

# AZ JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

## *The Business of Limited Jurisdiction Courts*



A watercolor illustration of a courtroom. In the foreground, a wooden judge's bench is shown with a gavel resting on it. The background features several tall, ornate columns and arches, creating a sense of a grand, classical building. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a warm color palette of oranges, yellows, and blues.

# Who Has Time to Hear Cases?

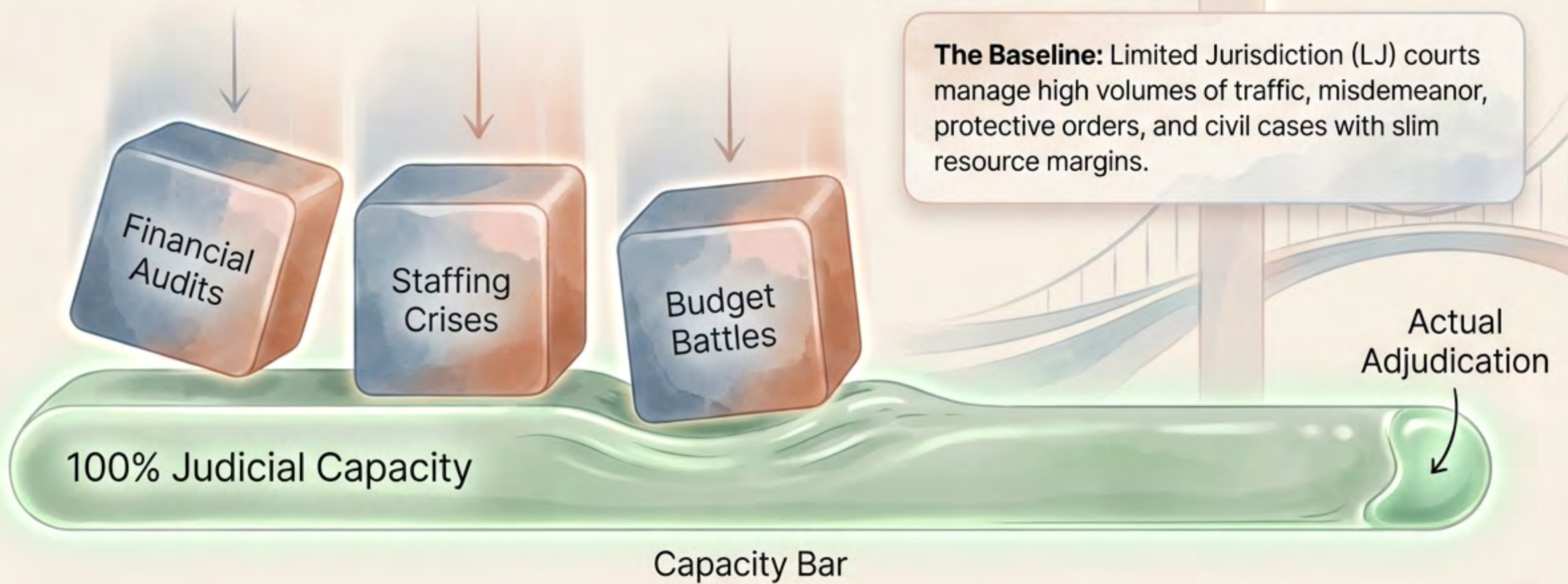
The Business & Resilience of Limited Jurisdiction Courts

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Navigating the tension between adjudication and the operational realities of MAS, FMLA, FYs, and FTEs to protect your time on the bench.

# The Adjudication Squeeze



**The Friction:** Operational infrastructure—when poorly managed—forces the judge to step off the bench to handle clerical emergencies, effectively halting the flow of cases.

# The Mindset Shift: From Bottleneck to Architect

## The Siloed Adjudicator (The Bottleneck Model)

**Focus:** Sole decision-maker for all operational details.

**View of Admin:** Distractions from the 'real work.'

**Response:** Absorbs clerical tasks during shortages.

**Result:** Halts case flow; structural liability.

## The Executive Leader (The Triad Model)

**Focus:** Sets transparent priorities for autonomous delegation.

**View of Admin:** Vital infrastructure that protects the bench.

**Response:** Relies on the triad of Court Admin, HR, and Finance.

**Result:** Stabilizes culture; guarantees adjudication time.

# The Fragility of Compliance

## Staffing Gap

A sudden turnover in a small LJ court.

## MAS Delay

Minimum Accounting Standards (MAS) checklist falls behind schedule.

