

Technology Corner: True Confessions

David Lederman

I could start every installment of this column with Bob Dylan's lyrics:

*Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.*

The practice of law has evolved since I started practice two decades ago. I remember that some attorneys didn't have email and the frequent nonsensical use of the facsimile machine. Every couple of years I evaluate the state of my office's internal systems. Some days, I feel that I have firm grasp of the current technologies. Other days, I am just awed by the pace of change and the evolution of traditional ways of doing business. It is easy to become complacent with existing technologies, but we have to keep "swimmin'" or we'll "sink like a stone." Nevertheless, some things just bug me.

One of these peeves is the changing of the distribution method of software. Like many offices, my office had a mismatch of software, largely based on when a computer was purchased. Basically, whenever we purchased a new computer, we would see whether we had an extra license for software that could be migrated to the new machine or we would buy new software with the machine. I viewed these purchases as one-time investments and did not buy new versions of software or upgrades as they became available. Why would I? It was just not economically efficient (and I did not see the added value for the new bells and whistles). The result of this was that my office has versions of MS word from 2006 to 2016, most of



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which were the 2010 version. I was also using the highest upgraded version of Adobe Acrobat Pro, version 8.

A couple of years ago, the software industry (wanting, of course, to maximize its profits) started offering monthly or annual subscriptions to software. I refused to buy a subscription to Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat. It seemed to me to be unconscionable to pay an ongoing fee for things that were single purchases. (OK... maybe I am being a little dramatic, but I was outraged by this "evolution.") Also, I could just use Google Docs for free like the rest of academia. It seemed like a never-ending spend.

I know when I am just being stubborn (although it sometimes takes a while for me to figure this out). It all came to a tipping point a couple of months ago. Until recently, we rented space on a server to serve as our POP3 (Post Office Protocol) email service. From a cost perspective, this was awesome. I had unlimited storage space, and I could create new users on our domain (ledermanlaw.net) on the fly with no added costs. I would just create new email account through our portal and wham bam—done. I had complete control over everyone's email accounts as well as access to our team's emails as needed anytime I wanted. I like this system and it worked great—until it didn't. Since it was a POP account, every once in a while, a security issue would develop. Different servers started to reject our domain. I'd have to develop a work around. I had to manage everything (and this was becoming time intensive). A client called me and asked for a status report on what was going on in her case. I asked her if she received any of my myriad of emails. She had not, and we never received an undeliverable

message or anything else. (David's Caveat: DO NOT BE COMPLACENT. DO NOT ASSUME THAT AN EMAIL SENT IS AN EMAIL RECEIVED, UNTIL YOU HAVE CONFIRMATION THAT IT WAS RECEIVED).

POP accounts date back to the early days of the internet in the mid-1980s. Emails essentially went to an email server, were downloaded to a client's local desktop and then deleted from the server. It was a simple system of email, but, as I learned, it no longer met our needs. We switched to Microsoft Exchange, which basically charges \$5 per month per user for an email account. This is not a horrific cost, but it is close to ten times what I was paying before on an annual basis, and it took me awhile to buy into.

Was it worth it? Oh yes. The reality is that the Internet has evolved from the mid-1980s, as have our methods of working independently and collaboratively. Anyone that has read this column knows that I am a huge fan of collaboration tools. Microsoft Exchange allows me to have mirror email boxes and contacts across platform (laptop, desktop, iPad, and iPhone). I still have administration privileges over my team, but I no longer manage the POP account or worry about security bounce backs or other email servers rejecting ledermanlaw.net. An email sent or received on one device populates on all devices and the email service integrates with Outlook 365. OK... With this upgrade, I also went with a team upgrade to the monthly subscription version of Office 365. This means that we will always have the latest and greatest versions of the Microsoft Office Suite.

As legal teams become more integrated and interactive, we must pay attention to upgrades and improvements to security. It is no longer about bells and whistles, it's about security, collaboration, and cross-platform utilization. Each of these areas evolves quickly, which requires and justifies the monthly subscription costs. I don't love the monthly costs, but for my firm, I believe the marginal cost increase is justified.

As we were upgrading our Microsoft suite, I was eyeing a subscription to Acrobat Pro DC (yes, also a monthly deal). I figured I'd test drive it myself and see how I liked it. From version 8 that I was using before, it was a huge upgrade. Oddly, some people think that if they print a document to a PDF format (and not secure it), that it is nonmodifiable. If this is you, purge that thought. It simply is not (and never was) true. However, modifying pdfs before was a little clunky in the earlier versions of

Acrobat Pro. The new version is crazy cool, very visual, intuitive, and easy to use. In the new version of Acrobat Pro it is quite easy to manage documents, move and reposition individual pages within a document, merge documents, cut documents, number stamp documents, etc.

I had a client who would send me these huge document scans with pages out of order and upside down (she blamed her scanner). In minutes, I can view the document, reposition the pages, redact things I need to redact, and put them in the order I want. This test drive was successful, and I ordered a subscription for my entire legal team.

So, "the times, they are a-changin'." It is too easy to get into a rut of just doing things the same way. As new technologies and solutions become available, keep an open mind about how they may affect your practice. For my part, as my practice evolves, I will report to you. If I can help you learn from my mistakes, this column would be worthwhile.



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