2018 ABA Legal Technology Survey Highlights
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Background

Every year the American Bar Association sends out a survey to tens of thousands of attorneys requesting information about several areas. The 2018 survey contained six questionnaires covering the following:

1. Technology Basics & Security
2. Law Office Technology
3. Online Research
4. Marketing & Communication Technology
5. Litigation Technology & E-Discovery
6. Mobile Lawyers

The complete survey is available for purchase from the ABA at https://www.americanbar.org/products/inv/book/353335439/. It's not cheap, but packed with useful information. We'll cover a few of the highlights here. Each volume is available separately, but you'll need the complete publication to appreciate all the technology that lawyers use and the trends for the legal profession.

Cyber Liability Insurance

It seems like we hear about data breaches on a weekly basis. Certainly, protecting against security incidents is moving up on the priority list for many attorneys. As a result, lawyers obtaining cyber liability insurance is on the rise. The survey reports that 34% of respondents now have cyber liability insurance compared to 26% in 2017 and 17% in 2016.

Technology Budget

The survey asked if the technology budget has increased this year over the prior year. 45.1% said the budget did increase and 32.5% stated that the technology budget stayed the same. Only 3.7% said the budget decreased. It is not surprising that the response varied based upon the size of firm. 35.4% of solo attorneys had a budget increase. 38.6% of firms with 2-9 attorneys saw an increase and 47.5% of firms with 10-49 attorneys increased their technology budget. The largest group of attorneys to increase their technology spend occurred in the 50-99 lawyer firms, where 60% of firms increased the technology budget.

Cloud Computing

We have seen a tremendous increase in lawyers using the cloud. Being faced with the decision of replacing a server or moving to the cloud, many firms are going with the cloud option. Our experience has shown that Office 365 is a big enticement in pushing law firms to the cloud. The Legal Technology Survey reports that over half (55%) of respondents are using cloud computing technology. The smaller firms appear to have a higher adoption rate than the larger firms. 59% of solo responders are using the cloud, followed by 58% of firms with 2-9 attorneys.

The survey identifies the top used cloud services as Dropbox (60%), Google Docs (36%), iCloud (22%), Evernote (14%), and Box (14%). When asked about the most important benefits to using the cloud, respondents answered with the following:

- Easy browser access from anywhere – 68%
- 24x7 availability – 59%
- Low cost of entry and predictable monthly expense – 48%
- Robust data backup and recovery – 46%
- Quick to get up and running – 40%
- Eliminates IT & software management requirements – 34%
- Better security than I can provide in-office – 31%
- None – 8%

Observations

Clearly the movement to cloud-based solutions is continuing to rise. More and more attorneys are comfortable with cloud solutions, which has the tendency to make them more mobile. Concern about cybersecurity and protecting client confidential data are also key concerns of today's practicing lawyers. You may not be able to afford the complete volumes of the 2018 Legal Technology Survey, but consider obtaining at least one of the volumes. It will help you see what other attorneys in similar sized firms are using, which can make you much more successful in your technology decisions.

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