

The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES

June 7, 2011

From Legal Pad to iPad: Using Tablet Computing to Increase a Lawyer's Efficiency



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It was not that many years ago, after Lexis and Westlaw came on the scene, that many attorneys were heard to say "I don't trust computer-based legal research," and, "I like to hold books in my hands and spread books in front of me on a table." Is there any attorney today who would like to go back to the paper-based law library days, or who thinks that form of legal research is more efficient?

Probably not, but there are those who are just as behind the times when it comes to the recent emergence of tablet-based computing as a tool for lawyers. Desktop and laptop computers are giving way to tablet computing, led by the iPad, and the numerous applications (apps) that are specifically being designed for the legal profession or that are easily adaptable to the practice of law. These devices and applications are game changing in their impact.

As a result, the days of carrying heavy trial bags and pushing dollies loaded with banker boxes are over. Despite the doubters, the iPad has arrived and has ushered in a new way for lawyers to manage, and to carry, information. Let me be clear about one thing, however: I am not suggesting that the iPad, or any other tablet-based device, is a complete substitute for a desktop or laptop computer.

As others have correctly pointed out, the iPad is an information consumption device, not an information creation device. For example, the information for this article was collected on an iPad, but the article was drafted on a laptop computer. In fact, I often work on a computer with an iPad at my side as a handy way to refer to research documents. In this way, I have the equivalent of a dual monitor setup that I can use anywhere.

I recently presented a CLE program to our firm to provide a basic introduction to the ways that a lawyer can use the iPad to become more efficient and to provide better service to clients. There can be no doubt that technology, alone, will not make someone a better lawyer; hard work and creative thinking are still the hallmarks of a successful attorney. Nevertheless, a lawyer gains nothing by lugging around briefcases and trial bags stuffed with documents; nor does the lawyer serve the client's interests by taking hours to find something that a computer can locate in a few seconds. The strengths of the otherwise successful attorney, when enhanced by the effective use of tablet-

based computer technology, can indeed be an awesome combination that will not go unnoticed by clients, the opposition or the courts.

The digital age has made vast amounts of information available that can be accessed on computers and even on cellular phones. Opposing counsel routinely provide thousands of documents in a digital format and we all know that e-discovery has become a hot topic. The problem is that once the most relevant digital information has been selected, how does the attorney store it for future reference. Some attorneys, I am certain, print hard copies of selected documents and then place them in file folders or three-ring binders. I find that rather counterintuitive in a digital age, and it certainly does not save the trees. Others place the electronic documents in directories on computers and in-house document management systems. While that approach is an effective way to store digital information, it is not a particularly effective way to access information quickly when it is needed. The solution is provided by the Apple iPad.

In my practice, the iPad serves as a media consumption device that I use to store and organize digital documents, photographs, video files and sound files. It has not yet enabled me to realize the dream of a paperless office, but I do now have a paperless briefcase. There is no longer any reason to lug around bulky accordion folders and three-ring binders. My briefcase, holding little more than my iPad, is very light, uncluttered, and easy to carry. Unlike a desktop or laptop computer that requires constant scrolling on the screen to read a document, the iPad provides a comfortable full page display. In addition, the iPad is an "instant-on" device and there is no annoying boot-up time to suffer through. Reviewing documents, reading and responding to e-mail messages, surfing the Web, checking my calendar and contact lists, and conducting legal research are all functions that have been enhanced by the iPad. For those of you who do a lot of flying, the reclining seat of the passenger in front of you will not prevent you from using your iPad, as it often would if you were using a laptop.

For those who are technologically challenged, you will be happy to know that the iPad is much easier to use than a personal computer. Unlike conventional computer software that often has a steep learning curve, the apps on the iPad are very intuitive and easy to learn. Currently, there are approximately 85,000 apps available for the iPad at the iTunes store, but those that are particularly useful to the legal profession are part of a much smaller group. Space does not permit an exhaustive analysis of the available apps, but the following will help you to get started:

Content Management

The iPad does not have an inherent ability to organize documents, but that void has been filled by some very useful and inexpensive apps. Unlike computer software programs that often cost hundreds of dollars, most apps are either free or carry price tags of only a few dollars. My personal favorite, and the one that I recommend that you buy first, is GoodReader (\$4.99) (<http://www.goodreader.net/goodreader.html>). This app provides the directory structure and organizational tools that the iPad otherwise lacks. I use GoodReader to duplicate the conventional file cabinet

hierarchy of folders and subfolders and, as a result, every client file that I need is always at my fingertips. The app makes it easy to read, annotate and organize documents in virtually any format. Those documents can also easily be e-mailed to others for review and comment. Another popular and similar app is ReaddleDocs (http://readdle.com/products/readdledocs_ipad/), which also sells for \$4.99.

