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— Opinion

A COVID-19 tip: Love the tech you're with - for now

Is your law firm getting the most of out of your existing technology, or looking at shiny new toys?

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Contributor



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One of the key decisions law firms need to make during the [COVID-19 crisis](#) concerns investment in new legal technology and innovation.

While some firms are keeping their R&D spend intact, anecdotal evidence suggests the majority are going into some form of hibernation.

Regardless of whether your firm decided to stop, reduce or continue, there is a strong business case for getting more out of what you already have.





Targeted training: Law firms may not be getting the most out of Microsoft Word **Karl Hilzinger**

It's not quite as exciting as playing with shiny new tech toys, but sometimes – as in the words of that great Stephen Stills' song – it's better to “love the one you're with”.

To make more of your existing technology it's important to ask three questions.

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Can our partners and lawyers use it well? Taking Microsoft Word as an example, my guess is that your firm currently uses it semi-well.

Most partners and lawyers use basic features like track changes, automated numbering, cross-referencing, indexing and sections.

However, I suspect only a handful would be good at using styles, templates, programmed auto-corrects, tailored designs and macros.

There is much to gain in terms of lawyers' and clients' time and money from investing in targeted Word training. Not having everyone at a base level proficiency in the basic tool of the trade is going to bite hard especially if you are looking to reduce secretarial support ratios or to have a more flexible work-from-home operating model.

Can we make it work better for us? The COVID-19 crisis is also a good time to experiment with add-ins, plug-ins and tools that add power and functionality to your existing applications.

It is much easier to extend an existing technology with a familiar user interface

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David Bushby, a lawtech expert from InCounsel, has kindly curated this list:

Donna (www.donna.legal) - a contract drafting Word plug-in.

Woodpecker (www.woodpeckerweb.com) – a tool to automate template documents

Wordrake (www.wordrake.com) – a plug-in for writing clarity and expression

Simul (www.simuldocs.com) - a document collaboration tool

AuthorDOCS (www.mccarthyfinch.com/products/author-docs) – a contract drafting tool

Trydefine (www.trydefine.com) – a Word add-in to simplify drafting

DocAssist (www.mosmar.com.au/software/docassist) – an document automation application

Contract Companion (www.litera.com) – a proofreading tool

RemarkableX (www.radiantlaw.com) – a Word add-in to speed up key legal processes

Pagemap (www.pagemap.com) – a terms, definitions and cross-referencing tool.

Are we becoming too dependent on it or its vendor? During COVID-19 crisis, there has been a rapid uptake of Microsoft's video-conferencing tool, Teams.

It appears that the latter has become the favoured video application of many large law firms and the Federal Court.

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authorship.

Combining this valuable data with its established software suite and voila! – they will control or strongly influence the entire legal supply chain.

In this scenario, it would be tough for individual firms to counteract Microsoft's power.

However, new collaborative application platforms owned by law firms, like Reynen Court in the USA, may point to a future with more options.

In this future, there may be opportunities to follow the advice of Wet Wet Wet rather than Stephen Stills – and make sure your “love is all around”.

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