

“As a profession, we need to step up to the plate to meet this need and to provide high-quality legal services online from licensed professionals. It’s in the public’s best interest that we take the initiative in defining where online legal services go from this point forward,” she says.

Consumers are already used to doing everything from shopping and banking to working and earning degrees online, she points out.

“They expect to find solutions to their legal needs online as well,” she says in an interview.

“Attorneys recognize this consumer need and are responding by providing these services and using it as a marketing strategy to stay competitive in a tight legal market and to expand their client base across the jurisdiction(s) where they are licensed to practise law to tap into this latent market for online legal services.”

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LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

<http://www.cba.org/CBA/PracticeLink/national/technology.aspx>



Take it to the limit

Achieve bigger cost savings by getting the most from your current technology.

By James Careless

Laptop computers, legal software and smartphones are essential elements of modern legal life, especially for solo and small firms that need to keep personnel costs down. But most lawyers are not getting full mileage from the technology they already have, say lawyers Laura Calloway and Donna Neff, never mind using new technology to increase productivity and reduce their costs even further.

“Most lawyers say that they are too busy practising law to learn about the full features of the technology they already have,” says Calloway, director of service programs and the practice management assistance program for the Alabama State Bar.

“But if they carved out the time to learn these features the way they do to improve their cross-examination skills, these lawyers would achieve major improvements in productivity.”

Neff, who operates Neff Law Office Professional Corporation outside Ottawa, agrees. “Using current technology to its fullest matters most to solo and small firms.

“There is a learning curve to becoming familiar with legal

technology, and it will cost you some time at first,” she says. “However, there is a very real payoff in doing so, because you save time and can cut the human hours needed to run your practice. For example, when our office went paperless, I reduced my staff requirements and saved \$30,000 annually.”

What about the fallout from staff about reducing their workload? “The jobs you eliminate by using technology more effectively are also among the most mind-numbing, so your staff will be happy to lose them,” Calloway replies.

“Everybody wins when lawyers use their technology to the fullest — including clients who get better, faster and more consistent service.”

Neff and Calloway spoke at the ABA TechShow 2011 in April on the topic of technology skills that every lawyer should possess. Here are some of their tips:

Microsoft Word

- Insert ‘file path names’ into a document, so that anyone reading them knows where they’re saved.
- If you use Styles to create headings throughout a long document and set it up to include the headings in a Table of Contents, you can scroll through the Table of Contents later, click on the heading linked to that section of the paper and end up right where you need to be.
- Use the Track Changes feature in Word so that revisions and client input can be easily found and dealt with.

Document assembly software

If you use document assembly software, create templates for commonly used documents so you don’t have to waste time and effort starting from scratch each time.”

Digital dictation

If you dictate documents using a digital recorder rather than an old analog cassette recorder, you and your staff can easily prioritize the documents for transcription. The delivery of the dictation and the finished product takes place electronically, saving more time.

Add a piece of voice recognition software such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking, and your computer will transcribe the first draft from your spoken words, saving more time and person hours.

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