



TURN YOUR SMARTPHONE INTO A LEGAL ASSISTANT

Ellen Freedman, CLM
© 2011 Freedman Consulting, Inc.

By the time you read this article, I will have already presented my new seminar — *Turn Your Smartphone Into a Legal Assistant* — at the PBA Annual meeting in Philadelphia. Typically, the CLEs offered at the annual meeting are of high quality but attract a low attendance, due to the number of meetings taking place. So I thought I'd take advantage of this column deadline by providing you all with a little sneak preview and some thoughts to digest.

Having just returned from ABA TechShow 2011, my head is swimming with information gathered from the best and brightest technologists around North America. Speakers included attorneys, practice management advisors, and technology experts. While most presenters clearly had some bias for particular operating systems, applications, and equipment, when taken as a whole, one is provided sufficient information to make well-reasoned selections.

What I discovered at one of the first sessions is that most of us have distorted views about the actual implementation of some of this stuff. For example, when presenting at a recent bench bar conference, an attorney stated to me with a high degree of certainty that there were far more applications for his favored Smartphone operating system, than the one I indicated I favored. So let's start by looking at some numbers.

Each year ABA conducts a technology survey. Results are often presented at TechShow, and this year was no exception. Clearly, those who respond are users of technology. This year the respondents numbered 464 law firms, representing 80,000 attorneys and 180,000 end users. Demographics of participating firms was slightly skewed to larger firms; 33% from firms under 50 lawyers, 36% from firms of 51-149 lawyers, 16% from firms of 150-349 lawyers, and 15% from firms of 350 lawyers or more. Ninety percent of firms are still using Windows XP as their desktop operating system. Six percent have migrated to Windows 7.

You've heard me say for many years that the word processing wars have ended, and the evil empire has won. The numbers clearly bear that out. Only 3% of respondents use WordPerfect as their primary word processor. The other 97% are

using some version of Word, with Word 2003 serving 60% of firms, and Word 2007 serving another 22%. No surprises here.

OK, so far you can determine whether your firm is ahead of or behind the curve on operating system and Word Processing software. What about Smartphones? According to comScore — the global source of digital market intelligence and the most preferred measurement service — the Android has a 33% market share, followed by BlackBerry at 28.9% and iPhone at 25.2%. The small remainder of the market is shared by Microsoft, Palm and other Smartphone operating systems.

Each operating system has its attractions. Crack, er, BlackBerry offers exceptionally tight integration with corporate servers. Synchronization is a snap, and it offers the best security defenses. Most models feature physical keyboards. And it's been the favorite of lawyers for a decade, so there's quite a comfort zone built around the BlackBerry OS.

The iPhone is thin, light, and fast. It features a large display area, a highly intuitive user interface, and a huge selection of applications, both free and paid.

The Android offers the most diverse selection of hardware. It's open operating system invites development of tons of innovative applications. Aside from its tight Google integration, it offers the ability to load widgets. Widgets are little programs which display useful information on the screen, rather than force you to open an application to get the information. For example, a weather widget will provide a live window which continually displays current temperature, weather conditions, and so forth. BatteryLife is a useful Battery widget that displays your battery status as a large symbol on the home screen. It can also be configured with different colors and can display the health status of the battery, charging info, as well as the temperature, voltage and technology of your battery. Plus, the Android supports Adobe Flash.

How will you select your Smartphone? Well, the better question is how you *should* select your Smartphone. Let's start with a strong recommendation you're your firm should standardize on the operating system of Smartphones which will be deployed at the firm. That makes your internal IT person or outside service company's job much easier. It also enables users to help one another climb a learning curve faster. Beyond that, it's all about how you will use the phone. Here are your considerations:



1. What carrier offers the best plan and coverage for your needs? Some new products are being offered which enables everyone at the firm to sign onto a master account, earning them decent discounts on fees. However, each user retains his/her phone number, and is billed directly.
2. Which type of user interface is easiest for you to navigate? Small screen? Giant screen? I have to admit, surfing the web is pure torture with my BlackBerry. I can hardly read a thing on the small screen.
3. How easily will the operating system synchronize with your personal productivity (e.g. Outlook) or case management software? Some are very difficult, others incredibly easy. It depends on the software you use for these applications, and should always be taken into consideration when making a Smartphone selection.
4. What type of keyboard do you want? Physical? Touch screen? Keep in mind that aftermarket products exist which enable you to select your phone and still utilize the keyboard you want. However, it may mean lugging along another "piece" to your phone, whether that be a separate keyboard, or stylus. Women with long fingernails who have explored the iPhone have turned away, because typing accurately can only be done with the side of the finger. Now one can purchase a stylus which produces sufficient warmth to simulate a finger touch. Or use a separate keyboard.
5. What applications do you want? Yes, in the end it's all about the applications, folks. This is where the rubber will meet the road. When it comes to the BlackBerry, there are approximately 10,000 applications available. Let's face it, BlackBerry is first and foremost a business-only tool. But it redeems itself because it offers the best enterprise-wide security. The Android offers approximately 200,000 applications at the present time. The iPhone popularity has been gained not just by a stunning display and user-intuitive interface; there are approximately 350,000 applications available for this operating system.

