

# LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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## Outlook Mobile App

Despite the popularity of other messaging platforms, including Facebook messaging, Twitter and even plain text messaging, we still are slaves to our old familiar email inbox.



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For most professionals working in the legal space, email is the lifeblood of communications, not only with clients but with coworkers and vendors as well. Increasingly we find ourselves drafting and responding more to email messages on our mobile devices than on our office desktop PCs. As such, we are constantly looking for the optimal email app that allows us to master our inbox on our smartphone rather than scrambling to find an important email buried weeks-deep in our inbox. Fairly or not, we always seem to judge an email client app based on how it performs compared to Outlook, simply because we are so accustomed to the Microsoft Outlook interface that has ruled our desktop for the past 10-15 years.

So it is not surprising that our ears perked up recently on the Microsoft announcement that it was rolling out a new, free Outlook mobile app for both iOS and Android platforms. It's been a long time coming, so we downloaded the new app on our respective smartphones with much anticipation, but also with a little bit of dread for fear that the mobile Outlook would not live up to its hype. Thankfully, our fears were unfounded. Our test drive of the new Outlook mobile app has gone very smoothly and we have taken a strong liking to this new email tool.

First, setup was a breeze on the new Outlook app, with smart setup wizards for the major email account options, including Exchange, Outlook.com, Google (Gmail), Yahoo, and even iCloud (yes, Microsoft plays nice with Apple — take note, Apple developers). Additionally, we were pleasantly surprised to see integrations with cloud storage providers OneDrive (Microsoft's solution), Dropbox, Box and Google Drive (more on this later). There were no arcane server names or ports to configure (for those familiar with the old-fashioned email setup). We just entered our login credentials, and voilà, our email started appearing.

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The first thing we noticed that was different with this interface is a "Focused" view that filters your email to include only those that the app determines are of most importance. So those pesky sales emails get pushed to the "Other" view. No worries, though, if an important email doesn't make the cut to the "Focused" view, we can put it there manually; and Microsoft says the app will get smarter over time, learning what we classify as important and doing the work for us automatically.

We like that. And while this important email feature is not new (Gmail has been doing something similar for some time); the new Outlook app allows users to synthesize important messages across all email accounts, which is a huge plus.

Using a swiping motion, we can also schedule emails to show up in our Inbox at a later time. This feature is both wonderful and scary. How many emails do you get in a day where you say "I'll respond to this later"? Yes, we do too. While we can schedule these things away to only show up at a future time, doing so could result in future chaos. Nevertheless, we love having this option.

Beyond just the inbox features, we love the tight integration with our Calendar and Contacts in the Outlook app. A major downside of the native iOS email, calendar and contacts apps on Apple devices is just that, they are all individual apps. So if we are drafting an email on an iPhone, for example, and need to put in our availability for a future meeting or call, we have to pull up the Calendar app to view our schedule, then go back to the email app and try to remember what time slots were open. In the new Outlook app, however, we can view and even indicate our availability from our calendar, without ever leaving the app. It works great! When viewing an email from a particular contact, we can click on the contact's name and get a focused view of our collaboration with that person, showing email messages related to that contact, meetings schedule with that contact and even files (attachments) shared with that contact. This is just tremendous integration between the three pillars of our communications portal: email, calendar and contacts. And Microsoft is continuing to improve the app and add to its functionality.

The surprising integration with cloud storage accounts in the new Outlook app is a welcome feature as well. When we want to attach a file to an email from one of our connected cloud storage accounts, we are presented with a uniform interface that shows all our connected accounts. This interface has consistent navigation to the desired file, regardless of the cloud account in which the file resides.

For some reason the iOS version of the app is more mature (and less buggy) than the Android version (probably because iPhones and iPad account for the vast majority of mobile devices being used in the United States, and because Microsoft acquired the Accompli app and turned it into the Outlook app). But we're told that the Android version of the Outlook app will eventually catch up and be as pretty and feature-rich as the iOS version. We hope so. Ironically, the app is not yet available for Windows phones.

So while some may find it difficult to get excited about email with all the new gadgets and innovative apps on the market, we justifiably danced a little jig when we realized that this new Outlook app would help us master the biggest monster we face every day, our email Inbox. If you still live in the email world (and who among us doesn't?), you need to download this app right away.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**William Ramsey**, Partner at Neal & Harwell, and LogicForce Consulting President **Phil Hampton** are best known for The Bill and Phil Show. The duo tours often and provides technology news and reviews on their website [www.thebillandphilshow.com](http://www.thebillandphilshow.com).

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