

Interactive Realtime 201

By Sandy Bunch VanderPol

You're going live now with your interactive realtime skills. You're confident you have prepared to successfully meet the expectations of providing stellar interactive realtime skills, including troubleshooting realtime connections, loading drivers, teaching counsel and the court the quick-and-easy functions on their realtime viewers and, in the process, still managing to write "perfect" realtime!

You've come a long way to get to this point. You've overcome the "scared of writing realtime for anybody other than myself" mindset; you've gained confidence in your troubleshooting skills and you're prepared for any landmine that may rear its ugly head during the job; you've learned the basics of the most commonly used realtime viewer programs used by counsel; you've purchased all the equipment necessary to output your realtime and also have your backup equipment; and, most of all, you're ecstatic about the prospect of providing interactive realtime to your clients.

So, what's next? Let's start from where we left off in "[Interactive Realtime 101](#)." As you recall, we discussed in Realtime 101 several topics, including gaining a basic understanding of Windows, learning your CAT realtime features, acquiring basic knowledge of serial communication, Bluetooth and wireless realtime delivery, and more. As a reminder, much of the information in this article is taught in detail at the **Realtime Systems Administrators Workshop** and is memorialized in a comprehensive manual that accompanies the workshop.

In "Interactive Realtime 201," let's consider what knowledge we, as realtime reporters, need to master in order to reliably and consistently meet the expectations of our clients in the interactive realtime environment at the deposition or in court. This equates, simply put, to providing a realtime feed to your clients every single time they request it. Understanding the equipment needed, the realtime viewer software available to the end user, and the troubleshooting issues unique to each delivery method of interactive realtime is what's important to succeed in the endeavor of interactive realtime.

Which delivery method will you use to deliver your realtime feed?

Be prepared to provide, at a minimum, realtime via serial/cable connection, which would include the use of cables and serial-to-USB adapters. In addition to the serial/cable delivery method of interactive realtime, other options include Bluetooth, WiFi (LAN), or Internet streaming. Without going into the details of each of these delivery methods, each method has its own unique troubleshooting issues and equipment. The basics are discussed below.

Basics of each delivery method – equipment, software, and troubleshooting

Serial/Cables: This method of realtime delivery has been in existence since the genesis of interactive realtime. As a result, the end users of realtime (counsel and the courts) have grown to learn the setup process and usually bring the necessary equipment. However, there are still troubleshooting issues that arise on a consistent basis with serial/cable realtime.

Troubleshooting issues: Most computers are no longer equipped with serial ports, so the knowledge of how to load drivers for a USB-to-serial adapter onto the end user's computer is a troubleshooting issue that arises often. With more than one, and often four, COM ports on the newer computers, the COM port assignment may vary

depending upon which COM port you insert the USB adapter into. So knowledge of which COM port is assigned to your USB-to-serial adapter in the Windows device manager is an absolute must. Manually assigning the COM port to a specified number in Windows device manager has to be done since the realtime viewer software that counsel uses may not recognize the COM port assignment.

Equipment: A multi-line block with at least two cross-over cables for realtime output to counsel. These interactive realtime kits may be purchased through various vendors. Check with your CAT vendor for a recommendation. (Note: *The RSA practical exam uses Stenograph's and DepoBook's interactive realtime kits.*)

It's always a good idea to bring one or two USB-to-serial adapters for counsel. There will be occasions when they either have forgotten theirs or the IT department hasn't informed them that they need one. (Note: *The RSA practical exam uses the I/O Gear USB-to-Serial adapter.*)

Bluetooth: This method of interactive realtime delivery is accomplished with the StenoCast product. StenoCast is the only Bluetooth vendor in the interactive realtime market. Bluetooth interactive realtime, simply defined, is two devices that are "paired," allowing communication between the devices. An example would be your Bluetooth phone pairing with your Bluetooth earpiece.

Troubleshooting issues: StenoCast uses a serial communication platform, thus the same troubleshooting issues apply with StenoCast's Bluetooth as the serial/cable method, e.g., knowledge of COM port assignment within the Windows device manager and loading drivers.

