

LEGAL MANAGEMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ADMINISTRATORS

OM Feature

OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

Best Options for a Tech-Savvy Office

What technology does your firm need to keep the advantage?

Before the days of social media, websites and the cloud, law firms' and departments' technology decisions largely concerned what hardware and software employees needed to most efficiently and effectively run business.



ED FINKEL
Freelance Writer and Editor

“Certainly if your practice involves being anywhere other than your office, a smartphone is absolutely essential to keeping in touch with your office, your clients, or even the court if you happen to be running late.”

BRYAN SIMS

Attorney,
Sims Law Firm, Ltd.



These questions still remain central. But now they are intertwined with the more forward-thinking options that clients are looking for when making decisions about representation.

Attorneys, law firm managers and tech consultants differ on which hardware lawyers and law firms want and need, given the array of devices. But one thing is clear — there are options, and lots of them, bound together by one common thread: the need to be mobile.

In fact, it's the key for clients of Kimberly Rice, Principal and Chief Strategist of KLA Marketing Associates. Most have laptops and can dial into a network, and they find tablets to be invaluable while traveling. Plus, “you can't be in business without having a smartphone,” she says.

Bryan Sims, Attorney with Sims Law Firm, Ltd., in Naperville, Illinois, echoes this sentiment and wonders if desktop computers will become a thing of the past, especially for litigators or others who spend most of their time out of the office.

“Certainly if your practice involves being anywhere other than your office, a smartphone is absolutely essential to keeping in touch with your office, your clients, or even the court if you happen to be running late,” Sims says. “And then just the ability, for me, to access my documents through my phone or, more likely, my tablet, for wherever I happen to be is very valuable.”

Data from the International Legal Technology Association supports this. Their 2014 survey noted that 91 percent of respondents said they use tablets as part of their day-to-day work.

But it takes more than mobility to run a law practice. The following is the rundown on some other tech must-haves to keep things running smoothly.

DID YOU KNOW?

Data from the International Legal Technology Association found that **91 percent** of respondents said they use tablets as part of their day-to-day work.

STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Document and email management software has become increasingly critical for law firms of all sizes, although these were traditionally big firm concerns. But now, “Instead of two letters, we have 27 emails with attached PDFs — [even] voicemails delivered as attachments to email. Firms can’t keep up with their email,” says Barron Henley, Partner with Affinity Consulting Group.

Ari Kaplan of Ari Kaplan Advisors in New York views document management as part of a more holistic pattern of managing matters within a firm that also includes e-billing.

“You’re seeing organizations assemble a group of tools that together allow them to have greater transparency, more robust tracking and the ability to pivot when necessary, if they have staff allocation issues or resource constraints,” he says. “They can modify some of their activities based on what they’re seeing in their document management system, matter management system, e-billing system.”

Document assembly software is also very helpful for firms to build templates using their own documents, which Henley says massively increases speed and accuracy. Most firms start drafting a document by finding an old document pretty close to the new one they need, then save it under a new file name.

“It’s easy to leave stuff in you should have taken out, and easy to forget to add something that wasn’t a starting point,” Henley says. Document assembly asks the due diligence questions and makes sure everything is done accurately and quickly.

Strengthen Your Abilities In **STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP and LEGAL MANAGEMENT**

Advance your career with a Master’s degree in Law Firm Management.

Join us for an online information session, or to learn more about this opportunity, visit cps.gwu.edu/lawfirm or call 571-553-0321

THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

“People are comfortable with Microsoft products if they’ve been using Excel and Powerpoint from the beginning. That said, there also are a lot of really good

Deb Tesser, President of Today’s Practice Consulting, LLC, figures the need for document assembly software depends on the sophistication of the practice. “People are comfortable with Microsoft products if they’ve been using Excel and Powerpoint from the beginning,” she notes. “That said, there also are a lot of really good [document assembly] products out there specifically tailored for lawyers and law firms.”

