How to create case chronologies with timelines

If you're a litigator grappling with complex cases, you're well aware of the daunting task of organizing extensive volumes of documents, facts, and legal intricacies. CaseFleet is meticulously crafted to empower you with mastery over this wealth of information, thereby enhancing your ability to secure victories in court. Dive into the following to discover how to seamlessly construct legal timelines for your cases...

Why Build a Case Chronology?

Before we cover how to create a legal timeline, let's first explore why you'd want to build one. The answer is that you're *already* building a chronology in each case; but the chronologies you currently build probably have several disadvantages. These chronologies appear in your pleadings, briefs, notes, discovery responses, and in your own memory. For some cases - especially cases that follow a simple pattern - this is more than enough. But for other cases, this system gets strained.
Your memory and your desk begin to be equally cluttered with scattered information, documents, notes, and facts. It can be overwhelming, and it only gets worse when you have numerous cases to juggle. We know: we've been there ourselves. That's why we built CaseFleet.

CaseFleet gives all of your case information a home. Facts have a home, witnesses have a home, documents have a home. And each of these pieces of information can be related or linked to other pieces of information. For example, you might have dozens of facts in which one witness plays a part. Half of those might be related to a particular legal issue, and several of them might be provable by a particular document. CaseFleet lets you *see* all of these connections and work with them in an intuitive way. By creating legal timelines for court cases, you'll reduce clutter, stay organized, and experience the zen-like state of having everything in its place!

Core Concepts Of Creating Legal Timelines

In order to get the most out of CaseFleet, it's important to understand a few core concepts about creating a legal timeline. The concepts are mostly intuitive, but there are a few things we've added to increase the power of CaseFleet that also increase its complexity a little. Don't worry, it's still very easy to use!

- **Contacts** are the people and entities (businesses, government units, associations, etc.) that are involved in your case. They are parties, witnesses, attorneys, etc. - anyone that could be involved in a *fact*. You can optionally assign a role to each contact, such as "witness" or "client."
- **Issues** are the elements of the claims and defenses in your case, but they can be anything else that could be helpful for grouping facts. For example, we always like creating an issue called "Key Facts" so that we can instantly pull up a list of the most important facts in any case.
- **Facts** are the building blocks of your case. Each fact has a field where you write what happened, or what you want to prove happened. Facts can have dates, but they don't need to have dates. For example, "Penny was Vice President of Sales" doesn't have a single date, so you can leave it undated, or you could break it into separate facts, such as when she started in this role and when she applied for it. **The most important thing to remember about facts is that they are best when they are linked to issues, contacts, and sources**. (We'll show you how to link them below.) When you link a fact to other information, it gains context, it's easier to find, and its role in the case is easier to determine.
- **Sources** are items of evidence. The primary kind of source you'll be dealing with is a document, which could be an email, a PDF, a photograph, a deposition transcript, or any other file on your computer. You can name sources so that they have memorable and readable names, even if the files they are named for aren't easy to read or remember (e.g., a file named "B. Jones dep transcr20130423 final rev.ptx" could turn into a source named "Jones Deposition"). **Sources can also be set up for documents you don't have yet**, such as a "secret memo" you've heard of but haven't obtained. Sources can also be set up to show that a particular witness rather than a document is the source. The idea is to give you a map of exactly what evidence you'll use to prove each fact.
- **Citations** are connections between sources and facts. Imagine that you're relying on the Jones Deposition to prove several dozen facts. Each fact will be supported by a different page and line number of the deposition. The citations are where you hold this information about how a source proves a fact.

Armed with these concepts, you'll find it much easier to get started creating a legal timeline with CaseFleet.

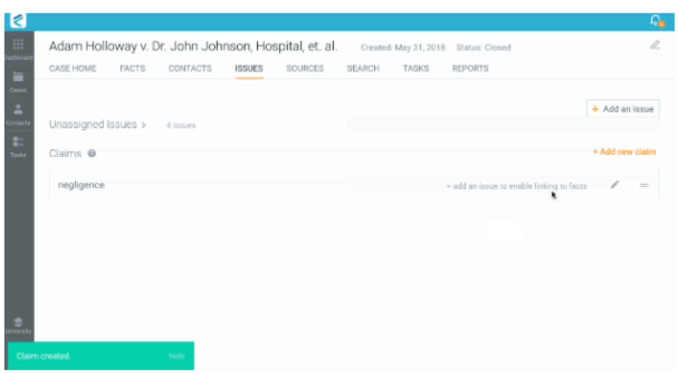
How To Create A Legal Timeline

When creating legal timelines, there are a few best practices to follow. These steps can help you create legal timelines for court cases:

1. Create Issues
2. Link Contacts
3. Add Facts
4. Filter Facts
5. Link Evidence

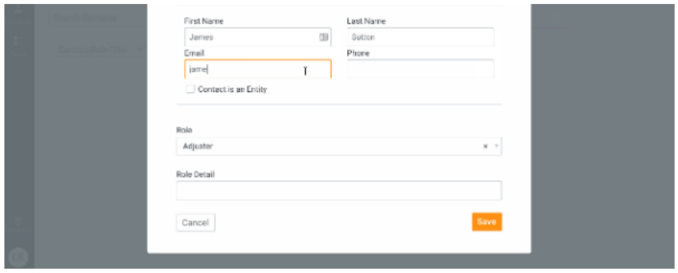
Step 1: Creating Issues

Step one in using CaseFleet is creating issues. Each issue serves as a category or tag for the facts you'll be adding later. You can optionally add a description for each issue, but all that an issue needs is a name. In the screen-grab below, we've added sample issues for a torts case, such as "Causation," "Adverse Action," and "Job Duties." We've also added handy issues called "Key Dates" and "Background." Even though these latter issues aren't elements of claims, they are very useful for grouping facts in your case chronology. As you can see, issues can be tied to a claim or they can remain separate.



