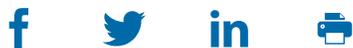


## FEATURE

# Legal Apps for the Lawyer on the Go

By Seth G. Rowland and Samuel Rowland

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It has been nearly three decades since I got my law degree, and over two decades since I became a legal technology consultant. My primary focus has been on PC-based productivity tools for lawyers—and therein lies my bias. To counter this bias, I sent out my college-age son, Samuel, an avid cell phone user, to find what productivity tools exist on the Android and Apple iOS platforms. The result is a discussion between Sam and me over the merits of software applications, or “apps,” that can be run on cell phones and tablets. We have grouped the apps by area of usage, such as e-mail management, document management, practice management, legal research, document markup, and other utilities.

| lawyers enjoy apps on their phones

## **E-mail Aggregators**

**Sam:** Virtual show of hands: who else has trouble remembering to check every single one of their multiple e-mail accounts every day of the week? Honestly, anything that puts your e-mails all in one place can be a lifesaver. Your cell phone's native e-mail application will keep you from missing any e-mails as long as you create the right spam filters and check it regularly. The only major issue I've encountered is the amount of effort it can take to set it up. No matter the OS, it's always a

hassle to add new accounts. However, I have questions about potential security risks from giving third-party aggregators access to all your e-mail log-ins.

**Seth:** It is true that most lawyers have multiple e-mail accounts: a business e-mail, a family e-mail, and sometimes an old AOL account that you set up back in the Jurassic Age (that all your friends know and use). There are e-mail aggregators such as Inbox by Gmail and Microsoft Outlook (both available on the iOS App Store, [apple.com/ios/app-store](https://apple.com/ios/app-store)). But my recommendation is to stick with your cell phone's native e-mail application and learn how to set up multiple e-mail accounts. Both Android and iOS have an option to view "All Inboxes." This option unites all your e-mails into one mailbox. However, be careful when replying to ensure the reply comes from the correct mailbox.

## Voice Recorders and Transcribers

**Sam:** The biggest advantage here is making personal memos on really short notice. Sometimes you don't have enough time or hands to even type notes into your device, but all you need is one finger to open up the included Voice Recorder app on your Android device or the Voice Memos app on your iPhone and start recording voice memos. There are other apps that can translate speech directly to text or reminders, but not all of them are free, and none of them come bundled with the phone or tablet. Other uses include recording memos to file to be sent out and typed up by your office staff or recording conversations with your clients.

But I wonder: How can you can securely transfer these recordings to other platforms? Can you use these recordings for text-to-speech functions?

**Seth:** Transferring notes to other platforms or converting them to text is a big headache. For that reason, I tend to type everything. I like to "read" what I say before I send. However, I have recently discovered the "voice text" of texting, with a little help from Siri. With voice memos, you can record more detail in less time. My caveat is you need to "title" your voice notes so that you can efficiently recall them later or send them out for transcription. There are online transcription services such as [Scribie.com](https://Scribie.com), TranscribeMe! ([transcribeme.com](https://transcribeme.com)), and Trint ([trint.com](https://trint.com)) that will convert long memos and recordings to text for a nominal fee. Another app to consider is Notability ([gingerlabs.com](https://gingerlabs.com)). This app lets you take notes on your iPad and record lectures and meetings simultaneously.

## Document Management

**Sam:** I rarely carry my computer with me. If I need a document I wrote, I want to be able to find it on my phone and review it. Sometimes I need to make last-minute edits before I hand in my

homework. I can always find a spare computer terminal on campus, so my documents need to be accessible wherever I am. I use Google Drive ([google.com/drive](https://www.google.com/drive)) more for collaborative efforts where multiple people edit and comment on the same file.

**Seth:** Lawyers are much more mobile than they were when I started practicing law in the Jurassic Age. We do need access to our documents on our phones and tablets; and there are times when I will use a hotel business center to deal with a client emergency. What services have you used beside Google Drive?

