

15 Tips Annotated

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[These tips are part of the 60 Hot LegalTech Tips presentation]

Securing Your Internet Connection

[<http://www.ibm.com/e-business/soready/p1>]

There are probably an equal number of myths and threats about how secure your computers are when you connect to the Internet, whether through a dial-up connection or through broadband, “always on” service. IBM is offering a free book called “Inside Internet Security: What Hackers Don’t Want You to Know” that discusses many of the terms of art of the Internet security world. It is not about IBM products, however. Instead, you get a good dose of introductory security information and suggestions about how to avoid the worst problems. You could buy the book for \$30 at an online book store but IBM is giving it away for free (plus some personal information) until November 30, 2001.

Finding the Needle in the Technology Haystack

[<http://www.lawyerware.com>]

There are any number of software solutions for whatever problem you have. Often the problem is not that of identifying the need but rather it is to identify the appropriate product that will solve that need. Many programs are branded as being “for lawyers” but attorneys can find solutions in general business software as well. One site that has provided something of an index for software vendors focused on the lawyer market is Lawyerware.com. These include the more focused legal technology vendors as well as those whose product has application for lawyers but was not necessarily developed with them in mind. The site allows you to browse by software category as well as search based on keywords. There are some drawbacks in finding software in the index but it tends to make up for that in its comprehensiveness.

What Does That Mean?

[<http://www.itpapers.com>]

Lawyers often call the ABA’s Legal Technology Resource Center to learn more about a new technology before even getting to the point of whether to buy it or not. While you can use sites like Whatis.com (<http://www.whatis.com>) to get basic definitions or introductory blurbs on technology, often you need something more in-depth. ITPapers.com has gathered together links to a great deal of

online (mostly free) content on technology issues. Of particular interest is the legal-specific technology area, which pulls together “whitepapers” and other articles by well-known legal technology consultants. Can you get this information elsewhere on the Internet without registering at a site? Sure you can; but ITPapers.com’s index pulls many threads into one place for easier access.

Controlling the Information Flow

[<http://www.mailshell.com>]

A critical element of e-commerce is the e-mail address. We have them for work, at home, we use them for subscribing to online services and for purchasing products. Each day seems to bring more e-mail. Controlling that flow can allow you to not only block unsolicited e-mail but it can also help you keep a handle on everything else: e-mail list requests, financial and other e-mailed statements, and news. Mailshell.com offers an interesting, free solution in its e-mail alias service. An e-mail alias looks like an e-mail address, but when a message is sent to the alias, it is immediately forwarded to your real e-mail address.

You register (!) with Mailshell.com for an account and are designated a third level domain - dwhelan.mailshell.com for example. You then create new aliases, all appended with that domain: dw_lists@dwhelan.mailshell.com, dw_financial@dwhelan.mailshell.com, etc. When you register for a service or e-mail list, you use the alias rather than your real address. Multiple aliases allow you to filter your e-mail as it arrives and allows you to turn off an alias that is being abused without having to change your e-mail account or access to other services.

You’ve Got the Whole Web in Your Hand

[<http://www.eudora.com>]

Personal digital assistants (PDAs) have rocketed along in their mission to support new software. One weak area has been in its Web tools. You can now find a number of e-mail applications for Palm devices but online (as opposed to offline) Web browsers have been scarcer. Enter Eudora, that perpetual Internet e-mail program! Qualcomm has created an Internet Suite based around Eudora, providing a Web browser and e-mail client for the Palm OS. Both applications synchronize with your computer and will download your Netscape Navigator bookmarks or your Internet Explorer favorites as well as your e-mail. It contains many of the features of a desktop Web browser: proxy and firewall settings, categorized favorites. It lacks support for some of the more complex features on Web sites but as a tool to get where you want to go, this free Suite is a terrific solution.

News on the Go!

[<http://www.avantgo.com>]

Many PDA users focus on the calendar and contact management aspects of their handheld computer. Getting news pushed to your Palm may be the next great thing if you want information on the go. Avantgo.com is a free news service, where information publishers create a "channel" and Avantgo.com passes the information on to you. You create an account and select your own channels, how much information to download, and how often to update the channel. There are hundreds of English channels, including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and a variety of other resources including many international channels. Legal information is less common although the ABA Journal's Mobile Edition is now available.

