

# Abacus Data Systems, Inc.

## Practice Management Solution for Lawyers Delivers Fast, Reliable Performance with Advantage Database Server

As a licensed attorney and a software developer serving attorneys and law firms, Judd Kessler of Abacus Data Systems, Inc., understands the value of time—billable time, wasted time, time management, and even taking a little extra time to deliver a reliable, value-added practice management solution to an inherently litigious industry.

His company's flagship practice management solution, Abacus Law, is designed to help professionals in the legal field turn administrative time into billable hours by tracking everything from case files to calendars, court rules and contacts. "Most attorneys are so overworked, they don't have time to 'sharpen the saw' to grow and improve their law practices," says Kessler, president and founder of Abacus Data Systems since 1985. "Abacus Law allows them to do their jobs more efficiently."

But when Abacus began converting its solution to a 32-bit Windows environment a few years ago, the legacy, 16-bit database being used could not support the upgrade to a 32-bit environment. As one of the first solutions providers to employ the Harbour compiler for Windows applications, Abacus needed a new database to back it up in a 32-bit scenario. "Harbour ran [our application] fast, but it was missing a good database management system," recalls Kessler.

While converting their application to a Windows environment, Kessler and Abacus CTO Brian Hays also wanted to mitigate data corruption and data loss issues in the local or file-sharing networks

used by the majority of its customers, and expand its market reach to larger firms with a client/server version of the program. "We refuse to take steps backward," says Kessler. "If it wasn't going to work as fast or reliably as our previous version, we didn't want to release it."

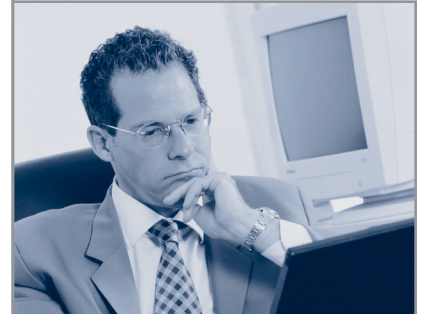
**"I don't know of any other system that enables both a file-sharing application and, with the flip of a switch, a client/server application."**

— Judd Kessler, Esq.  
President, Abacus Data Systems, Inc.

### The Advantage Solution

With a strong reputation for providing client/server database support for widely distributed, commercial applications, Advantage Database Server from Extended Systems became the clear choice for the new version of Abacus Law. Under the proprietary moniker of Secure Server, the embedded database of the 32-bit version of Abacus Law has allowed the company to upgrade the functionality, reliability and integrity of existing clients in either local or client/server network environments and attract larger firms as new customers.

Simply, the use of Advantage Database Server solved several issues connected to 32-bit Windows programs. "Of our competitors who went from 16- to 32-bit programs, their applications became bloated and ran slower," says Kessler. By combining Advantage Database Server with our application, he says, "We get



**COMPANY:** Abacus Data Systems, Inc., San Diego

**INDUSTRY:** Developer of practice management software solutions for the legal profession, specifically law firms and attorneys, nationwide.

**COMPANY PROFILE:** Founded in 1983, Abacus Data Systems is a privately held solutions provider of practice management software for financial planners, attorneys and law firms. Its flagship product, Abacus Law, is used by more than 100,000 attorneys and other professionals in the legal industry nationwide since its initial introduction in 1987.

**SITUATION:** The company's switch to a 32-bit Windows environment using Harbor source code protocols required a compatible database component with client/server capabilities without reducing the speed of the data processing or indexing.

**SOLUTION:** Abacus selected Advantage Database Server from Extended Systems to provide the database backbone to its upgraded, 32-bit version of Abacus Law. Available free in a local or file-sharing environment, or as a licensed client/server solution, Advantage Database Server has allowed Abacus to enhance its practice management systems with additional functionality and flexibility without a reduction in performance.

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much faster times indexing and reporting, even on a local basis, than anything else we've run. It's a screamer of a program."

In addition, the stability of the Advantage Database Server results in "zero data corruptions and zero crashes among even its largest customers," says Kessler. "The product is now more stable than it's ever been."

## Opportunities for Growth

The stability of Abacus Law has enabled Kessler and Hays to further enhance the product to meet demand and attract a wider range of law firms and practices, while changing the company's support functions to help users optimize the software instead of troubleshoot data problems.