**Sam:** Dropbox ([dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com)) might not be the best cloud storage system, but it has a big advantage in being free. More seriously, it's a powerful service even with a free account. For those unfamiliar with the program, Dropbox allows you to save files onto your computer, which are then synchronized to the cloud. You can access these documents from any Internet-connected computer or via the Dropbox app on your phone. For a paid subscription, you get enhanced features such as much more storage and document versioning. But I understand there may be security issues. Exactly how bad is the security problem?

**Seth:** Lawyers are bound by the rules of professional responsibility to keep client matters confidential. Services such as Google Drive and Dropbox have a mixed reputation on matters of confidentiality. Google Drive's privacy policy states: "Our automated systems analyze your content (including e-mails) to provide you personally relevant product features, such as customized search results, tailored advertising, and spam and malware detection." Dropbox's privacy policy states: "We may disclose your information to third parties if we determine that such disclosure is reasonably necessary to (a) comply with the law; (b) protect any person from death or serious bodily injury; (c) prevent fraud or abuse of Dropbox or our users; or (d) protect Dropbox's property rights." Documents stored in a cloud service should be "encrypted" at rest, and only you, the law firm, should hold the key to decrypt them. Have you looked into NetDocuments ([netdocuments.com](https://www.netdocuments.com))?

**Sam:** At your request, I have attended training classes on the platform. As I understand it, this is an enterprise-level cloud-based document management system designed for attorneys. Honestly, within this discussion's constraints on time and space, I don't think I can give an adequate explanation of all this program does. It is relatively simple to navigate on the user end, using a non-folder-based organizational system involving matters, work spaces, and what the system calls "cabinets." The system is accessible via a secure log-in from any device. All documents are encrypted at rest, communications are secure, and the law firm holds the key.

# Cloud-Based Practice Management

**Sam:** I know you use Time Matters in the office for practice management and billing, but I wanted to see what was out in the cloud that I could set up quickly and that required no local server installation. In my search, I came across a number of programs that I could run from my Galaxy Note phone: Actionstep ([actionstep.com](http://actionstep.com)), Centerbase ([centerbase.com](http://centerbase.com)), Clio ([clio.com](http://clio.com)), CosmoLex ([cosmolex.com](http://cosmolex.com)), Kurent ([kurent.com](http://kurent.com)), MyCase ([mycase.com](http://mycase.com)), PracticePanther ([practicepanther.com](http://practicepanther.com)), Rocket Matter ([rocketmatter.com](http://rocketmatter.com)), and Zola Suite ([zolasuite.com](http://zolasuite.com)). There were too many to review closely, but I did notice that most just focused on time and billing for solo attorneys and small law firms and had few customization options.

**Seth:** Your observation is true. In an effort to make the software widely accepted, these vendors have focused on the features they believe a majority of lawyers would want in a practice management system. As a result, you need to review each product carefully and decide if its interface works for you.

There are two product outliers: Actionstep and Centerbase. Both are quite strong on the core practice management features of time and billing, with a usable interface. Both have customizable iPhone and Android apps that are fully functional. What distinguishes these two products from the crowd is support for unlimited practice-area-specific fields on intake forms, and support for unlimited customizable form objects. These allow you to turn a “billing system” into an information management system. In addition, both have extensive work flow automation features and document automation features to allow a firm to guide its staff efficiently through the daily work.

## Legal Research

**Sam:** I have heard about Lexis and Westlaw, but I wanted to see if there were other alternatives that did not have such heavy subscription fees. I found Fastcase ([fastcase.com](http://fastcase.com)). Although I grew up with Google as my online resource, even I still trust hitting the books. I assure you that this app is just a digitized form of the same legal library you would find in real space. You can search by statute collection or by keyword and citation with cases relevant to the laws of all 50 states and the federal courts. The app in the Android and Apple stores indicates that the service is free, but it is only free to members of certain bar associations that have partnered with Fastcase (see [fastcase.com/bar-associations](http://fastcase.com/bar-associations)). For everyone else, accounts range from \$65 to \$95 per month.

**Seth:** That is a great find, particularly the “free” part. For your information, Lexis has a solo and small law firm offering called Lexis Advance ([lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/lexis-advance.page](https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/lexis-advance.page)), and Westlaw has a package for this market as well ([legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.com/law-products/westlaw-legal-research/small-law-firms](https://legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.com/law-products/westlaw-legal-research/small-law-firms)).