## Audit Threat

Failure to meet the rigid compliance timeline per ACJA § 1401.

## System Risk

Cascading financial issues and a breach of public trust.

**The Fix:** Strict adherence to timelines: January 31 (due to presiding judge) & March 1 (due to AOC).

**Pro-Tip:** Always download and save an unsigned version before applying digital signatures to prevent system lockouts!

# Protecting the Human Ecosystem



## FMLA: Absence Impact

**The Threat:** A small court loses 25% of its staff for 12 weeks. Remaining staff absorb massive workloads, risking burnout.

**The Defense:** Cross-training, emergency coverage plans, and robust internal communication protocols.



## FLSA: Wage/Hour Risk

**The Threat:** Misclassification (exempt vs. non-exempt) creates huge liability.

**The Pitfalls:** Non-exempt clerks checking emails after hours, or assisting law enforcement outside normal shifts without compensation.

# Translating Data into Resources



## The Input (Data)

Conducting data-driven workload analysis to justify Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs).

## The Lens (Advocacy)

State and local fiscal year (FY) cycles dictate timing. Judges must build relationships with City/County executives and funders, translating data into financial narratives.

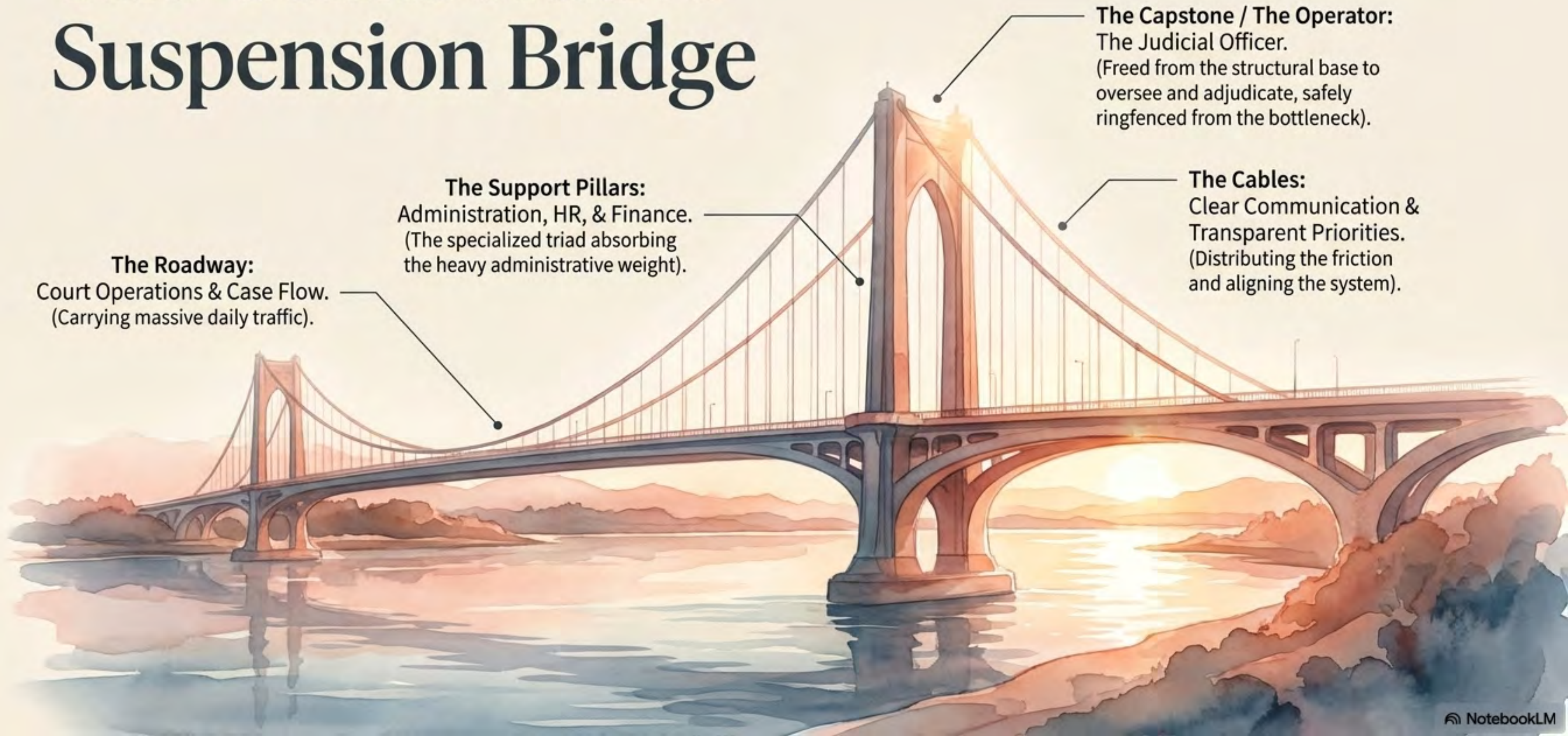
## The Output (Assets)

Securing funding for crucial technology (e.g., the "Waitwhile" system) by proving how it reduces clerk strain and improves customer service.



