

Lawyers Addicted to Technology: Cutting the Cord

by Sharon D. Nelson and John W. Simek

© 2021 Sensei Enterprises, Inc.

Not exactly a new subject, is it? And yet the pandemic has brought a new focus to technology addiction as way too many lawyers worked longer hours at home than they ever did at the office, their overtired, burning eyes fixed on their monitors.

As the pandemic receded and lawyers ventured out, we heard a regular theme about technology – “I can’t let go.” Finally, a chance to take a vacation emerged in the summer of 2021 and we proved to be pretty terrible at relaxing sans technology.

Technology Itself Gives You Tools to Cut the Cord

Your phone is your worst nemesis because you can’t stop “checking in”, right?

Put on “Do Not Disturb” (DND) and let your cares fly away. Of course, to do that, you need to let any critical folks at work know – and for the sake of those trying to reach you by email, make sure your “away” message is on. You also have the option to program DND exceptions to allow a specific caller which may be critical if you have elderly parents, grown children who may need you, etc.

Instructions to do that here:

<https://itigic.com/configure-android-do-not-disturb-mode-to-add-exceptions/>

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/9/26/20883331/iphone-do-not-disturb-mode-exceptions-how-to>

We’ll state the obvious: Don’t look at the phone when “Do Not Disturb” is on – those emails and notifications will show up if you do and your blood pressure will skyrocket!

Put your phone in a hotel safe and go to the pool or dinner. You can’t check what you don’t have. No safe? Another way to enforce your relaxation is to give your phone to your spouse or other travelling companion with orders about when to return it. Don’t get mad when they obey your orders – play fair!

As for laptops, do what needs doing once or twice a day. Maybe before breakfast and dinner? That’s our routine. And **power them down** in between. Your devices sing silent siren songs to you if you can bring them to life in a flash.

Advice From Friends

Our friend Reid Trautz recommends using technology pre-vacation to immerse yourself in your dreams of what you want to do. Envision your fun so that you are in a frame of mind to do everything you really want to do and not be sidetracked by technology.

Juda Strawczynsk has some excellent tips for unplugging on vacation:

Attack your “to-do” list with a vengeance – clear the deck as much as possible so that no deadlines are hanging over your head when you leave. Let your colleagues know you are “really” on vacation, so they don’t pester you and tell them who to contact in case of an emergency. If you must connect, set strict rules.

We follow that advice religiously. It took us years to succeed, so if you stumble at first, you are in good company.

The funniest advice shared with us came from our friend (and fellow technologist) Tom Lambotte. On vacation, his team was told that if they needed him, to text his wife. According to Tom, this allowed his more rational half to serve as a gatekeeper!

Our Average Day and Digital Downtime

Like everyone else, we struggle to keep our devices at bay. Workdays are the hardest for everyone, but we do religiously carve out after dinner time for a movie – the only permitted interruptions are the occasional texts from our six children.

We are pretty strict on weekends. Generally, we consult our devices 2-3 times a day. It feels quite restful after the workweek. You can truly get yourself into the habit of limiting screen time - and it gets much easier to maintain that kind of schedule once you’ve determined that you are going to be in charge of your devices rather than your devices being in charge of you!

Sharon D. Nelson, Esq. is a practicing attorney and the president of Sensei Enterprises, Inc. She is a past president of the Virginia State Bar, the Fairfax Bar Association and the Fairfax Law Foundation. She is a co-author of 18 books published by the ABA. snelson@senseient.com.

John W. Simek is vice president of Sensei Enterprises, Inc. He is a Certified Information Systems Security Professional and a nationally known expert in the area of digital forensics. He and Sharon provide legal technology, cybersecurity and digital forensics services from their Fairfax, Virginia firm. jsimek@senseient.com.