

Essential Apps to Increase Efficiency in Your Law Practice

By Heidi S. Alexander

From budgeting to finding a parking spot in the city, the right apps can make you a more efficient lawyer and a more focused human.

Reliance on our smartphones is now the norm. Seventy percent of lawyers report using a smartphone to do legal work while at the office. Some attorneys have gone so far as to abandon all other devices and rely solely on a smartphone or tablet to practice law. However often you choose, you can use your smartphone for a number of practice-related tasks.

But you're facing option overload when choosing applications for your smartphone. Currently, there are approximately 2.5 million apps available for Android and Apple users.

The following list will help you focus on applications that will boost your productivity while you're mobile—many of them while you're stationary, too!

Microsoft Office and G-Suite (Free, with premium/business-level services options)

Microsoft and Google make their office applications for both Android and iOS users. If you use dictation, drafting on a mobile device works quite well.

Law Practice Solutions is a regular feature brought to you by the Practice Management Resource Center (PMRC) of the State Bar of Michigan, featuring articles on practice management for lawyers and their staff. For more resources offered by the PMRC, visit our website at <http://www.michbar.org/pmrc/content> or call our Helpline at (800) 341-9715 to speak with JoAnn Hathaway or Diane Ebersole, Practice Management Advisors.

Dropbox (Free, with premium/business-level services options)

Do you store documents in the cloud? With Dropbox on your mobile device, you can access them wherever you are.

Evernote (Free, with premium/business-level services options)

Known as a note-taking application, Evernote is essentially a tool for remembering everything. Using the mobile app, you can quickly save notes and images, access existing notes, save web pages for future reference, and scan and save business cards. Evernote syncs to the cloud, so all your information is available whenever and wherever you need it.

Scannable (Free)

This simple app for iOS allows you to scan business cards, receipts, and documents, and automatically crops and adjusts lighting. You can also use it to scan multi-page documents to create a single PDF. You can save scans directly to your phone or upload to cloud-storage services. Scannable does not apply OCR unless it is uploaded to Evernote.

ABBYY FineScanner (Free, with premium/business-level services options)

This app, available for Android and iOS, is similar to Scannable, but applies OCR to most documents. It can also split facing pages into two separate images, removing defects and straightening curved text lines.

TrialPad (\$129.99 one-time fee)

This iPad-only app made by Lit Software is one of the most popular apps for trial

attorneys. You can organize, annotate, and present evidence using your iPad in court. Lit Software also makes DocReviewPad and TranscriptPad for the iPad.

Get Human (Free)

Have you ever spent hours trying to get through to customer service? Sometimes it can be nearly impossible to get a real person on the phone to help. This app provides information and instructions for accessing customer service for many companies.

Spot Hero (Free)

If you drive and park in a major city, you need to try this app. Spot Hero locates nearby parking spots and allows you to compare prices and reserve a spot online. The app often provides a discount when you book and pay online. Available in 40 U.S. cities.

MileIQ (Free, with premium options)

Do you hate the tediousness of recording mileage for business purposes? This app automatically captures every mile with its drive-detection feature. As soon as you start moving, MileIQ prompts you to classify your trip as business or personal with a simple swipe. The app also provides reports and integrates with accounting programs.

Hours Time Tracking (Free, with premium options)

Need a way to track your time on the go? This simple app can help. You can create multiple timers for different tasks and projects. Hours Time Tracking will export data to a PDF or CSV, or create a link to a web report.

Pennies (Free)

You didn't go to law school to do math—at least that's what you thought. Budgeting is an essential part of running a business. Pennies is an iOS app for people who don't like budgeting. You can add expenses, create budgets, set daily targets, and receive valuable insight based on your purchasing history.

1Password (Starting at \$2.99 per month)

If you use strong and unique passwords to reduce the risk of unauthorized access to your data, you'll need a way to keep track of them. This password management app, an encrypted, cloud-based data repository, requires one master password to access all your passwords. You can also store other important information in this secure vault, including Social Security numbers, software licenses, membership data, notes, and more. Although available for both Android and iOS, this app is most popular among Apple users.

LastPass (Free, with premium options)

LastPass is another password manager with features comparable to 1Password.

Signal (Free)

Do you worry about unauthorized access to your audio, video, or text chats? Signal, an open source app, is touted as one of the best apps for encrypted audio, video, and text communication. Signal is not a business; it operates on grants and donations, and therefore contains no advertisements.

Buffer (Free, with premium options)

Managing multiple social media accounts for marketing purposes can be time consuming. Spend less time by using Buffer, which connects multiple social media accounts (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, and Pinterest) to schedule information you wish to share.

Calm (Free, with premium options)

Lawyers are notoriously terrible at taking breaks, but if you don't take them, you'll burn out. Maintain your energy by taking a break to breathe or meditate with this app.

Calm provides guided and unguided daily meditations, breathing exercises, and even sleep stories to help you fall asleep at night. Use the app's timer to remind you to take a break.

Headspace (Free, with premium options)

Do you keep hearing about the benefits of meditation but don't know where to start? This beginner's meditation app starts with 10-minute sessions and fun animations to keep you motivated. The app tracks your sessions and provides other helpful statistics.

This list is based on a presentation I gave at ABA TECHSHOW. Download my 70-page TECHSHOW resource paper at <https://tinyurl.com/y9qw4uxz> for even more essential apps to help increase efficiency in your law practice. ■

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