You can expect that the Android will eclipse the iPhone in available applications within the next couple of years. Its open architecture and accelerating market share will ensure that third parties continue to develop applications.



What may surprise you are the large number of applications already developed for iPhone, iPad, and Android which are applicable specifically to lawyers. Functionality typically includes email, calendar and task synchronization, document production and editing, spreadsheet editing, digital dictation, voice recognition, time capture, research – legal and other –remote access, and even GPS capability. And a surprising number of the applications are free or very low cost.

Wait, you say, where are the legal-specific applications? Let's start with WaffleTurtle Software for the Apple iOS, which enables you to carry the law in your pocket with searchable apps for federal rules and more. Also for Apple iOS is Black's Law Dictionary. Need to do research on LexisNexis to get cases and even Shepardize? Yep, that's available on the Apple iOS too. Fastcase is offered by many state bar associations as a member benefit, but it is free on Apple iOS. It includes cases and statutes from all 50 states and from the federal government. Did I mention it's free?

If your work depends on tracking government legislation, there is Pocket Congress, which tracks elected officials and enables you to read the latest bills and laws, on an Android OS. Also for Android is DroidLaw, which enables one to search, bookmark, copy, share, and annotate. It's free, too.

To do your own research on available applications there are three web sites to visit. BlackBerry App World can be found at <http://us.blackberry.com/apps-software/appworld/>. A quick selection of the category Business Tools reveals 451 available apps to choose from. And that's just one category. For all things iPhone visit the Apple store at <http://www.apple.com/iphone/apps-for-iphone/>. Android doesn't have its own store. In fact, for all other operating systems you need to go through an Appia storefront. Appia is a cross platform catalog which customizes the application catalog to match the platforms and devices of their business partner. One of the better-known partners is Android Market at <https://market.android.com/>.

The bottom line, folks, is that you can carry around a cell phone which is, well, just a phone. Many of you choose to do just that. But you have the option to carry a Smartphone instead, which can be loaded with a tremendous level of functionality. Imagine that the minute your secretary schedules a meeting it synchronizes automatically with the calendar on your phone, and vice versa. Imagine that you can dictate a document, memo, whatever, and upon conclusion it automatically transmits to your secretary's inbox for transcription. Imagine capturing the time you spend on your phone reading and responding to emails,



reviewing documents, and so forth. The increase in revenue at the end of the year can be highly significant.

Ok, just so I'm clear, I'm not suggesting that you walk around with a huge clunky piece of equipment which requires you to work day and night, no matter where you are and what you're supposed to be doing. I'm suggesting you carry something sleek and intuitively designed which will enable you to be more productive at all times, when you *choose* to work. And enable you to capture time you work which is currently falling through the cracks in the floor.

I'm suggesting that you also realize that a Smartphone is not just a business tool. The ability to capture and view photos and videos on a stunning display is amazing. Add to that the ability to make customized radio stations for your Smartphone and listen to amazing quality sound through your Bluetooth headset or external speakers. Are you a sports nut? How about watching the game on your Smartphone? Yes, you can watch TV – there's an app for that!

Hopefully, you're starting to think a little differently about the potential of the small device which fits neatly into a shirt pocket or purse. I remember having one of the first "bag" phones. Using it required muscles and a location on the top of a tall building or mountain. This week I managed to maintain a phone connection from one end of a tunnel to another. I was astounded. At a recent bench bar conference, the women at my table were able to relate on a more personal level by sharing photos of our pets, gardens and children which we carried on our Smartphones. Things have changed for the better in this small area of technology. Take advantage of it to make your day more productive and enjoyable.

© 2011 Freedman Consulting, Inc. The contents of this article are protected by U.S. copyright.. Visitors may print and download one copy of this article solely for personal and noncommercial use, provided that all hard copies contain all copyright and other applicable notices contained in the article. You may not modify, distribute, copy, broadcast, transmit, publish, transfer or otherwise use any article or material obtained from this site in any other manner except with written permission of the author. The article is for informational use only, and does not constitute legal advice or endorsement of any particular product or vendor.