Since attorneys receive countless documents in the Adobe PDF format, there are a number of apps that are designed to make it easy to read and annotate PDF files. While GoodReader does an admirable job in this regard, another popular app is iAnnotate (\$9.99) (<http://www.ajidev.com/iannotate/>). This app enables you to fill out forms, enter notes for edits, sketch diagrams, copy text, and add highlights or underline with the drag of a finger. Another useful feature is that it allows opening of multiple documents at one time.

Content Storage

Of course, before you can manage content on the iPad you need to place that information on the device. One way to do that is to connect your iPad to your computer and then download the information (files) through iTunes. This is cumbersome because it requires you to be in front of the computer that houses the copy of iTunes that is synched with your iPad.

There are two other methods that are much easier. The first is to simply transfer any document that is attached to an e-mail message to GoodReader, or any other similar app you are using. Simply holding your finger on the attachment in your e-mail message will bring up a dialogue box that says "Open-In" and then you simply select "GoodReader," in my example, to transfer a copy of the document. Secondly, an even better method is to use a free app called "Dropbox" (www.dropbox.com).

Dropbox is a free, "cloud-based," file sharing system that allows users to share files (photos, documents, videos, etc.) among multiple devices, whether it be computers, iPhones, iPads, or even Android and Blackberry devices. Any files shared to a Dropbox folder are automatically shared among the devices or people that the attorney authorizes to use it. Dropbox is particularly useful for transferring large files, or entire file folders, to GoodReader.

There is an option to connect to Dropbox within GoodReader and you have the option to download individual, or multiple, files and folders to any client folder within GoodReader. You can also upload files from GoodReader to Dropbox so that they can be shared with your desktop and laptop computers. Any device that has Dropbox installed, and that is registered to your free Dropbox account, will always have the same documents. You can forget about going back to the office to retrieve a file (or even having to log on remotely to your office network). If the document was saved to Dropbox on one computer, it will appear on all of your computers, including your iPad.

Attorney-Specific Apps

This is where the fun really begins! Although it is not the purpose of this article to provide an exhaustive list or explanation of attorney-specific apps, some of my favorites — in addition to those mentioned above — are as follows:

- Downloads HD. A fully featured download manager that lets you download files from the Internet to your iPad. You can view or play the downloaded files right on the iPad or transfer them to your computer. I frequently use this App to download court and board decisions. (\$2.99).
- Read It Later. Allows the user to save Web pages and store them for offline reading. This is handy when you want to access information without an available Internet connection. (\$2.99; basic version free).
- QuickOffice Connect. Create, edit, and share Microsoft Office documents. (\$14.99).
- Westlaw Next. Access familiar WestlawNext features including, WestSearch™, KeyCite™, Folders, History, document notes and highlighting, browse database content and more - all redesigned for the iPad multi-touch screen. (Free, but Westlaw Next account required).
- Fastcase. A free legal research application, putting the American law library in the palm of your hand. Fastcase contains cases and statutes from all 50 states and from the federal government. You can search by citation, keyword (in Boolean or natural language), or browse statute collections. (Free). Other legal apps include Lawstack, which includes, among others, the U.S. Constitution, the Federal Rules of Civil and Criminal Procedure, the Federal Rules of Evidence, and certain state codes. (Free). LawBox (free) is another app that is very similar to Lawstack.
- Litigator. Litigator is an easy-to-use, all-in-one reference for the working litigator. Whether in court, on the road, or at your desk, have the Federal Rules of Appellate, Civil, and Criminal Procedure, Federal Rules of Evidence, Supreme Court Rules of Procedure, Title 18, Title 28, and Local Rules at your fingertips in a single searchable application. (\$14.99, plus \$4.99 per state).
- Pages. This is an Apple software product that has been adapted for the iPad. It is the closest thing to a full-fledged word processor on the iPad, but I do not recommend it for lengthy documents. One important feature is that documents created in Pages can be e-mailed in a .doc or .pdf format. In fact, this is the easiest way to convert a document to PDF on the iPad. (\$9.99).
- Keynote. Apple's answer to PowerPoint, but not quite as powerful. The app can import PowerPoint presentations. (\$9.99).
- Auditorium. Allows note-taking and simultaneous recording. The user can jump to the place in the recording that matches the time when a particular note was taken. (\$4.99).