When you synchronize your Palm OS device, Avantgo.com will update your channel content. Can you cancel your WSJ subscription? Perhaps, although you will find that each source is different in how much information it provides and no one provides nearly the same amount of content as they do in print. A tip for Chicago Tribune readers: the Trib has not created an official Avantgo.com channel but has created a daily update on its Web site. Create an Avantgo.com profile and then create a custom channel pointing to this Web site:

<http://www.chicagotribune/wireless/avantgo/>

and configure the channel to synchronize daily. Wireless access is not necessary.

You can use the custom channel feature to download any Web page to your PDA but be prepared that some pages do not translate well! One service that works very well with Avantgo.com is Mapquest.com (<http://www.mapquest.com>), where you can have your driving directions saved and downloaded to your PDA.

Tame Your Fax

Are you still walking to your fax machine to send and receive faxes? While the exercise may be good for you, think of the amount of time you and your staff spend around that fax machine waiting: to send, to receive, and to fix errors. Connect your fax machine to your network and make your network do the waiting for you. The fax machine's software on your computer can allow you to send your fax as easy as sending it to a printer. You can check the status of the fax machine before sending, and then check the log to ensure it was sent. No more paper copies just to send a fax.

Your fax machine is not a new networkable fax? No problem. Most vendors sell what is called a print or fax server that connects from the network to your fax machine. Visit your vendor's Web site and search for a "print server" or "fax server". You can often bring your fax machine online for less than \$500. If you are buying a new fax machine, or one of the multifunction printer/scanner/copier/fax machines, try purchasing a network-ready machine.

If you want to receive faxes to your computer as well, there are fewer options. Products like RightFaxNT (<http://www.rightfax.com>) are powerful but expensive. A free service for smaller firms and solo lawyers is Efax.com (<http://www.efax.com>). You are assigned a phone number and when a fax is sent to that number, Efax.com packages it up and forwards it to you in an e-mail. If you print the attached fax out, it looks as if it came directly from a fax machine.

Know What Bill Knows

[<http://www.microsoft.com/support/>]

[<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/>]

No matter what your personal feeling about Microsoft are, they have become an integral part of most law firms, whether just at the operating system or for all primary office software. While they conquer the world, Microsoft is providing a bit of pro bono support for its users. Two very powerful resources can be found on the Microsoft Web site with support for all of its products.

The Knowledgebase is a keyword searchable database of articles about Microsoft products, providing tips on how to fix software conflicts, find patches and upgrades, and generally background “how tos” on the applications you are using. Technet began as a service to information technology staff, with a CD being sent to each certified technician. This information is now available on the Web and, supplementing the Knowledgebase, provides more in-depth discussions of Microsoft technology. Areas cover deployment strategies for Microsoft operating systems, security issues on Microsoft servers, and many of the topics that would come up when planning for technology. Using Technet prior to purchasing Microsoft software can help you understand whether your purchase is going to fix your problem. Once you have purchased Microsoft software, it is a great place to return to learn more about your new application.

Put Your Documents at Your Fingertips

Lawyers are document people, even if you have broken the paper trail! Somewhere, you have documents, whether in digital or physical file cabinets. How easily can you get to those documents, though? If you are like most lawyers, you have an organizational system that you can riffle through to find what you need. Document management systems can make that process easier by doing the looking for you. Even if you do not buy a document management system, like Worldox (<http://www.worldox.com>) or Netdocuments (<http://www.netdocuments.com>), you can use software already on your computer. For Windows 98 and later, the Find Fast icon on your Control Panel allows you to configure folders on your desktop and network computers to be indexed. When you next search for a file, that index is ready and waiting.

Who's Knocking On the Door?

[<http://66.129.1.101/top20.htm>]

We often hear of the security threats of hackers and the dangers of “always on” Internet access. The stories tend to be vague and unhelpful if you are considering a broadband connection except to raise the fear level. The FBI and SANS Institute have collaborated on a Top 20 list of Internet security vulnerabilities, based on the Internet connection and type of servers (Windows or Unix) that you are using. Each vulnerability is described and then suggestions on how to fix it, including tools to test the fix, are often included. Some vulnerabilities are as simple as turning off all of the Internet services you are not using. By default, many systems come with everything turned on: file transfers, remote administration access, Web access, etc. It is felt by many vendors to be easier than having the user turn them on individually. Reviewing what Internet services you have active, and turning off those you do not use, can plug the number one vulnerability on the FBI / SANS list.

