Court Administrator 101 Reference Sheet

- Court Administration Resource Guide (CARG)
- Nonpublic and Limited-Access Court Records
- Records SCAO Site
- Records Handbook
- MCAP
- ADA Handbook
- Trial Court Directory
- Courtroom Technology Standards
- Virtual Courtroom Standards
- Michigan Court Rules, Admin Orders, Etc.
- Caseflow Management Guide
- Fines, Fees, Costs, and Rates
- Deferred Judgement and Delayed Sentence Chart
- Employee Guide to Legal Advice
- Handbook of Legal Terms
- MJI Benchbooks
- SCAO Subscriptions

Being an effective court manager involves many skill sets. It involves a number of technical skills to perform daily responsibilities, and also involves "soft skills" like consensus-building, problem-solving, and leadership. Education is available on all of these skill areas and this guide attempts to highlight the primary topics and resources available.

A. Leadership
    1. Learn to watch and listen to staff and court customers. Consider periodic court satisfaction surveys. *See* **CourTools** from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).
    2. Lead by example, demonstrate ability and willingness to fulfill any role necessary. Instill public trust and confidence in the judicial branch by exhibiting professionalism and integrity.
    3. Invest in your staff, e.g., coaching (not disciplinary based), relationship building, external training.
    4. Be a life-long or career-long learner. Explore leadership and management **opportunities**.
    5. Obtain education from experts on conducting crucial conversations.
    6. Consider finding a mentor.
    7. Gain a clear understanding of what is expected of your role and be clear of your expectations to those you lead.
    8. Encourage diverse input and utilize strengths.
    9. Hold staff accountable through appropriate coaching or discipline. Court managers and supervisors must be firm, fair, and consistent.
    10. Consider joining at least one trade association, MCAA, MACCA, MAFCA, etc.

B. Problem Solving
    1. A court manager's job involves identifying problems, finding solutions, presenting them to judges, and implementing strategic solutions. This includes internal investigations and fact finding. It is important to stay abreast of trends and remain up to date in finding solutions.
    2. Gather and consider information for all sides of an issue before issuing a position. Be sure you include those impacted by a decision and get their feedback before it is finalized, if possible.
    3. Communicate and build consensus.

C. Relationship Building – Both Internal and External
    1. Understand the court's role in the community and the effect the court has on many people, organizations, and offices.
    2. Educate justice partners on the role and purpose of the judiciary.
    3. Meeting with justice partners early on in your tenure to hear their concerns, complaints, if any, and to establish your personal relationship. This is key to resolving future conflicts and establishing good communication.

4. Relationships to consider are court customers, individual attorneys, firms and bar associations, funding authority, other divisions of the court and elected officials, clerk, probation, media, tour groups, schools, department heads, program leaders, court staff, volunteers, sheriff, police, legal aid, child welfare, prisons or detention centers, other community leaders, municipal/county courts, treatment providers, prosecutors, public defenders, interpreter agencies, government administrative agencies

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D. Prioritizing Issues and Projects
    1. Court managers cannot tackle all projects at once.
    2. Identify all of the programs/issues/deficiencies pending in the court, prioritize according to how they line up with court vision/strategic plan, the culture of the court, and the ability to fund. Resources can be found at the **Project Management Institute**.
    3. Utilize a network of others in the field of court administration to assist you.

E. General Management
    1. Professionalism – Consider joining or attending professional association meetings and conferences
    2. Communication – Maintain communication with the local bar association, justice partners and court staff. Utilize newsletters, staff meetings, and press releases.
    3. Interpersonal Communication
        a. Presentation skills – practice, e.g., **Toastmasters International**.
        b. Leading effective meetings – Have an agenda and a specific start and end time. Stick to both. At the end, summarize what was decided and what is to be done before the next meeting.
        c. Develop a professional network
        d. Mentor others.
    4. Succession Planning – This should start upon your hire. You need to ensure continuity of the court's mission/vision and operations.
        a. **Resources**
    5. Strategic Planning and Visioning – It is helpful to have a strategic plan that is utilized and visited often. Being able to articulate the vision of the court guides decision-making, unifies staff and increases efficiency, e.g., **Harvard Business Review**.
    6. Knowledge of current laws and local rules