

STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR THE

UNITED STATES

BANKRUPTCY COURT

FOR THE

DISTRICT OF MARYLAND



April 2012

MISSION STATEMENT
UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

The primary reason our Court exists is to:

“Promote social and economic order by reconciling the opportunity of debtors to a fresh start with the right of creditors to be paid”

To achieve this fundamental purpose, this court performs the following critical functions:

Development and Improvement
Information Integrity
Case Administration/Dispute Resolution
Case Management

The core values and principles which guide this court in achieving its purpose and performing its functions are:

Providing service to the public in a manner that demonstrates issues have been resolved fairly.
Promotion of teamwork and *appreciation* for diversity
Focus on productivity and quality
Passion for innovation and learning
Commitment to honesty, fairness, trust and respect
Building and *improving* partnerships
Growing employee capabilities

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Key Results Areas

Critical Function: **Development and Improvement**

- Key Results Areas:
1. Communication/relationships with bar/trustees
 2. Processes to record and access information
 3. Improved Accuracy
 4. Planning and analysis

Critical Function: **Information Integrity**

- Key Results Areas:
1. Information is secure, reliable and readily accessible
 2. Records are checked with Quality Control

Critical Function: **Case Administration/Dispute Resolution**

- Key Results Areas:
1. Disputes Resolved
 2. Record of court proceedings
 3. Orders are timely signed, entered and noticed

Critical Function: **Case Management**

- Key Results Areas:
1. Access to electronic court records
 2. Ensure timeliness and accuracy of the record in the
 3. Promote the progress of cases toward conclusion

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Critical Function: **Case Administration/Dispute Resolution**

Key Results Area: **Disputes resolved**

Priority goal:

Promote optimum efficiency in the administration of justice with the potential loss of judgeships.

Basic Strategy for achieving this goal:

To increase the level of resources available to assist judges with the administration of justice.

Initial Action steps, not in priority order, are grouped into three areas:

A. Additional legal resources

- 1. Seek emergency law clerks for any Conference approved judgeships that are not legislatively approved.**
- 2. Explore the possibility of a staffing additive for pro-se law clerk position similar to that of the District Courts**
- 3. Expand use of law school interns for chambers support.**
- 4. Review Bankruptcy Dispute Resolution Program (LBR 9019-2).**

B. Reduce time needed to prepare for and hold hearings

- 1. Review the volume of matters set for hearing.**
- 2. Consider greater utilization of video conferencing for hearings.**

- 3. Apply technology to assure that proposed orders comply with court preferences (form orders). Consider directing routine orders to automated solution (e.g., “Clerk Sign”)**
- 4. Consider requiring mandatory debtor/lender meetings for real estate Motions for Relief from Stay.**
- 5. Identify inconsistencies in judges’ practices.**

C. Contingency strategies to adjust workload

- 1. Review new case assignment protocol (division, county, or zip code).**
- 2. Change duty station for judge(s). Consider having judges hear matters in both divisions.**
- 3. Review the courtroom support services provided by the Clerk’s office to identify how efficiency may be increased.**
- 4. Explore the use of visiting judges and expand the use of recalled judges, both internal and external.**

Target Date: Actions in groups A & B – June, 2013.

Person or group responsible: Judge Alquist, Judge Lipp, Judge Gordon and the Clerk of Court

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Critical function: **Development and Improvement**

Key Results Area: **Improved Accuracy**

Priority Goal:

All self represented debtors have access to sufficient legal resources to effectively file and manage their consumer bankruptcy cases. (2012)

Basic Strategy for achieving this goal:

Provide unrepresented debtor with access to comprehensive and understandable legal resources.

Initial Action steps (*updated for 2012*):

- 1. Monitor the progress of the Pro Se Pathfinder software filing assistance program developed by the New Jersey Bankruptcy Court¹ for possible implementation.**
- 2. Revamp and refresh unrepresented debtor manual and written materials on the web page.**
- 3. Investigate solutions developed by other courts – both state and federal. Consider reviewing information exchange mediums, e.g., list serves.**

Target Date: **December, 2012**

Person responsible: **Judge Lipp, Judge Gordon and the Clerk of Court**

¹ This grant funded program is expected to be piloted in three districts beginning Spring of 2011 – NJ, CAC, and NM.