**Key Warning:** When a critical FTE request is denied, simply telling remaining staff to "do more" is not a strategy. **Workflows must be actively redesigned.**

# The Collaborative Suspension Bridge



**The Roadway:**  
Court Operations & Case Flow.  
(Carrying massive daily traffic).

**The Support Pillars:**  
Administration, HR, & Finance.  
(The specialized triad absorbing  
the heavy administrative weight).

**The Capstone / The Operator:**  
The Judicial Officer.  
(Freed from the structural base to  
oversee and adjudicate, safely  
ringfenced from the bottleneck).

**The Cables:**  
Clear Communication &  
Transparent Priorities.  
(Distributing the friction  
and aligning the system).

# Test Your Architecture: Scenario Lab

## The Goal:

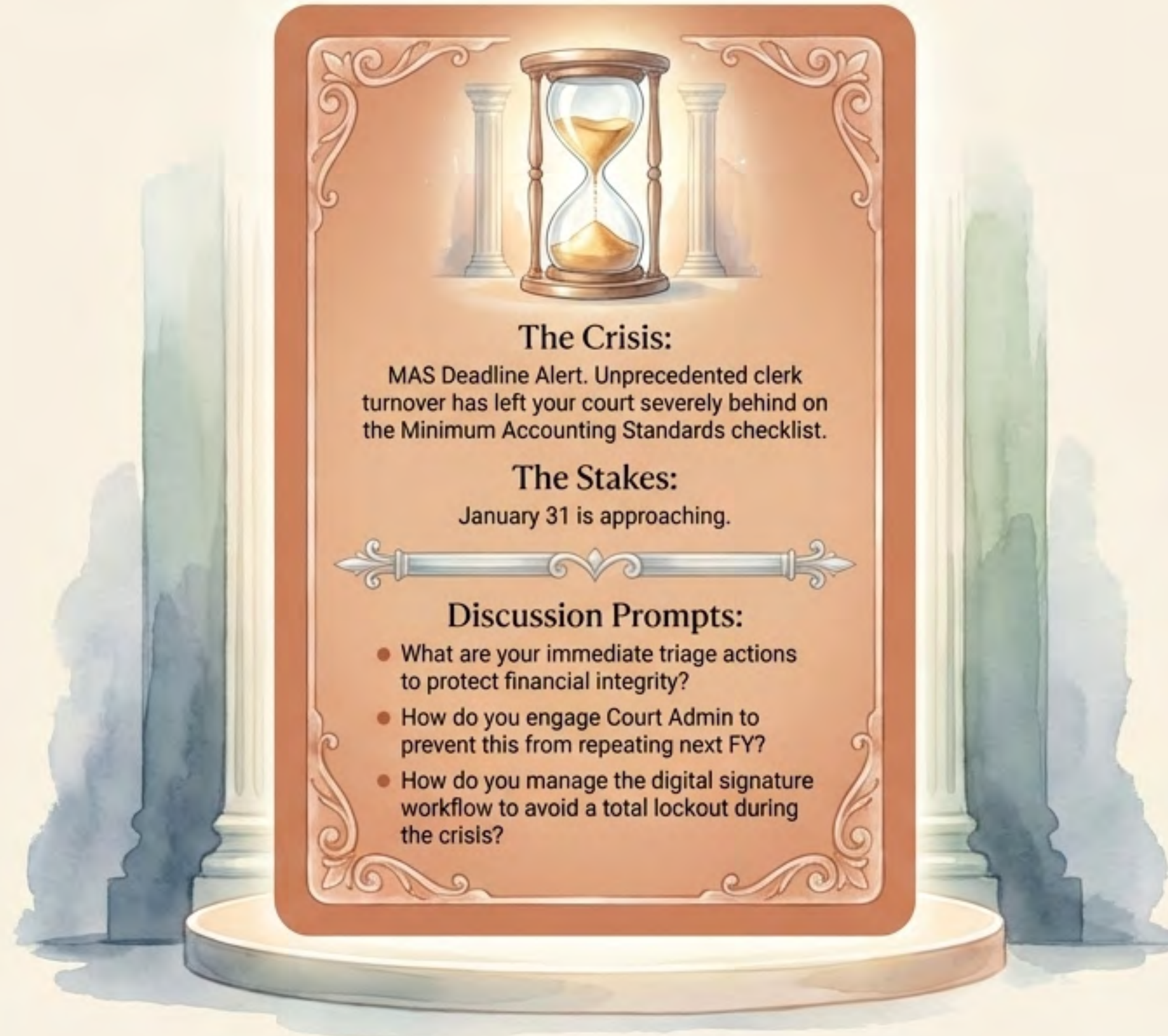
Apply the Triad Leadership Model to four real-world limited jurisdiction crises.