- Dragon Dictation. Dragon Dictation is an easy-to-use voice recognition application powered by Dragon NaturallySpeaking that allows you to easily speak and instantly see your text or e-mail messages. It is advertised to be up to five times faster than typing on the keyboard. (Free).
- TrialPad. This is an up-and-coming trial presentation app that includes Dropbox integration. The user can organize all the exhibits in Dropbox on a computer, then easily import multiple files at once into TrialPad with the folder and file structure intact. Version 2.0 is about to be released and it will include the ability to use "callouts" to emphasize particular words or sentences for presentation. It is the most costly of the attorney-specific applications. (\$89.99). Competitors include the RLTC Evidence (\$9.99) and Exhibit A (\$4.99).
- Save2PDF. This app allows you to convert documents to PDFs simply and easily right on your iPad without having to go near a computer. Save2PDF will convert most file formats into a PDF including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Pages, Numbers, Keynote, Photos, Web Pages, Contacts and many more formats. (\$9.99).
- IJuror. Provides a seating chart and allows the entry of information on each prospective juror. (\$9.99).
- Pulse. Although it is not a lawyer-specific app, it is my favorite way to follow blog postings. (Free).
- CourtDaysPro. Provides attorneys and legal professionals with the ability to calculate dates and deadlines based on a customizable database of court rules and statutes. Once the rules are set up in the application, calculations are performed using a customizable list of court holidays. Once you choose a triggering event, e.g., a motion hearing date, the application will display a list of all events and corresponding dates and deadlines based of triggering event, e.g., last day to file moving papers, opposition, reply briefs. Icons on the screen show the number of calendar days and court days from the current date for all resulting events.
- TaskTask HD. A simple, easy-to-use task management application that enables you to synchronize your tasks from your Exchange mailbox to your iPad with ease. (\$4.99).
- OmniOutliner. Allows you to collect, compose, and rearrange text, and its outlining features allow you to organize your ideas. (\$19.99).

The apps I have listed are ones that I have used and can recommend, but many of them should be compared to competing apps that have features you may find more useful in your practice. Obviously, the list is but a small sampling of what is available, but my point is that there are plenty of apps available to enhance the practical use of the iPad for an attorney. By trial and error, you will find the combination of apps that provides the greatest benefit for you.

There are a number of blogs that are dedicated to the use of the iPad for the legal profession, including *TabletLegal* by Josh Barrett, *TechnoEsq* by Finis Price, *iPad4Legal* by Patrick DiDomenico, *iPad Notebook* by Justin Kahn, *Legal iPad* by Niki Black, *Walking Office* by Rob Dean, and my blog, *iPad Lawyering*. These blogs frequently include articles that review and recommend apps and even the American Bar Association has published a list of must-have apps for the lawyer that can be found at www.americanbar.org/publications/youraba/201105article05.html.

There is no doubt that the list of iPad apps and resources for lawyers is growing and that this growth mirrors what is happening in law firms all over the country. The iPad, or some form of tablet-based computer, is rapidly becoming an essential electronic tool for the practicing attorney.

In closing, I must briefly address a frequent issue of concern — security. Just as it is not a good idea to lose a file folder or a laptop computer, losing an iPad loaded with all of your client files would be a nightmare. Fortunately, the iPad enables the user to require a password every time the tablet is accessed, and many individual applications have their own secondary password protection. GoodReader, for example, allows different levels of password protection including a "paranoid mode" that requires re-entry of a password every time the app goes into the background and is later reaccessed. In addition, GoodReader allows the user to set passwords for individual files and folders. Finally, as a last defense, Apple's "MobileMe" allows you to locate a lost iPad on a map, remotely set a passcode, or even remotely wipe (erase) all of the contents of the iPad. Therefore, while care must always be taken with any electronic device, the iPad is one of the most secure devices on the market today. •

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