

Technology

A Few of My Favorite Things

A Roundup of Tech Devices, Services and Ideas That Make Life Easier for the Average Attorney

BY DANIEL J. SIEGEL

Every few years, I write about my favorite technology toys, the software, hardware and other gadgets that allow technology to make my life easier and to provide clients with better legal representation. While some of these items may require a bit of training, the common thread is that these are all easy to use. With apologies once again to Rodgers and Hammerstein, I will discuss “a few of my favorite tech things,” items and even events that make my life easier and, hopefully, can do the same for you. In no particular order, here goes:

ABA TECHSHOW

Sponsored by the American Bar Association Law Practice Management Section, attending this annual event is like making a pilgrimage to Mecca for those of us who want to know more about law office technology. Unlike many trade shows, which are primarily focused on vendor booths, Techshow offers dozens of educational programs and terrific social events, along with an excellent trade show. The biggest misnomer, however, is that the event is only for geeks. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Techshow, held every spring in Chicago, is primarily an educational event that showcases the technological issues, concerns and products

confronting virtually every law firm. For example, the 2012 show offered nearly 60 individual sessions among its 13 tracks, *i.e.*, topics, including paperless offices, mobile/smartphone, litigation, cloud computing and e-discovery. In addition, the 1,800 attendees heard Ben Stein’s humorous

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and thought-provoking keynote address, “The Life of the Law is Not Logic but Experience.” The show also featured plenary sessions offering tips, such as “60 Sites in 60 Minutes,” “60 Tips in 60 Minutes” and a provocative presentation by Oklahoma Bar Association Law Practice Management Advisor Jim Calloway on “The Future

of Law Practice: Dark Clouds or Silver Linings.” I presented programs about “Preparing to Litigate: The Latest Smart Litigation Management Tools” and “How to Stay Safe in the Cloud.”

But perhaps the best part of Techshow is the people. It is *the* place to meet *the* experts on virtually every legal technology issue. And these experts love to talk with the attendees and help them. There is no pretense, and my annual trek to the next Techshow – April 4 to 6, 2013 – is already highlighted on my calendar.

DESKTOP SCANNERS

It sounds scary, but my office has never had paper client files. Yes, we save fee agreements, medical authorizations and any other documents that we are required to preserve by law or under the Rules. Everything else is scanned and shredded, and we can find any file in our office in three seconds or less. Plus, we can search the contents of all of our files almost as quickly when we need to find the needle in the haystack.

At the heart of our “less-paper office” (after all, you can’t have no paper) are Fujitsu Scansnap scanners, which scan our mail and other documents and store them in our case management software. The latest version of the Scansnap is the s1500, and we have one of these workhorses on every desk in our office. People love them, our consulting clients love them,



and when you read various listservs, you will see that we are among the many who sing the praises of this product. Plus, the Scansnap comes with Adobe Acrobat X Standard, an essential piece of software for any office that wants to reduce or eliminate its reliance on paper. I have written about Adobe Acrobat in the past, and it remains one of the most important components in our electronic office.

HIGH TECH PHONES

When my longtime associate, Molly Gilligan, recently moved back to Maine, we didn't disassociate. Instead, our offices merely expanded to Maine. Surprisingly, the key component to accomplishing this move wasn't the upgrade of our computer network and server, although that helped. The key component was the installation of a VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) phone system, *i.e.*, an Internet-based system rather than a more traditional system, which allows us to speak to each other by simply pressing the person's extension – no phone calls, no dialing, just press a button and talk. No matter where Molly is, if she has an Internet connection, we can talk with her. Plus, our phones ring in Maine, and her Maine phone numbers also ring down here, so anyone can answer any call, and if need be, with just a push of a button, calls can be transferred instantly not only to another person in the system, but also to our homes, our cell phones, or anywhere else we program into the phones. There is no question that the success of our transition is based in large part on these amazing phones.

Tech BRIEFS

Will Boeing's New Smartphone Fly?

Commercial airliners? Check. Helicopters? Check. Satellites? Check. Smartphone? Wait...what? *National Defense Magazine* reports that Boeing is currently working on a highly secure Android-based smartphone of all things, and that it should see a release later this year.

Boeing President Roger Krone wouldn't give up any of the details about a release date or hardware specifics, but he did say it's almost at the end of its development cycle. And chances are this isn't going to be a phone to play *Angry Birds* or *Words With Friends*. Boeing has been keeping tabs on the competition in the secure communications market, who often price their proprietary devices in the five-figure range. Boeing is expected to introduce its smartphone at a much lower price, which should make the Defense Department and other security-conscious operations very happy.