## The Rules:

1. Assess the legal, ethical, and customer-impact angles.
2. Leverage internal networks (Admin/HR) and external tools (AOC Court Services).
3. Find the solution that keeps the judge on the bench.



# Scenario 1: The Compliance Cliff



**The Crisis:**  
MAS Deadline Alert. Unprecedented clerk turnover has left your court severely behind on the Minimum Accounting Standards checklist.

**The Stakes:**  
January 31 is approaching.

**Discussion Prompts:**

- What are your immediate triage actions to protect financial integrity?
- How do you engage Court Admin to prevent this from repeating next FY?
- How do you manage the digital signature workflow to avoid a total lockout during the crisis?

# Scenario 2: The Capacity Shock



**The Crisis: FMLA Absence.** Due to unexpected medical and family emergencies, your small court has just lost 25% of its staff for the next 12 weeks.

**The Stakes:** Front counter coverage is compromised, and remaining staff are nearing burnout.

## Discussion Prompts:

- How do operations continue without the judge absorbing clerical duties?
- What emergency cross-training and coverage plans can be activated today?
- How does this impact customer service and case flow?

# Scenario 3: The Funding Wall



**DENIED**

**The Crisis: Budget Shortfall.** You presented data-driven workload analysis to the county funders, but your request for a critical new FTE was denied due to local budget constraints.

**The Stakes:** A massive case backlog is imminent.

## Discussion Prompts:

- Why is “working harder” not a viable long-term strategy?
- How do you collaborate with Admin to redesign existing workflows?
- What technological solutions (e.g., Waitwhile) could you pivot to in the next FY budget cycle?

# Scenario 4: The Hidden Liability



## **The Crisis: FLSA Boundary Breach**

You discover that your highly dedicated, non-exempt clerks have been checking court emails late at night and occasionally assisting law enforcement outside their normal shifts to "keep things moving."

**The Stakes:** Severe wage and hour misclassification liabilities for the court.

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## **Discussion Prompts:**

- How do you remediate the immediate risk without punishing dedicated staff?
- How do you establish transparent internal communication protocols to prevent recurrence?

# Synthesis: Engineering Operational Resilience

**Regulatory Viability  
(MAS & FLSA):**  
Protects public trust  
and financial baseline.



**Human Capital  
(FMLA & Culture):**  
Maintains staff retention,  
cross-training, and  
emergency coverage.

**Strategic Resources  
(FTEs & Tech):**  
Data-driven funding  
and external advocacy.

The Core Insight: These are not competing administrative chores; they are an interconnected network. A failure in Human Capital (FMLA) directly triggers a failure in Regulatory Viability (missed MAS deadline), which undermines your ability to secure Strategic Resources (FTE funding).

# Your Architectural Toolkit



## Compliance Baselines

Annual MAS Checklist (Refer to AOC guidelines for latest updates).

## Training & Support

AOC Court Services Division (Your primary partners for statewide initiatives and training programs).

## Workflow Optimization

Tech integrations (Look into Waitwhile and similar customer service systems to reduce counter strain).

## Relationship Building

Regularly scheduled data reviews with City/County executives—turn your operational data into a compelling civic narrative.

# Reclaiming the Bench

**The Question:** Who has time to hear cases?

**The Answer:** The judge who masters their non-judicial operations.

By stepping into the role of  
of the executive leader,  
building strategic  
partnerships, and



trusting the triad of  
collaborative delegation, you  
stop fighting the system—  
and start engineering it.

**Final Takeaway:** Your administrative excellence is the  
ultimate guarantor of your time to adjudicate.