

Digitally Transforming Yourself and Your Firm

By: Michael L. Goldblatt

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Over the past 40 years there has been a Digital Transformation in the practice of law. The Transformation was facilitated by several innovations --- the introduction of the IBM PC in 1980, commercialization of the Internet around 1990, popularization of cloud computing in the 2000's, Apple's launch of the iPhone in 2007 and the iPad in 2010, and the proliferation of wireless hotspots and mobile apps during the 2010's. The result has been legal technology that is more affordable and easier to adopt. Technology is increasingly used by lawyers to automate legal tasks, improve client relations, and manage law practices. Read on to learn about top technologies for lawyers and resources for implementing them at your firm.

Benefits of Technology - Legal technology frees lawyers from mundane tasks and increase billable hours. Technology also helps improve communications, increase success rates, and reduce errors and omissions.

Complying with Ethical Rules -The ABA recognized the importance of technology in 2012 by amending its Model Rules of Professional Conduct to obligate lawyers to be technologically competent. Most states have adopted the ABA's technology rule and many now grant or require CPE credit for technology education. In the 40 states that have adopted the ABA's technology rule, lawyers have an ethical duty to be knowledgeable and skillful with legal technology. The rules also require lawyers to stay alert to the benefits and risks associated with technology.

Staying Competitive - Clients are accelerating their use of technology at home and work. They expect lawyers to be technically savvy in addition to legal experts. Both newly minted and experienced lawyers can digitally transform their practices to remain competitive.

Evaluating Competence - Outdated skills and systems can be an obstacle to a successful law practice. Assess the technical competence of your firm's lawyers and staff. Look for warning signs that your firm needs a tech makeover like antiquated systems, security breaches, and unautomated tasks. Adopt policies and training to create a culture of technological competence at your firm.

Acquiring Technology - When shopping for technology, evaluate cost, features, simplicity, support, training, and time needed to implement. Get recommendations from other lawyers and read product reviews. Set a goal of digitally transforming your office by adopting or upgrading the following technologies:

- *Accounting* - use software for billing, budgeting, financing, timekeeping, and trust accounts.
- *Artificial Intelligence* - adopt AI to analyze data and documents and to research facts and law.
- *Cloud Computing* - utilize the Internet to access data, documents, and services.
- *Communicating* - deploy client portals, digital receptionists, and messaging systems.
- *CPE* - attend online seminars and listen to podcasts.
- *Data* - utilize backup, security, and storage technologies.
- *Documents* - use systems to assemble documents, access forms, and go paperless.
- *Litigating* - apply technology to discovery, filing cases, preparing for trial, and presenting evidence.
- *Management* - use tech tools to manage calendars, cases, and client/staff relations.
- *Marketing* - attract clients with blogs, mailings, social media, and websites.
- *Productivity* - exploit technology for collaboration, note-taking, presentations, and word processing.
- *Research* - explore low-cost tools for researching law, facts, and staying up-to-date.
- *Security* - stay secure with encryption, passwords, and virtual private networks.

Resources - Below is a list of resources for attaining and maintaining technical competence. The resources include articles, books, checklists, and surveys about law office technology.

- Books:* Study ABA books on [blogging](#), [collaboration](#), [e-discovery](#), [encryption](#), [ethics of social media](#), [Internet marketing](#), [LinkedIn](#), [research](#), [security](#), [web publishing](#), and [word processing](#).
- Checklists:* Use checklists prepared by [ISBA](#) and [AuCPA](#) to identify [new technologies](#) to adopt and [outdated ones](#) to abandon. Learn how to [create checklists](#) to [assess technology needs](#).
- Consultants:* Hire a [consultant](#) or request free help from technical specialists at the ABA's [Legal Technology Resource Center](#) or [state bar associations](#).
- Guides:* Read ABA guides to [Legal Technology](#) ([click here](#) for table of contents) and [Automation](#) ([click here](#) for table of contents). Read LPD articles on [legal technology](#) and [makeovers](#).
- Inspiration:* Get inspired by reading articles about the [duty of competency](#), [benefits of technology](#), and [how to stay current](#).
- Products:* Search online for products and services in the ABA's [Buyer's Guide](#) and Lawyerist's [Software Guide](#).
- Periodicals:* Subscribe to free [blogs](#), [e-newsletters](#), [podcasts](#), and [webinars](#).
- Reviews:* Read the ABA's [Technology Tips for Lawyers](#) about apps and devices ([click here](#) for table of contents). See online reviews of [law office technology](#) and [legal research tools](#).
- Seminars:* Take tech seminars sponsored by the [ABA](#), [ALI](#), [EPIQ](#), [PLI](#), and [other bar](#) associations. Learn how to create [in-house training programs](#) and adopt [training policies](#).
- Training:* [Strengthen technical skills](#) by [practicing keyboarding](#) and [taking free courses](#) offered by [Adobe](#), [Apple](#), and [Microsoft](#) and other technology providers.
- Trends:* Track trends in the ABA's [Annual Tech Survey Report](#). See survey summaries published by [LPD](#) and [Slaw](#). Read about [popular smartphone apps](#) and [solo and small firm trends](#).

Conclusion - Outdated technology can impede your law practice, disable your client relations, and raise malpractice risks. Modern technology provides opportunities to make your life easier and enhance client relations. Take time to improve your technical skills and adopt new technologies in your practice. Harness the power of technology to satisfy your ethical duties and be a better advocate for your clients. Use the resources mentioned in this article to improve technical proficiency for yourself and your firm.

About the Author

Mr. Goldblatt has authored numerous books and articles about marketing for lawyers.