Utility

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The dilemma which new judicial officers faces, in general, is conflict of the demand to achieve the required disposal coupled with the expected quality work, against the scarcity of the time, and to update themselves of the new trends in law. In this context, it is quint essential that the docket management is so balanced that it serves all the purposes.

After getting exposure from the experiences of seasoned judicial officers and even from the opinion of advocates and the senior court staff officials following factors have been found to be beneficial for docket management.

Firstly, the officers should have an overview of the total number and types of cases pending matters in the court. The old cases which are shortlisted at directions of Hon'ble High Court should also be specifically identified and there should be special mark on the file cover of old files, including distinguishable file covers. In preparation of the cause list a special mark should be mentioned to indicate that the case falls in the category of old cases so that the staff, advocates and the litigants themselves are aware that in regard to these old cases, all of them have to be over cautious.

Secondly, the officer should ensure that old cases are evenly distributed in all the working days and there should be a transparent and open method of giving adjournments within a fixed time frame. Such cases can be heard at the beginning of the court hours to ensure that if on the one working day the cases can be heard with substantial work. Suppose, an application to amend the plaint is pending, and if it is heard and disposed of early in the day, then the case can be adjourned same day for filing amended plaint and thereafter for filing amended written statement. It will avoid three dates.

Thirdly, the old cases should be matured one after other rather than maturing of the cases simultaneously. On one end it does not burden

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the advocates, on the other hand after getting matured, the cases are not adjourned for final arguments. Instead if old cases are matured one after other and disposed off, it is convenient to all the affected parties.

Fourthly about the docket management is the listing of cases of all special categories of Senior Citizens, Ex-servicemen, Women, service matters and mentally challenged persons. Such cases can also be given indication on the cause list. Thereafter, such cases should be adjourned in the presence of effected person ensuring that this special litigant feels privileged and satisfied of the reasons for date given.

Fifthly, the cause list should be such that cases of all categories get equal impetus. Listing only unit generating cases should be avoided. All the cases have to be ultimately disposed off. If for the purpose of unit, cases are given different treatments, ultimately the ignored cases lose their track and become a burden. If the cases are complicated they should be so spread that on the given day only one or two such complicated cases are listed for hearing. The officers should be well aware of such complicated matters. In these matters officer can come prepared with the facts of the case and the law, only if one or two cases of such nature are listed.

Lastly the most important factor is that vexatious and frivolous cases should not escape from eye of officer. They should be nibbed in the bud. Cases which are pending for service due to non-compliances or for reply of unnecessary applications, because parties have lost interest. Such cases should not be allowed to be adjourned, once the officer realize that they are not of bonafide disputes and abuse of process of law, no amount of cost can justify such adjournments.

Keeping above factors in mind, while adjourning the cases and creating docket will ensure that the dilemma which young officers generally face can be overcome by them giving best to their system.