Krone told the magazine the Boeing Phone will give customers "what they are used to seeing [on consumer market smartphones] and give them the functionality from the security perspective." Boeing isn't the first company planning a security-conscious mobile device. Dell's *Streak 5* was the first Android device to get the OK from the U.S. Department of Defense. ■

Cool-Looking Thermostat Learns When to Chill, Warm Up

From the "what will they think of next?" department comes the Nest Learning Thermostat that the company says learns from your behaviors, preferences and surroundings to create a custom heating and cooling schedule, keeping you comfortable when you're home and conserving energy when you're away.

Thermostats are generally a pain to program. Nest fixes that issue through a combination of sensors, algorithms, machine learning and cloud computing. It learns behaviors and preferences and



adjusts the temperature up or down accordingly, making you comfortable when you're home and saving energy while you're away.

The \$249 Nest programs itself based on the temperatures you set. Nest learns your personal schedule in a week and starts automatically turning down heating or cooling when you're away to save energy. Nest will keep refining its schedule over time. It's available at Lowe's and the Apple store or online at nest.com. ■

ClamBook Turns Smartphone into Laptop

ClamCase says its new ClamBook, due out in time for the holidays, lets you turn your smartphone into a really thin laptop.

ClamCase is being tight-lipped with the details, but the widescreen device has a full-size keyboard, multi-touch trackpad and battery that you'll be able to tether to your iPhone or Android device. ClamBook will use MHL technology to charge your phone while it's connected. They claim you'll be able to watch full-length movies, edit documents and browse the web without the worry of draining your battery.

There's no word on how many clams this gizmo will set you back, but you can check out the website at clamcase.com. ■





SATELLITE RADIO

When I first subscribed to satellite radio, it was still a relative novelty. But once you have it, you will never want to get rid of it. Satellite radio is very different from cable TV. Cable TV offers a zillion channels, yet there are still times when there is still little to watch. On the other hand, satellite radio (the only real option right now is SiriusXM) has a station featuring virtually every type of music, news, sports, political analysis, religion, etc. you can imagine. Once you have satellite radio – including the ability to stream it onto your computer or smartphone – you will wonder how you lived without it.

GIANT MONITORS

Many computer users love to have more than one monitor on their desk. I have always found this to be a bit clunky, and have never gotten used to the setup. What I love, however, is my 27-inch computer monitor, which gives me virtually the same “real estate” as do dual monitors, without having to figure where my mouse is and where it should be. These monitors now sell in many stores and discount warehouses for less than \$300, and looking at them is like watching HD TV at your desk. When I first bought the monitor, my staff thought it was just another gimmick. Now they all want them.

TRIPIT

If you travel, you will want to use this app on your smartphone and visit its website. All you have to do is forward your hotel, airline and other travel confirmations to TripIt, and they are automatically aggregated so that you can view all of your plans in one place. You can also link TripIt with Flight Track Pro, which will then provide you with flight alerts, terminal maps and information about weather delays. Once you set up the sites, you don’t have to do anything else except show up for your flights and enjoy your trip.

MOBILE HOTSPOT

If you travel a lot, or are out of your office frequently, and need Internet access, but want the security of knowing that others can’t see your work, and knowing you won’t be ripped

off by hotels that charge \$10 to \$15 a day for Internet access, then you need a mobile hotspot. A mobile hotspot is a small stand-alone device or smartphone feature that enables Wi-Fi devices to access the Internet wherever a cellular signal is available. Generally sold by all of the major cell phone providers (they give them away or charge a nominal fee to buy them), these hotspots provide you with Internet access almost everywhere, and the 4G versions are nearly as quick as having a hard-wired connection.

I use the Verizon Jetpack 4G LTE Mobile Hotspot MiFi 4510L, and go everywhere with it. While it’s great when traveling, it’s also just as handy at a client’s office or anywhere else. The monthly cost for these devices is generally around \$50, which allows you to download about 5GB of data (that’s enough unless you love movies, videos and other similar types of items); I have never exceeded the monthly allocation, although I have come close. But considering the cost of hotel Wi-Fi, and the convenience, these devices are a bargain.

Once you have the hotspot, you will no longer have to worry whether there will be Internet access, and how secure it is. If you go on vacation or an extended business trip, you can save enough that the hotspot is almost paying for itself. Once you arrive, just power on the hotspot (it tends to hold a charge for three to four hours); up to five Wi-Fi-enabled devices can access the Internet, and prying eyes won’t be able to see what you’re doing, unless they stand behind you.

The best technology is easy to use and works well. My favorite things are neither fancy nor expensive. However, they save me lots of time, and make my life easier. If only everything worked as well. ■

What I love, however, is my 27-inch computer monitor, which gives me virtually the same “real estate” as do dual monitors, without having to figure where my mouse is and where it should be.

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Nike + SportWatch GPS



Garmin Forerunner 405 CX

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