

# Nothing to Fear

Starting a new job is an exciting – and occasionally unnerving – experience. When I joined the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) in late October of last year, I was psyched about the opportunity and eager to get to work immediately. I love being a “magazine guy” – working on stories, spearheading new content ideas, brainstorming with the design pros – and I was exuberant about the potential to do great things with *Legal Management*.

On my first day at ALA, however, a little Halloween surprise awaited me in my new office. You see, throughout seven years of college and 11-plus years as an editor and designer, I’ve exclusively used Apple Macintosh computers and publishing software such as Quark Xpress and Adobe Photoshop. In my line of work, “Macs” are prevalent, and they have served me quite well for nearly two decades. Imagine the look on my face, then, when I strolled into my office on October 31 and saw – *shudder* – a scary-looking Windows-based PC.

Don’t get me wrong: I’ve used PCs occasionally, such as at my parents’ house when I needed to quickly check e-mail, or in an Internet café to stay connected while traveling. But I’d never had to use one regularly for work purposes. Not wanting to alert my colleagues to my irrational PC phobia, I tried to take it all in stride. A computer is a computer, right? Well, after three minutes of trying to figure out how to turn the computer on, followed by several more minutes of stumbling through unfamiliar drop-down menus, I felt like an idiot. I’m a professional journalist, for goodness sake, so I should know how to use this machine!

Ultimately, it took only a couple of hours to get oriented to my PC, and by the end of my first week I felt fully functional. I still don’t excel at Excel (after all, I’m an editor, not an accountant), but I’ve come a long way since Halloween 2005. The experience reminded me, too, that I must constantly stay ahead of the technology curve. Stubbornly staying in my “Mac safety zone” would only hurt me in the long run.

Legal administrators should also realize there is nothing to fear when it comes to technology and change. Law firm administrators must stay abreast of emerging technologies to be strategic assets for their firms. In this issue of *Legal Management*, we’ve assembled a special section on technological issues of importance to legal professionals. Beginning on page 40, you can read all about legal technology predictions for 2006 and beyond, security strategies for small and mid-size firms and the top 10 essential technologies for solo practitioners and small firms. Also, read about the emergence of blogs as key law firm marketing tools and the ways you can improve communications between your attorneys and members of your IT staffs. And two more articles reveal how BlackBerry handheld devices and Adobe Acrobat “PDF” software can enhance law firm productivity.

Finally, an article beginning on page 88 tackles an intriguing subject: the increasing popularity of Macs in law firms. If you work for a small firm – and especially if you don’t have the budget for an IT professional to keep everything “up and running” – you might consider putting a Mac on every desk. Now *that’s* a trend worth watching.



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