

HotButtons

Ways to Power Your Practice: A Few of Our New Top Picks

SHARON NELSON AND JOHN SIMEK | From keeping their operations efficient to marketing their services to controlling costs and beyond, there's no shortage of ways in which lawyers can put technology to use in their practices. Check out these tools to aid you in 2010.

In the course of our work, conversations with colleagues, CLE presentations and elsewhere, we regularly gather tips on how lawyers can power and protect their practices. Here are some of our top picks for the year.

Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor

Before installing Windows 7 on your computer, use Microsoft's Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor to see if your computer system is really ready to run the new OS. This utility can be downloaded for free from Microsoft's Web site (www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx). It first runs



Sharon D. Nelson (snelson@senseient.com) and John W. Simek (jsimek@senseient.com) are President and Vice President, respectively, of Sensei Enterprises, Inc., a computer forensics and legal technology firm based in Fairfax, VA. They are coauthors of *The 2010 Solo and Small Firm Legal Technology Guide* (ABA, 2010).

a compatibility check, which takes a few minutes to complete, and then it generates an easy-to-read report detailing the results of the scan. The report is broken down into sections, explaining what system requirements, devices and applications are compatible, which software might have to be upgraded or reinstalled after the installation, and where any potential problems with an upgrade might be encountered.

To view all the system requirements for Windows 7, visit www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/get/system-requirements.aspx.

Outlook Send Assistant

A new product from the PayneGroup, the people who brought us the terrific and highly popular Metadata Assistant scrubbing tool, Outlook Send Assistant (www.payneconsulting.com/products) seems destined to become a must-have utility for Outlook users. It's simple and elegant and works like a charm. Essentially, it's an add-in for Outlook that protects users from themselves. What does this wonder product do? Here are some of the features.

- It notifies blind-copied recipients

of their Bcc status to prevent related, inadvertent disclosure.

- It checks for firm distribution lists on the To line to verify that users meant to include the entire list in their e-mail.

■ Any Global Address List (GAL) distribution list can be set to issue a desired prompt that you specify. For example, if you have a distribution list that goes to the entire firm, Outlook Send Assistant can prompt you to verify that you really want to send this particular e-mail to everyone in the firm.

■ It can also prompt the user about including any kind of disclaimer, text directing users to the firm's Web site or the like, and will place the appropriate text at the bottom of the e-mail message.

■ It detects Reply To All usage and prompts users to confirm whether they would actually like to reply to all recipients.

Outlook Send Assistant works within Outlook 2000 and above. Some of the features, such as the disclaimer message, require that Outlook be configured for HTML-type messages. The cost is \$15 to \$40 per seat depending on the number of licenses purchased.

Checkpoint-Friendly Laptop Bags

Removing laptops from cases for security inspections is a hassle, and especially time-consuming for lawyers who travel frequently. But last year, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) adopted a policy that allows laptops to remain in "checkpoint friendly" bags during security screening. These bags have a separate compartment for the laptop and split down the

middle so the laptop-only compartment lays flat to provide a clear view of the laptop during X-ray inspections.

Several manufacturers now have these bags on the market. Examples include the Targus Zip-Thru series (www.targus.com/us) and Mobile Edge's ScanFast line (www.mobileedge.com).

Lawyer Marketing Videos

With lawyers' use of videos burgeoning, what are you waiting for? Seriously. YouTube is now the second most-searched site on the Internet. Whether it's a modest "welcome to my site" video or something edgier, using online videos to market your practice is something every lawyer should be considering. The cost to have a modest "welcome to my site" video produced generally ranges from \$500 to \$1,000. One that involves multiple special effects might range from \$1,500 to \$3,000. Given that viewers today have a short attention span, how long should the video be? A brief video welcoming users to your site should probably be a minute or less. Other forms of marketing videos generally target two to three minutes.

Is it really worth the cost and effort? Consider this: Online videos are key to driving traffic to a Web site through YouTube, Google Video, Yahoo Video and even normal Google results. Thus, videos are now a standard part of search engine optimization. Your law practice can even have its own YouTube Channel. An excellent article on this subject may be found at www.law.com/jsp/law/sfb/lawArticleSFB.jsp?id=1202429433261.

Constant Contact

Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) provides Web-based tools that make it easy to create professional-looking e-mail newsletters and online

surveys. The company also provides customers with the latest industry information and education to help them learn e-mail marketing and online survey best practices. Because Constant Contact customers are restricted to using only "opt-in" permission-based mailing lists, broadcast e-mails from its servers are more likely to reach their destinations. The company's high e-mail deliverability rates are also due to strong partnerships with ISPs, a no-tolerance spam policy, and leadership in organizations such as the ESPC (Email Sender and Provider Coalition).

This is a terrific mechanism for sending newsletters and surveys—and Constant Contact does all the administration. Nice. The company offers a free no-obligation 60-day trial, and service plans start at as low as \$15 per month.

Seagate FreeAgent Desk

Now that Seagate owns Maxtor, the latter's very popular One Touch hard drive backup system has been replaced with Seagate's FreeAgent Desk system (www.seagate.com/www/en-us/products). The FreeAgent Desk backup drive connects via USB 2.0 and comes in sizes ranging from 500 GB up to 2 TB. Automatic backup software is included and comes preinstalled on the hard drive. The software works automatically to protect your data, and built-in encryption software keeps sensitive data secure. FreeAgent Desk currently retails for \$250.

Virtual Assistants

There are many virtual assistant services available on an ad hoc or part-time basis. Why pay someone to sit around and answer the phone in your office when you can have it done by a virtual receptionist? (Check www.totalattorneys.com/our-services/virtual-receptionist for an example

of pricing packages.) You can also get receptionists who speak Spanish if that's part of your client demographic.

Virtual paralegals (check out www.virtualparalegalservices.com) are also available when you need a little extra help. Virtual services are an excellent idea if you're a solo or still growing your firm and don't need (or can't afford) full-time employees.

PR Newswire

Offering access to multiple marketing and media communications tools, including press release distribution for small businesses, PR Newswire (www.prnewswire.com) helps firms target specific media and blogger audiences. Sending a press release to the entire metro D.C. area costs roughly \$210. Sending a press release nationwide will cost roughly \$1,200. Services like this do two incredible things—they get out the word about you and your firm and they get you quality inbound links to your Web site, something that search engines all love.

Kindle-ize Your Evidence

Lastly, Amazon's Kindle (www.amazon.com/kindle) is not just for reading books, newspapers or periodicals. You can use it for evidence displays, too. Recently we met with one of our favorite litigators, David Oblon of Albo & Oblon LLP, and were fascinated when he told us that he regularly brings his Kindle DX into the courtroom to show the judge demonstrative evidence (as native PDF files), simply handing the Kindle over to the judge. So far, all the judges have been happy to review demonstrative evidence on the Kindle. You can go through a conversion process to get PDFs on the other models, but since the Kindle DX handles PDF files natively, that makes it the device of choice. ^{1P}