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Save time and money: Use technology wisely

Whenever I evangelize the importance of keeping up with technological changes, the most common response I hear from other lawyers is that they don't have enough time to sort through the ever-increasing number of choices available to them.

After I spoke recently at a legal seminar devoted to emerging Internet technologies of interest to attorneys, an audience member told me that although he really enjoyed the seminar, he was overwhelmed by the thought of sorting through the technologies discussed during the presentation.

He wondered whether I knew of someone who could help him determine the tools that would best supplement the systems already being used in his practice.

At the time, I wasn't aware of anyone who offered such a service, so the best I could do was suggest that he use the information provided at the seminar as a starting point, and conduct the research himself.

Since that time I've have many conversations with lawyers who are frustrated with the cost of running their practices, especially during the current economic downturn.

Their predicament is unfortunate, since there are many emerging Internet and Web 2.0 legal technologies that can save law offices time and money by increasing efficiency and reducing costs, including:

- RSS feeds, to track the people and changing laws relevant to pending litigation;
- Online to-do and reminder applications to assist you in keeping on top of your caseload;
- Online applications for pretrial preparation, such as mind mapping and timeline programs;
- Figuring out which smart phone makes the most sense for you and your practice;
- Determining whether it makes sense to invest time and energy into social media and, if so, which platforms will be of most benefit to your practice;
- Determining whether a law blog would benefit your practice and, if so, which blogging platform would work best for your firm;

- Figuring out whether online case management systems would make sense for your firm, and exploring the options;

- Exploring online back-up storage options and figuring out how to best use them in your practice;

- Determining whether virtual assistants will make your practice run more smoothly; and exploring the options available;

- Exploring online e-mail and calendaring applications; and

- Exploring online collaboration platforms.

Sadly, the most common refrain I encounter after advising that there are many free or low-cost alternatives available is that practicing law is so time consuming that there simply isn't enough time left over to devote to staying on top of the always-changing law practice management technologies.

After thinking about that dilemma, I decided that busy lawyers who are unable to find the time to sort through the new technologies should have other options.

That's why I started my new consulting business, lawtechTalk (lawtechTalk.com). Essentially, lawtechTalk is the "Consumer Reports" of legal technologies. I research and compare different categories of free or low-cost Internet and legal technologies and show lawyers how they can fit into their practices.

My research, comparisons and conclusions are recorded and made available in the form of screencasts at the lawtechTalk.com Web site. I also provide recommendations specific to a particular law practice on a consultation basis.

Technology is here to stay and turning a blind eye to the reality of ever-changing technological advances is a costly mistake.

Don't let technology get the best of you; make it work for you. Choose to conquer technology and watch your law practice reap the benefits of that choice.

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