Step 2: Linking Contacts

The next step in creating a legal timeline is to add a cast of characters to your case. You can add both businesses and people, and you can assign them roles, such as client, opposing party, or witness. If you already have a contact record for the character in CaseFleet, you can search for the existing record and link it to the case. Otherwise, you can create a new contact directly from the form.

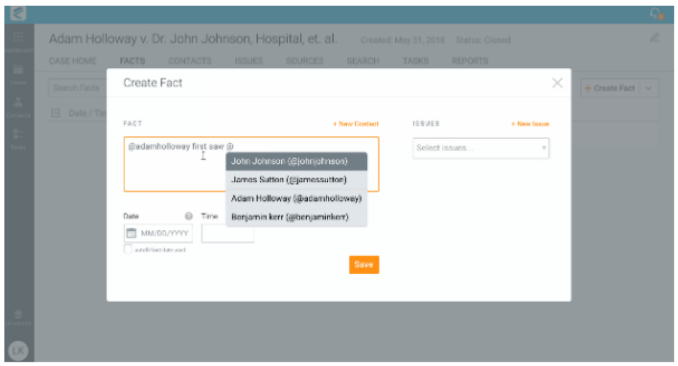


Step 3: Adding Facts

Now that you've completed the basic set up for your case chronology, you can begin creating facts that are linked to both issues and contacts. **When you're typing in the text of the fact, simply type "@" whenever you want to refer to one of the contacts.** This is how you link contacts to facts. If you only type the contact's name, there won't be a link. If you ever miss a link, you can go back and add it by deleting the name and using "@" to select a contact from the list of contacts on the case.

To add an issue to a fact, you can click one of the issues shown, or you can search for an issue to attach it if it's not in the list already. You can also add a date and time to each fact.

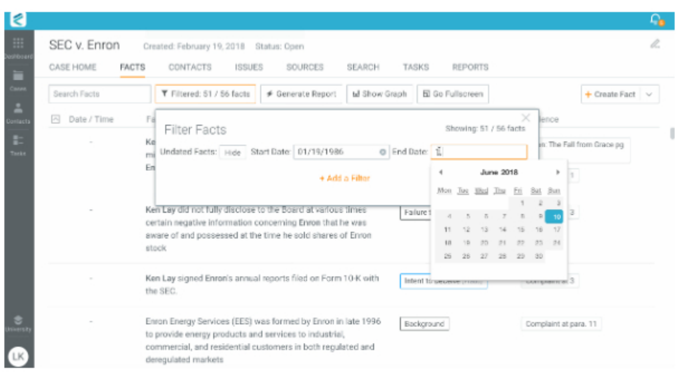
To create facts linked to their supporting evidence, which is the cornerstone of CaseFleet, you'll want to use our *Highlights* document viewer.



Step 4: Filtering Facts

In some cases, you'll have a lot of facts. Indeed, it's not uncommon to have hundreds of facts in a complex case. We do not recommend consuming that much information in one sitting! Instead, for the most part, you'll want to review and edit only a subset of facts at a given time. For example, you might want to see facts that occurred in a particular date-range that involve the issue of negligence and one particular witnesses. Simply click the "Filters" button, enter the dates, select the issue and witness, and the fact page will refresh to show you only the information that you need. You can also search through the facts by entering a query in the search box above the bar with filters.

With filters, you can manage a complex case without getting overwhelmed with information. But remember that filters rely on correctly linking contacts and issues when you're creating facts.

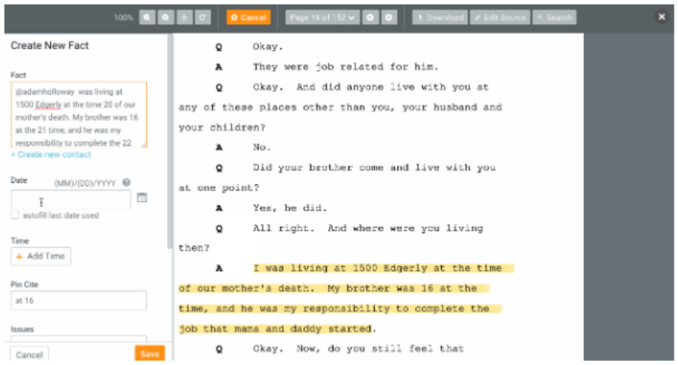


Step 5: Linking Evidence Using the *Highlights* Document Viewer

What good are facts if you can't prove them? Not much. One of the most powerful features of CaseFleet is the fact that you can create facts from and attached to your sources of evidence.

In November of 2016, we launched *Highlights* to help you create facts straight from the documents that you will use to prove them. To use Highlights, just upload a file, and click "Launch Reviewer." This will open a window that utilizes our patent pending technology to enable you to read a document and highlight it to create facts. Each fact created in this way will be linked to the section of the page that you highlighted to create it.

Moreover, the way that CaseFleet stores files is very sophisticated. Every file is connected with its unique signature. This means that you have a safeguard against evidence getting changed, and you can be sure that you're actually dealing with the *same* evidence when you're attaching it to different facts. This also has important implications for eDiscovery. You can see the metadata for each file you upload into CaseFleet by clicking on the name of the file.



Conclusion

At CaseFleet, we believe that creating legal timelines for court cases can help litigators win more and have an easier time doing it.

Sign up below to start a free trial, or give us a call at 800-968-3994 to see if CaseFleet is a good fit for your practice.

Made with ❤ in Atlanta, GA

338 Glendale Ave. NE | Atlanta, GA 30307 | United States | (800) 968-3994