Larry Bodine, Editor of *lawpracticeadvisor.com* and a Management Consultant, uses Google Drive for document storage, figuring he can access his work from anywhere and search it quickly. “It’s

[document assembly] products out there specifically tailored for lawyers and law firms."

DEBORAH TESSER

President, Today's Practice Consulting



free, and it's fast, and it's really easy," he says.

Andrew Jurczyk, Chief Information Officer (CIO) with Seyfarth Shaw LLP, sees Office 365 as a great solution for smaller firms, along with One Drive and other data storage solutions. "The key to every one of them is ease of secure access," he says. "That's changed, and that's what's opened up the cloud."

TIME AND BILLING TRACKERS

Henley has seen time-and-billing apps, such as iTimekeep.com, that provide the ability to enter time remotely on whatever device you want to use, linked to 25 different accounting programs. "It's so simple to use," he says. "You can use the voice recognition in your phone to speak your time entry."

Kaplan has noticed the mobile options for time-and-billing as well as time capture apps that can track how long you are working on a particular document, or how long you are on a particular research site. "That will help you bill more accurately and efficiently," he says.

SOFTWARE-AS-A-SERVICE

Henley sees law firms and other types of companies moving to subscription-based software-as-a-service (SAAS) through the cloud rather than purchasing programs. "Nothing is running on my computer anymore," he says.

When using SAAS, Henley adds, "The device I use doesn't matter as much. I have access anywhere to my stuff, as long as I've got an Internet connection."

Tesser, who works with small and midsized firms, steers them exclusively to SAAS.

"For my clients to invest in software and servers and all that hardware, which is going to potentially be obsolete in a very short time frame, doesn't make a whole lot of sense," she says. She notes it also depends on the demographics you're dealing with. "There's a certain population of attorneys who still depend on their legal assistants or secretaries to pull up a Word document."

VIDEO CONFERENCE SETUPS

It used to be that outfitting your office with video conferencing would cost \$20,000. But Henley says law offices can put together a full system for around \$3,000 with a Logitech Conference Cam, a laptop and a speaker phone system with remote control.

"All you need to do is plug into that laptop, and you have a web meeting service," he says.

Sims says that firms can put together a good video conference setup for less than \$500 using Skype or FaceTime, a speakerphone that works with Skype, and the video piped into the conference room. "It wasn't that long ago that wasn't even theoretically possible," he says of the setup and price point. "I myself have done remote depositions with Skype."

Seyfarth Shaw LLP is set up with Jabber, a product from Cisco that ties into iPhones and desktop computers. It enables video conferencing "whether you're working from home, in the office, on a client site or on vacation," Jurczyk says. "It's as easy as making a phone call." It can be used as a boardroom solution as well, he adds.

TECHNOLOGY TIMES

As the tech world continues to evolve, it's clear clients are going to be demanding top-notch, tech-savvy service from the legal industry. Law practices that can stay on the leading edge of these changes will have the advantage.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ed Finkel is a full-time freelance writer and editor who covers law, technology, medicine, education and youth, and other issues. His legal writing background includes work for the *ABA Journal*, *Student Lawyer* magazine, the *Illinois Bar Journal* and *Chicago Lawyer*.

[Email](#)

[Website](#)



The banner is split into two main sections. The left section features a green football field background with two blue football helmets. The helmet on the left has a white outline of the state of Washington, and the helmet on the right has a white outline of the state of Florida. Between the helmets is a white banner with the letters 'ALA' in blue. Below the helmets is a large white banner with the text 'CHAPTER VS. CHAPTER' in bold blue letters, and a smaller white banner below that with the text 'SCHOLARSHIP CHALLENGE' in bold blue letters. The right section has a dark blue background with the text 'Help Your Chapter Earn Scholarship Funding!' in large white letters. Below this text is a silhouette of three football players in action. At the bottom right of the banner is an orange banner with the text 'See the latest standings.' in white.