## Electronic Signatures and Notaries

**Sam:** I found an app called NotaryCam ([notarycam.com](https://notarycam.com)) that might be useful for lawyers. This app might just be part of the electronic, cloud-based wave of the future. The free app connects you to a notary anywhere you have a data connection. The process is simple. You upload your document to the app and request an e-notary or call one you already trust. Once he or she accepts the request, you'll be moved to a face-to-face webcam session with your notary, who will confirm your ID. From there, you e-sign, the notary e-notarizes, and it's all done with little fuss, at a standard rate of \$25 per signature in the United States, \$79 for international transactions.

**Seth:** Lawyers spend a lot of time coordinating closings where everyone gets together and signs documents before a notary. But what happens if some of the parties can't travel to the U.S. or can't travel to the lawyer's office? The NotaryCam app could be quite useful and cost-effective. I would point out DocuSign ([docusign.com](https://docusign.com)) does offer “Transaction Rooms” that include provision for a notary certificate, but this service requires special configuration. If a notary is not required, you might also consider RightSignature ([rightsignature.com](https://rightsignature.com)).

## PDF Markup

**Seth:** Did you find anything for marking up PDF files? Lawyers often receive documents via e-mail and need to mark changes or highlight particular language for further review. Although it is great to print the document and apply a red pen, there has to be a better way.

**Sam:** I saw an app called GoodReader ([goodreader.com](https://goodreader.com)) on the top of multiple lists, but I'm not entirely sure what all the excitement is about. It's a PDF and .txt viewer for iOS. It can sync with Dropbox, but Dropbox has its own mobile viewer app. It does have markup and signing capabilities, so you can comment and make e-signatures, so that might be redeeming—that is, if it weren't for the fact that it costs \$5 for those features alone, while other services and apps include commenting and e-signing bundled with many other features for a monthly fee.

**Seth:** Actually, the markup feature can be quite valuable; and \$5 is worth it to avoid the “nags” to buy the premium version. While iOS and Android claim to have markup tools, these are more for marking up pictures to post on Instagram or Facebook than real productivity tools. I would add

that attorneys might want to look into Evernote ([evernote.com](http://evernote.com)), which allows you both to annotate the documents and organize them. However, GoodReader seems to be better at handling multipage documents. If you don't have the PDF, but do have the paper, I use the Evernote Scannable app (iOS only; [evernote.com/products/scannable](http://evernote.com/products/scannable)), which captures paper with an iPhone camera and transforms it into a high-quality PDF, which can then be marked up and e-mailed.

## Remote Desktop Access

**Sam:** I found a product called LogMeIn ([logmein.com](http://logmein.com)). This is a pricey one, starting at \$349.99 per year for up to two computers, but it seems to be worth it. The app is connected to a remote computer access program, allowing you to access and control a designated computer from anywhere, including from an app on your phone. Forgot to send an important attachment on an e-mail? Left open important files on your desktop? Just log in from your phone at your local coffee shop, resend that e-mail, and close your files remotely.

**Seth:** LogMeIn now also owns GoToMyPC ([gotomypc.com](http://gotomypc.com)), which starts at \$20 per computer per month. My preference is for firms to use Microsoft Office 365 for access to e-mail and a secure product such as NetDocuments for documents. That said, if you left a key document on your desktop or in your My Documents folder, LogMeIn or GoToMyPC can be a lifesaver. However, navigating a full desktop from a phone screen (even a large screen like the Galaxy Note or the iPhone X) can be a challenge. The same technology can also be used to host meetings to collaborate on document review or negotiate agreements. We have used GoToMeeting ([gotomeeting.com](http://gotomeeting.com)). We also have used ConnectWise Control ([connectwise.com](http://connectwise.com)), join.me ([join.me](http://join.me)), Skype ([skype.com](http://skype.com)), and WebEx ([webex.com](http://webex.com)). All these meeting tools allow you to join (or host) a meeting from your phone or tablet.