Untether Your Computer

[<http://www.lawtechnology.org/mobicomm.html>]

Wireless networking is a growing phenomenon, gaining momentum as businesses realize the benefits of internal and external mobility. The excitement is balanced by the fears raised about the very real security problems with wireless networking. Many of the fears can be calmed by using the security available for wireless products and by thinking about your wireless security in the same you did with wire.

Wireless products conforming to the 802.11b standard offer wired equivalent privacy (WEP) that uses 40-bit encryption. WEP means that, when turned on, it offers the same encryption level as if it was a wired connection. Many wireless products offer 128 bit WEP. If you purchase wireless, purchase the highest level of encryption you can afford and then make sure you turn it on when you install your network. In addition, your wireless network can be configured to only allow certain network cards to access it. Each network card has a MAC address that is unique; by using the MAC address security in your network, you can block unauthorized network cards.

More News of the World

Gone are the days when, each morning, I diligently would surf to my favorite sites to get information. Now the operative word is “push” and believe me, there are great services out there to push the e-mail into your Inbox without any effort. Law.com's Legal Newswire (<http://www.law.com/newswire>) is a daily e-mail that includes links to American Lawyer Media online content. While the legal news is good, I rely on the links out to the Automated Lawyer portion of the Law.com site for technology news. A recent addition is Mondaq (<http://www.mondaq.com>),

which is a database of articles written by US and foreign lawyers on recent developments in a wide variety of substantive areas. You can customize the e-mail you receive from Mondaq by the substantive areas in which you are interested. Newsbytes (<http://www.newsbytes.com>) is another favorite, also customizable by the substantive focus but includes news with a law and technology focus. Sometimes you learn about the legal profession and technology by reading information that was not intended for lawyers or techies. Bizjournals (<http://www.bizjournals.com>) is a Microsoft powered site that brings together a number of periodicals (all called Business Journal or Business Review) focused on local business. Services like this one allow you to get a regular update on news affecting your client, a particular industry or technology, or any other topic and have it localized. The weekly e-mail sent by Bizjournals can be restricted to certain geographic locations to make the information more useful. Finally, there are the venerable tools from LexisNexis (Eclipse) and West (Westclip) that use a search query you build to determine whether there is new content to send you. When a new match is found, it is forwarded to the e-mail address (or addresses) you configured.

How Many Buttons Will Fit On a Screen?

Move your mouse arrow over the toolbar in your word processor, click the right mouse button, and you may be startled at the number of toolbars you have available to you. When you add new applications to your computer, they sometimes add their own toolbars as well. You can end up shrinking the amount of space you have on a screen to a postage stamp, with menus on all sides.

You can customize your menus to remove those buttons you do not use or those that are for functions that are easier to perform from the keyboard. For example, it is easier for me to **bold** text from the keyboard (ctrl-b) than to switch from keyboard to mouse each time I need bold text. I am sure you can think of others that you use. Move your mouse arrow back over that toolbar, right-click again, and select the Customize option to reconfigure your toolbar. You'll find that every function on any menu is available, allowing you to move your most common functions to a button on your toolbar.

Soup Up Your Surfing

[<http://www.lawtechnology.org/fyidocs/cooltools.html>]

You receive your news via your PDA or via e-mail, you use your bookmarks or favorites to visit your most useful Web sites. Can you possibly make your Web browser more powerful, keeping your favorite tools close to hand? The answer is probably yes! More and more search engines and databases are offering customized toolbars for your Web browser, allowing you to type a search query without going to the search engine's home page. When the search results come up, they are on the search engine's home page. Some tools, like the Google Toolbar, provide extra features when you retrieve the search result, including

being able to highlight all search terms on the page retrieved. Also, when you highlight text on a page, you can right-click on it and tell Google to run a search on the highlighted text.

Back to the Future

[<http://www.futurelawoffice.com>]

The Associates, a research company, surveyed lawyers at the ABA annual meeting and at other locations to get a sense of where the profession was going, including what kind of offices they would be using and the types of resources and technology they would be using. You can download a free white paper that outlines the highlights of this survey, including some information you might guess and some at which you might be surprised.