MAN-U-MISSION

THE TRUTH ISN'T ENOUGH

A practical guide for getting the truth through the door

One side may arrive with an operating system.
The self-represented person may have to build one while the case is running.

You may have the letter, photograph, lease, message, receipt, and truth. But a court still needs the issue put before it through the right procedure. Procedure is not the truth. It is the route the truth must travel.

RESPONSIVENESS SHOULD MATTER

Deadlines, notice, service, evidence, jurisdiction, and finality matter. But there is a difference between refusing to participate and imperfectly learning how to participate. Answer. Call. File. Serve. Appear. Correct. Preserve. Continue.

Accessibility is not favoritism. Correction is not immunity. Responsiveness is not exemption.

BUILD YOUR OPERATING SYSTEM

Never assume your jurisdiction works like somebody else's. Check your jurisdiction, your court, your local rules, and the orders in your own case.

1. Start with reality

Write: What happened? What can I prove? What do I want the court to do? What is the next event? What must happen next?

2. Find the governing source

Work toward the actual constitution, statute, court rule, local rule/order, case-specific order, controlling decisions, and official forms. Ask: Where does it actually say that?

3. Separate fact, law, and procedure

FACT: what happened. LAW: what governs. PROCEDURE: what must be done to put the issue before the court.

4. Argue against yourself

Find the strongest argument against you. Identify what you cannot prove, authority that cuts the other way, defects that can be cured, and points that should be conceded.

5. Control the case on one page

Track case number, court, judge, next date/time, purpose, pending motions, deadlines, filed/accepted documents, service, orders, open questions, and next act.

6. Call the clerk

Ask procedural questions. Write down the date, time, office/person, answer, and what still needs verification. Do not let embarrassment stop you from asking.

7. Use official materials first

Use court forms, filing instructions, local rules, self-help centers, law libraries, legal-aid resources, and court filing guides before inventing your own procedure.

8. Watch the docket

After filings and before hearings, check the case. If an order is entered, get the order. Track: EVENT -> DOCUMENT -> EFFECT -> DEADLINE -> RESPONSE.

9. Respond to what actually exists

Get the actual paper. Read every page. For each argument identify: their position, authority/evidence, your answer, your source, and the required action.

10. Name the lane

A motion to dismiss is not an injunction. An eviction notice is not a judgment. Filing is not service. Service is not proof. A proposed order is not an entered order.

11. Preserve the record

Keep originals, filed copies, stamped copies, receipts, service proof, correspondence, photographs, envelopes, docket captures, orders, call notes, and research.

12. Correct mistakes openly

Identify the error, decide whether it matters, find the permitted correction method, and create a transparent chain: ORIGINAL -> PROBLEM -> CORRECTION -> CURRENT RECORD.

13. Check before signing

Verify facts, authority, citations, caption, case number, dates, names, attachments, signatures, service, deadline, page order, and the final rendered document.

14. Filing is not the end

Run the whole chain: PREPARE -> FILE -> ACCEPTANCE -> SERVICE -> PROOF -> RESPONSE -> HEARING -> ORDER -> RECORD.

THE METHOD

REALITY -> SOURCE -> LOCAL PROCEDURE -> DOCUMENT -> VERIFY -> FILE -> SERVE -> CONFIRM -> MONITOR -> RESPOND -> RECORD

Leave your ego outside. Ask the basic question. Call back. Correct yourself. Keep the receipts. Show up. Keep moving.

The truth isn't enough if nobody tells you how to get it through the door.

MAN-U-MISSION is about learning to open the door yourself.

ONE-PAGE CASE CHECKLIST

Print one for each active case. Update it whenever the record changes.

Case number

Court / county

Judge

Next date / time

Purpose of next appearance

Opposing party / counsel

Your next deadline

Other side next deadline

Next required act

☐	Latest pleading/order obtained and read in full
☐	Docket checked
☐	Every deadline calendared
☐	Governing rule/local rule located
☐	Facts separated from assumptions
☐	Evidence organized and labeled
☐	Other side's arguments answered one by one
☐	All citations/sources verified
☐	Correct official form used where available
☐	Caption, case number, names, dates checked
☐	Required exhibits attached
☐	Final filing read from beginning to end
☐	Signature/date complete
☐	Document successfully submitted
☐	Clerk/e-filing acceptance confirmed
☐	Service completed by permitted method

☐ Proof of service preserved/filed as required

☐ Entered order obtained after hearing

☐ Next act recorded immediately

CALL LOG

Date/time: _____ Office/person: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Needs verification from: _____

REMEMBER

SUBMITTED is not ACCEPTED. FILED is not SERVED. SERVED is not PROVED. PROPOSED is not ENTERED.

Sources and jurisdiction-specific instructions: use the linked Sources page accompanying the online Man-U-Mission Paper.