Equipment: StenoCast equipment comes packaged with a transmission device, which connects to your CAT computer's USB port, and receivers that are inserted into counsels' USB ports. You can connect up to seven receive computers with the X7 model and 14 with the RED model. With each, you will need to load the driver onto your end users' computers. The driver comes packaged with the hardware and the driver on a CD. Once the driver is loaded, you've got your interactive realtime feed without cables.

Advantages over serial/cable realtime: No wires; secure; RED StenoCast transmitter allows refreshing of reporter's edit changes to the receive computer with most CAT software. RED has a serial output port that allows you to also use serial cables contemporaneously with wireless realtime feed; compatible with all realtime receive software, including LiveNote and CTSummation.

Wireless/Local Area Network: This method of interactive realtime delivery, thanks to our CAT vendors, came onto the market a couple of years ago and is gaining steam among the industry leaders in interactive realtime. Stenograph's CaseView Net, ProCAT's DeNoto, and Advantage Software's TeleView and Bridge are a few wireless programs available.

Troubleshooting issues: One of many advantages to wireless interactive realtime is the ease of use and resultant few troubleshooting issues. Any issue that does arise is usually a simple fix, such as confirming that your computer's wireless is turned on, the attorney's computer is recognizing your router (access point) and connected to it, or having to override the receive computer's wireless manager on occasion, allowing it to connect to your router.

Equipment: Router and Internet realtime receive software. Most CAT vendors have a turnkey wireless package, making it simple and easy for both the reporter to set up and the attorney/judge to connect to. Counsel will need to download the realtime viewer software from either a thumbdrive provided by you (the reporter) or they may download it from the vendor's site. For the router, I personally use a Cradlepoint MBR 1000 router, which allows me to insert my cellular Air Card into the router's Express Card slot. This allows counsel to receive the wireless realtime feed as well as browse the Internet or check e-mail through my Local Area Network.

Advantages over serial/cable realtime: No wires; secure; refreshing of reporter's edits to the receive computer. If counsel arrive late and connects to the wireless realtime router (LAN), all testimony is pushed out to his or her computer. Realtime viewer software is free to counsel/court. (Note: *Wireless realtime via a LAN is not, at this time, provided for the RSA practical exam.*)

Realtime Viewer Software

Realtime viewer is defined as a software product used on the receive laptop to view interactive realtime. It is recommended that you have the knowledge and hands-on experience in working with the most commonly used realtime viewers to which you will be sending your realtime feed. There will be many occasions when counsel will expect or hope that you can explain some basic features of the realtime viewer. Some of the basic functions that most counsel use are the quick mark, search, go to page, insert a note, stop realtime to page back, and then restart or follow realtime. (Note: *All realtime viewer software guides are included in the RSA Manual.*)

Having a hands-on understanding of how to hook up to the reporter's realtime feed with CTSummation and West LiveNote is a must to succeed in the interactive realtime environment as well as in the RSA practical exam. (Note: *The RSA practical exam has loaded CTSummation and West LiveNote realtime viewers on the test computers. The candidate has 20 minutes to send a realtime feed to each computer.*)

You may download the West LiveNote realtime viewer guide and/or demo software at:
<http://west.thomson.com/software/case-notebook/welcome.aspx>.

You may download CTSummation realtime viewer guide at:
<http://ctsummation.com/en/TrainingAndSupport.aspx?tab=CourtReporters>.

You may have access to a trial CTSummation realtime viewer by e-mailing Nancy Hopp at
Nancy.Hopp@wolterskluwer.com.

In closing, hope for the best and prepare for the worst. To ensure connectivity of your realtime feed to the end user, practice with your equipment, your CAT software, and the various realtime viewers. Always carry backup realtime equipment in your "Realtime Toolbox." Give yourself the confidence to succeed with strategic planning and good preparation. Last, but not least, attending the Realtime Systems Administrators Workshop will empower you with the interactive realtime skills necessary to ensure connectivity to the end user. See you in Chicago!

Sandy Bunch VanderPol, RMR, CRR, is a credentialed Realtime Systems Administrator. NCRA's Realtime Systems Administrator program will be held August 5-6 as part of the 2010 NCRA Convention in Chicago.