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LegalLOOP

2012: The year of the mobile lawyer?

Like it or not, we are now living in a mobile world, made possible in large part due to rapid advances in mobile and cloud technologies. The effect of these tools on the legal profession is becoming increasingly apparent, especially as these technologies improve and the prices drop, making mobile devices more accessible and more affordable than ever before.

Proof that the legal profession is embracing mobile tools can be found in the results of the American Bar Association's 2012 Legal Tech Survey. According to the survey, laptop use increased significantly, with 38 percent of lawyers reporting that they switched from desktops to laptops as their primary computer of choice. And, a whopping 89 percent of lawyers reported using smart phones in 2012. Finally, over the past year, the number of lawyers using tablets more than doubled.

When it comes to smartphones, BlackBerry, once the preferred mobile device for lawyers, fell out of favor dropping from 46 percent of smart phone users in 2011 to just 31 percent this year. Meanwhile, the number of lawyers using iPhones went up in 2012, with that number increasing from 31 percent in 2011 to 44 percent in 2012. The number of lawyers using Android phones was the smallest, with Android use increasing only 1 percentage point in 2012, from 15 to 16 percent.

Tablet use was also on the rise in 2012. The iPad was released in the United States less than three years ago in April 2010. Since that time, lawyers have quickly acclimated to tablet use and the number of lawyers using tablets has risen dramatically every year. For example, according to the ABA's survey, in 2011, 15 percent of lawyers reported using tablets for law-related tasks, but in 2012, that number increased to 33 percent.

Not surprisingly, as lawyers' use of mobile tools increased, so too did lawyers' use of mobile apps. One of the most popular types of apps used by lawyers are PDF annotations tools, which facilitate the storage and organization of PDFs and also allow the

user to fill out PDF forms and annotate PDF documents by striking text, adding text, highlighting text and more. Some of the most-used PDF annotation apps for iPads include PDF Expert (my preferred app), Good Reader and iAnnotate.

And, of course, with the rise in the number of lawyers using mobile devices, the number of apps developed specifically for lawyers has increased rapidly, with new ones being rolled out all the time. These apps aid lawyers at every stage of the litigation process, including legal research, depositions, jury selection and trial presentation. The list of iPad apps for lawyer includes, but is not limited to: TranscriptPad, TrialPad, JuryStar, ExhibitView, Jury Duty, Mobile Transcript, The Dependent App, Exhibit A, iJuror, iPleading, iJury, iTestimony, MobiLit, JuryPad, TouchTax, FastCase and Law-Stack.

So, it seems that lawyers and mobile commuting were made for each other. Although traditionally the legal profession has sometimes been hesitant to embrace new technologies, mobile computing appears to be an exception to this pattern. Lawyers understand that mobile technologies make their jobs easier and provide a level of convenience and flexibility never before seen, while simultaneously offering innovative and affordable ways to better serve their clients. And, at the end of the day, isn't that what lawyering is all about?

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