



Richard Neubauer

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Court reporters and videographers on a non-recourse basis

COMPANY STARTED BY A PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY WILL SHARE YOUR RISK OF SETTLEMENT ON STENOGRAPHY SERVICES

Editor's Note: When Steno, Inc. began advertising in Advocate earlier this year, we wondered exactly how stenography services on a non-recourse basis would work, i.e., if the case doesn't settle, who's left holding the bag? The CEO of Steno, Inc., Greg Hong, was happy to answer our questions. While this Q&A is unabashedly self-promoting (and we've edited some of the answers), we think our readers will find it interesting.

What was the impetus for creating STENO?

The owner of a plaintiffs' law firm in Los Angeles, Dylan Ruga, was writing a lot of checks to court reporting agencies, which interfered with his firm's cash flow. Mr. Ruga started looking around for a court reporting agency that would defer payment until his cases settled and although there were a few that did, they all left the firm responsible for payment even if the case was lost. Since Mr. Ruga could not find any agency that would defer payment on a non-recourse basis, he decided to start his own.

What is different about STENO than any other stenography/court reporting service?

Steno's founders know first-hand the many challenges plaintiffs' attorneys face. This is why they created DisbursePay. With DisbursePay, law firms can get all of the typical court reporting services they already use, but with no upfront payment and on a non-recourse basis. If there are no settlement funds to disburse, then there is nothing to pay.

How does this fill a need for the legal industry?

Plaintiffs' attorneys juggle a lot, including generating new business, working up their existing cases and funding litigation until the case resolves. With DisbursePay, they can focus on the case rather than the cost.



What are reasons an attorney wouldn't choose to work with STENO? Are you more expensive than other court reporting services?

Steno does charge a premium to compensate for the risk that not all cases will achieve a favorable result.

Explain DisbursePay.

DisbursePay is Steno's non-recourse deferred payment process. It allows plaintiff firms to hire court reporters and videographers without worrying about any upfront costs. The firms don't pay until the case resolves and funds are disbursed.

Is the court reporter paid by Steno, Inc. regardless of the outcome of the case?

Yes. We are committed to ensuring that the court reporters remain impartial and that is why we pay them as soon as they turn in their work. Their payment is never impacted by the outcome of a case.

Many civil courts no longer provide a court reporter at no charge for a jury trial. Attorneys must pay for the reporter if they want one. Will STENO provide a reporter for a civil trial on a non-recourse basis?

Absolutely. Steno was founded by a plaintiff's attorney, so we understand that trials are expensive. But we never want the cost of court reporters to factor into an attorney's decision of whether to take a case to trial or not. By offering court reporters for civil trials on a non-recourse basis, Steno hopes that more plaintiffs' attorneys will take their cases to trial so they can obtain justice for their clients.

Are you using the same highly skilled reporters from other stenography or court reporting services?

Yes. Nearly all court reporters in California are independent contractors who work for many different agencies. Because Steno has developed a reputation for paying reporters accurately and quickly after they finish their work, reporters want to work with Steno.

What sort of responses have you heard from firms that have used STENO?

The feedback so far has been amazing. The most common response we've heard is "What a great idea; I wish I thought of that!"

When do you expect to roll out beyond California?

Steno currently offers court reporting and videography services nationwide. To date, we've handled depositions in California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Colorado. Each state has its own challenges, but we are excited to work with local court reporters and attorneys to learn how Steno can be the go-to agency for plaintiffs across the country.

Further information at www.steno.com.