## Online Case Valuation

**Sam:** I found an app called Picture It Settled ([pictureitsettled.com](http://pictureitsettled.com)). I'll admit that how this one works or even the finer details of what it does are a bit beyond my expertise, but what I do understand seems incredibly useful. The simplest way to explain it is that it's a negotiations prediction app, using data from a library of thousands of cases to predict the most likely response to whatever tactics you provide it with. I have always been a proponent of computers helping humans with our one of our greatest weaknesses: understanding Big Data. This app does just that, taking a lot of guesswork and hunches out of the process of negotiation.

**Seth:** This is certainly an interesting app. But I could not find any pricing information. Some online research suggested the app had not been updated in a few years. I would question entering confidential strategy information into a public website without knowing more about the vendor and its privacy policy.

## Online CLE Apps

**Sam:** I found an app called TalksOnLaw ([talksonlaw.com](http://talksonlaw.com)) that could be useful. It seems more like edutainment: a bit like TED, showcasing talks from and interviews with experts in their fields about a wide range of topics related to the law. The topics range from cutting-edge legal technology to alcoholism in lawyers and beyond. You can watch all the videos, ranging from 30-minute interviews to “briefs” that are less than ten minutes long for free online. You also can use the app to watch interviews for CLE credit. To get the credit, however, there is a fee. When watching for CLE or MCLE credit, videos are organized into classes, with a fee of \$399 for unlimited access to official credit for all videos, as well as an a-la-carte option of \$25 per class. Check to see if there is CLE credit for your jurisdiction. At the moment, it is iOS only.

**Seth:** It sounds like a good way to get CLE on your own time and have a little fun. Great find. I also found a few other online CLE sources: Lawline ([lawline.com](http://lawline.com)), LexVid ([lexvid.com](http://lexvid.com)), and TRTCLE (The Right Thing CLE; [trtcle.com](http://trtcle.com)).

## Date Calculators

**Sam:** There must be an app to quickly calculate the number of court days, calendar days, and weekdays between two dates, taking into account court holidays specific to a jurisdiction. It will probably save you a little time when you're trying to create a detailed schedule for how you'll handle a case.

**Seth:** There used to be an app called “Court Days Pro,” but it is no longer available. However, there are two services that store court calendar rules and allow you to update your calendar automatically with the respective court date. One is CalendarRules ([calendarrules.com](http://calendarrules.com)) and the other is LawToolBox ([lawtoolbox.com](http://lawtoolbox.com)).

## Trip Planning

**Sam:** It honestly does not take much to impress me, so an app that is basically a digital business trip organizer does. TripIt ([tripit.com](http://tripit.com)) is an app that screens your calendars and your e-mails to sort through all your e-mails related to your business trips, including confirmation messages, and

uses them to create an itinerary, keep track of flight info, and provide maps. I can't think of anything more convenient for the chaos of planning business trips.

**Seth:** With the demise of travel agents who would plan your entire itinerary, travel has become a logistical mess. Trip planning tools such as TripIt can be quite handy. Once you arrive at a destination, you will want to consult a few other apps. My favorites include Moovit ([moovit.com](https://www.moovit.com)) for best mass-transit route guides; Parking Panda ([parkingpanda.com](https://www.parkingpanda.com)) for discount urban parking reservations; Parking Spot ([parkingspot.com](https://www.parkingspot.com)) for airport parking; and TripAdvisor ([tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com)) for peer reviews of restaurants, hotels, and tourist sites (now including the ability to book from the site).

## All-Time Favorites

**Sam:** I live with my phone at my side. While I carry charge cables and portable batteries, there comes a time when the phone dies, and it is always at the wrong time. "Last Message" (available on Android, [play.google.com](https://play.google.com)) is my favorite app on the list. It solves one of the biggest problems of social and professional life in the digital age: losing power in the middle of a text. With this free app, you can set a battery life percent at which the app will send a predetermined message to your most-used contacts through a social media app called WhatsApp. This app will warn them that you are away from a charger and your phone is about to run out of battery power. And just like that, the biggest social mishap of our age, starter of so many needless fights, is solved.