Specifically, an upcoming version of Abacus Law will feature a full accounting module, a feature that combines Abacus' practice management functionality with an application even more valuable to attorneys and law practices. "[Advantage Database Server] has given us the opportunity to add a component that we've always wanted to offer, with the ability to support it with our current staff," says Kessler. "It allows us to move up the food chain of programs most lawyers buy for their practices."

The new time and billing module, in addition to the enhanced speed

and stability of the 32-bit version of Abacus Law, says Kessler, improves the company's potential to double its business while maintaining high levels of service and support. "With Advantage Database Server, we can handle that kind of growth," he says.

On that note, Kessler is also impressed with the unique ability of Advantage Database Server to support local file sharing or client/server environments with a single set of source-code, which allows his customers to upgrade their networks as they grow, without having to drastically change their systems.

Advantage Database Server helps Abacus educate its customers on the benefits of a client/server model by allowing the company's users to test and evaluate it on a trial basis. "They see all their crashes, data corruption, lost time and reindexing problems go away during their client/server trial period," says Kessler. "Once they have it, they don't want to give it back."

In fact, he says, not one Abacus customer that has implemented the client/server trial has gone back to the file-sharing version. "If they wanted to switch back, we just turn off the client/server function and [the database] continues to operate without undoing anything else," Kessler says. "That's really cool."

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— Judd Kessler, Esq., President,  
Abacus Data Systems, Inc.



## Abacus Customers Report Success with Enterprise Application *"All of our issues have been resolved."*

For eight branch law offices serving Infinity Insurance Group nationwide, the Abacus Law Enterprise (client/server) version has eliminated system crashes and data corruption issues that used to hobble the company's ability to track cases. Using Advantage Database Server, the Enterprise version also operates faster, with fewer data collisions—even in offices with 60 or more users and 500,000-plus event entries posted to the database.

"Abacus Law is an integral part of our business, and the Enterprise version with Advantage Database Server allowed us to solve our database issues without making a complete back-office change-out," says David Outtrim, managing attorney of Infinity's Pennsylvania legal office. He's also the technical liaison to all eight branch offices, representing about 150 individual users.

Nearly a year after installing the Enterprise version of Abacus Law, server crashes from overloaded databases have decreased from three per week in some branch offices to zero company-wide. "All of our issues have been resolved," says Outtrim. "I rarely get phone calls anymore, except from people who still can't believe how well it works."

Installation of the Enterprise version also went very smoothly. Outtrim budgeted a week at each office to install the new version, but had users up and running in less than two days. "These offices are extraordinarily dependent on this software, so getting them running so soon was very much appreciated," he says.

Outtrim was also impressed with the smooth conversion to the new Abacus Law program within its NetWare network environment. "There wasn't a lot of reconfiguring, except for a few customized screens and indexes at one of the offices," he says.

In addition to resolving system crashes and time and data loss issues, the Enterprise version of Abacus Law also runs faster than the previous version. "Searches are now almost instantaneous, even with the larger tables and many users on the network at once," says Outtrim.

The database is so stable and easy to use that other branch managers have learned to develop customized management and productivity reports from the data without requiring Outtrim's expertise. "It's made my life a lot easier," he says.

On a slightly smaller and no less demanding scale, attorneys and staff at Kubash & Associates in Houston have reduced system server crashes from three times a day to none using the Enterprise version of Abacus Law with its embedded Advantage Database Server. "With 54,000 clients in the database, the old database couldn't handle it," says James Kretschmer, a computer network consultant to Kubash & Associates.

With the faster and more stable Advantage Database Server behind Abacus Law, says Kretschmer, the firm can grow its business and look to opportunities to serve clients via the Internet. "Now we're set up to go that way," he says.

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For additional product information about Advantage Database Server, visit our Web site at [www.AdvantageDatabase.com](http://www.AdvantageDatabase.com) or call: **800-235-7675 or 208-322-7575, ext. 5030.**

For additional information about Abacus Data Systems, Inc., and its Abacus Law solution for practice management in the legal field, visit the company's Web site at [www.abacuslaw.com/ads](http://www.abacuslaw.com/ads), or call 800-726-3339.