

# It's Easier than Ever to Go Mac

By Tom Lambotte

"I don't want to use Macs. I'm perfectly happy with my Windows PC."

If that's the case and you truly don't care either way (and you don't often find yourself holding back from throwing your PC out the window), then maybe this article is *not* for you. However, if you are the tiniest bit curious about this topic, perhaps you should read on.

It's no surprise that the legal sector as a whole tends to be the opposite of an early adopter when it comes to technology. However, a category of attorneys is largely suffering in silence because they think there is no hope for things to change—the “Mac-curious, Windows-using” attorneys. These attorneys likely already have iPhones. Maybe they use an iPad. Maybe their kids use Apple computers at home, or their own personal computer is an Apple. I like to say they have seen the light and know how seamless and reliable the Apple experience can be. At times, they have wished they could ditch their PCs at the office and move to Macs, but something has always held them back.

In this article, I discuss a few key points. First, why attorneys should switch to Macs in the first place. It's not Windows bashing, but I touch on a few key benefits to using Apple computers in your practice. Next, I

discuss why using Macs in your practice is easier than ever before. Lastly, I provide a quick review of the main tools needed to run a law practice in the modern era.

## Why go Mac?

Many people assume that in my line of work—running a managed service provider that only works with attorneys who use Macs—I spend a lot of time convincing people they should make the switch. Years ago, I decided not to do this. Instead, I invest my time with attorneys who are either interested in switching from PCs to Macs or who already use Macs in their practices. Typically, the Mac-curious, Windows-using attorneys would *like* to use Apple computers in their practices, but are uncertain about what that would look like and if it would be reasonable. Many outdated beliefs still exist regarding the limitations of using Apple computers in a law practice.

One belief is that you'd be alone. Fear not. There are more than 1.3 million licensed lawyers in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The American Bar Association's Legal Technology Resource Center conducts an annual Legal Technology Survey Report of thousands of attorneys across the country, and in its 2016 ABA TECHREPORT the center revealed that 8 percent of attorneys use macOS, with the majority of these attorneys being solo practitioners (12 percent) followed by small firm practitioners (10 percent).<sup>2</sup>

Addressing each of the most outdated popular beliefs regarding Macs would make this a very long article; below are some of the most common.

## Macs are too expensive

This statement holds true if you're comparing Macs to \$300 Chromebooks, but I've found that a similarly equipped, high-quality PC does not vary much in cost compared to an Apple—and can often cost more. Two key factors are a proven lower total cost of ownership and higher resale value. For example, I just sold my personal-use, six-year-old 27-inch iMac for \$709. Good luck getting anything remotely close to that for a six-year-old PC.

## It's hard to share files with Windows users

That was true a decade ago, but file compatibility issues are rare these days. All common file formats can be read by Macs: Microsoft Office documents, spreadsheets, presentations, PDFs, images, text files, MP3s, videos, ZIP files, and more.

## My IT people say it can't be done

There are a few reasons this occurs. The idea of switching to Apple is a threat to their job security. Next, the overwhelming majority cannot adequately support Apple the

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same way they can with Windows. Because they spend most of their time supporting Windows, they lack the training and experience to support Apple. Lastly, with their limited exposure to Macs, they often hold many of the outdated beliefs listed here.

## Lack of software

Simply put, this is no longer the case. Thanks to advancements in the cloud, save for a few rare exceptions, the majority of software a law firm needs is accessible in the cloud as Software as a Service (SaaS). Law firms using Macs have exponentially more options available to them than they did only five years ago. I'll expand on this in the next section.

So why go Mac? Because Macs work. IBM says 5 percent of Mac users call help desks compared to 40 percent of PC users. I'll never forget the time my Compaq laptop died in the middle of class when I was attending the University of California Santa Barbara. At that time, many of my peers were using Macs, so I got one. When I first connected my laptop to my printer via USB, I plugged it in...and that was it. Compared to the complexity of setting up the same printer with my previous PC, I was shocked.

## Why is it easier than ever?

If there was one major shift that transformed Macs from something only die-hard, Apple-fan-attorneys used into something available to mainstream attorneys, it would be the cloud. Thanks to this giant technological leap, the majority of software titles previously only accessible on Windows have now moved to the cloud. This means software companies (for the most part) really don't care if you're using Windows or macOS.

Another contributing factor is Microsoft and its commitment to platform parity, meaning that users on all operating systems will have the same experience. Thanks to Microsoft shifting resources to its Apple development team, I can confidently say that the current suite of Microsoft Office apps for the Mac is the best ever. A decade ago, the Office apps had significant quality and cross-platform compatibility issues. Today, the Mac applications are rock solid and continue to improve with every new release.

Microsoft Office (Word, Outlook, PowerPoint and Excel) is a must for attorneys. But what about everything else? Here are my software suggestions for attorneys:

Email/contacts/calendars	Office 365 or G-Suite
File storage	Box, ShareFile, Dropbox for Business, DocMoto
Practice management software	Rocket Matter, Clio, Practice Panther
PDF editor	Adobe Acrobat (via Adobe DC), PDFpen PRO
Time and billing	TimeSolv, Bill4Time, Time59
Accounting	Quickbooks Online, Xero

This is by no means comprehensive, and it does not get into specific needs for certain types of law. Some of the options listed above are Mac-native apps, while many others are cloud-based. Cloud-based offerings run the gamut of litigation support, document review, trial presentation, and more. For a comprehensive list of options available to law firms using Apple computers, read *Macs-in-Law: The Definitive Guide for the Mac-Curious, Windows-Using Attorney* (2018), published by the ABA Law Practice Division.

## What are you *not* telling me?

I want to be honest: it's rare when a change is all rainbows and unicorns. If you jump into making the switch from PC to Mac without planning, you'll likely experience moments of discomfort. I encourage you to plan ahead.

You should also be aware of legacy Windows-based applications that have not made the move to the cloud. Catalog the applications you currently use and determine whether a cloud-based or Mac-native alternative exists. If not, virtualizing Windows on your Mac is fairly straightforward.

There are multiple ways to go about this, and I recommend finding an experienced consultant to assist with the process.

## Conclusion

However you arrived at your Mac-curiousness, you haven't taken the leap of faith to switch from Windows. You might be hesitant because you use your computer daily and can't afford to be without it. Other lawyers may have convinced you that you're crazy for thinking of switching to a Mac—why make more trouble for yourself? Or you may lack the confidence to know exactly what you need to do to make the switch.

I hope this article reignites your desire. Some complexities always accompany change. That said, I'm confident that making the switch will be worthwhile. Imagine yourself cocooned in an all-Apple environment. You leave your home Mac for a beautiful iMac in your office, and go to court with your iPhone and iPad. You deal with far fewer IT issues, you get to experience the reliability and quality you've enjoyed at home, and you no longer need to endure the pain of the "blue screen of death" or Patch Tuesdays. ■



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## ENDNOTES

1. ABA, *National Lawyer Population Survey: Lawyer Population by State* (2017) <[https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market\\_research/National%20Lawyer%20Population%20by%20State%202017.authcheckdam.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market_research/National%20Lawyer%20Population%20by%20State%202017.authcheckdam.pdf)> [accessed April 13, 2018].
2. Lingos, *ABA TECHREPORT 2016: Solo and Small Firm*, ABA (2016) <[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/law\\_practice/publications/techreport/2016/solo\\_small\\_firm.html](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/law_practice/publications/techreport/2016/solo_small_firm.html)> [scroll to "Hardware," then "Operating Systems and Servers"] [accessed April 13, 2018].