**Seth:** For me, there are a number of collaboration tools that I could not live without. E-mail is too cluttered and asynchronous. Text messages are too private. Our consulting company has standardized on Microsoft Skype for Business, including Teams (part of Office 365, [office.com](https://www.office.com)), for instant text messaging, phone conferences, and online meetings. It is private, secure, and all activity is logged. For tech support discussions that are not as timely, we currently use Slack ([slack.com](https://www.slack.com)). We are currently exploring ThreadKM, which soon will be integrated as a NetDocuments offering ([netdocuments.com](https://www.netdocuments.com)). This product will allow collaboration and messaging organized around matter work spaces, including the ability to collaborate and mark documents in the secure NetDocuments repository.

## This Is Only the Beginning

We hope you have enjoyed this discussion between a Millennial and a Baby Boomer of apps for the legal market. You need to begin your own exploration. The apps market is ever changing, and the competition is brutal. If you read this article in a few months, you may find some of the app

vendors are no longer in business, and new vendors may have entered the market. By no means do we urge you to abandon your PC or laptop. Rather, we celebrate the ability, on occasion, to travel lightly, with only your phone.

## E-mail Aggregators

- Inbox by Gmail | [Android](#), [Apple](#)
- Microsoft Outlook | [Android](#), [Apple](#)

## Voice Recorders and Transcribers

- Notability ([gingerlabs.com](#))
- [Scribie.com](#)
- TranscribeMe! ([transcribeme.com](#))
- Trint ([trint.com](#))

## Document Management

- Dropbox ([dropbox.com](#))
- Google Drive ([google.com/drive](#))
- NetDocuments ([netdocuments.com](#))

## Cloud-Based Practice Management

- Actionstep ([actionstep.com](#))
- Centerbase ([centerbase.com](#))
- Clio ([clio.com](#))
- CosmoLex ([cosmolex.com](#))

- Kurent ([kurent.com](http://kurent.com))
- MyCase ([mycase.com](http://mycase.com))
- PracticePanther ([practicepanther.com](http://practicepanther.com))
- Rocket Matter ([rocketmatter.com](http://rocketmatter.com))
- Zola Suite ([zolasuite.com](http://zolasuite.com))

## Legal Research

- Fastcase ([fastcase.com](http://fastcase.com))
- Lexis Advance ([lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/lexis-advance.page](http://lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/lexis-advance.page))
- Westlaw ([legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.com/law-products/westlaw-legal-research/small-law-firms](http://legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.com/law-products/westlaw-legal-research/small-law-firms))

## Electronic Signatures and Notaries

- DocuSign ([docusign.com](http://docusign.com))
- NotaryCam ([notarycam.com](http://notarycam.com))
- RightSignature ([rightsignature.com](http://rightsignature.com))

## PDF Markup

- Evernote ([evernote.com](http://evernote.com))
- Evernote Scannable ([evernote.com/products/scannable](http://evernote.com/products/scannable))
- GoodReader ([goodreader.com](http://goodreader.com))

## Remote Desktop Access

- ConnectWise Control ([connectwise.com](http://connectwise.com))

- GoToMeeting ([gotomeeting.com](http://gotomeeting.com))
- GoToMyPC ([mgotomypc.com](http://mgotomypc.com))
- join.me ([join.me](http://join.me))
- LogMeIn ([logmein.com](http://logmein.com))
- Skype ([skype.com](http://skype.com))
- WebEx ([webex.com](http://webex.com))

## Online Case Valuation

- Picture It Settled ([pictureitsettled.com](http://pictureitsettled.com))

## Online CLE Apps

- Lawline ([lawline.com](http://lawline.com))
- LexVid ([lexvid.com](http://lexvid.com))
- TalksOnLaw ([talksonlaw.com](http://talksonlaw.com))
- TRTCLE ([trtcle.com](http://trtcle.com))

## Date Calculators

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- LawToolBox ([lawtoolbox.com](http://lawtoolbox.com))

## Trip Planning

- Moovit ([moovit.com](http://moovit.com))
- Parking Panda ([parkingpanda.com](http://parkingpanda.com))
- Parking Spot ([parkingspot.com](http://parkingspot.com))