

Technology Corner

By Joseph G. Hodges, Jr.

Highlights From ABA Techshow 2008

Every spring for several years now the Law Practice Management Section of the American Bar Association has held an ABA TechShow, usually in Chicago. This year the show was held on March 13–15, 2008 at the Hilton Chicago (a new venue). The show itself took place over two and one-half days (Thursday through Saturday morning) and the sessions were divided into seven different simultaneous tracks. Some of the more popular tracks were Paperless Office, Microsoft Office, Records Management, Litigation, Vendor Tracks, Solo and Small Firm, Internet, E-Discovery, Mobile Technology, the MAC Track, and Show Me How. New this year was a series of Roundtables on a variety of topics, including Moving to Microsoft Office 2007, Outlook Tips and Tricks, the Paperless Office and E-Discovery Issues.

Interspersed with all these education sessions were frequent breaks that gave everyone plenty of time to visit the greatly expanded vendor exhibit hall and talk with the various vendors. In addition, the Keynote address was given at noon on Thursday by Marc Rotenberg entitled “Who’s Watching You? A Conversation About Privacy on the Internet.” At the James I. Keane Memorial Award Luncheon on Friday the first annual award was given out. Two of the most popular sessions were 60 Tips in 60 Minutes that was held on Friday afternoon and 60 Sites in 60 Minutes that was the closing event on Saturday morning.

As for add-on features, new this year was the ABA TechShow After Dark event that was held on Thursday evening featuring the music of the Empty Can Band, light fare and two complementary drinks. There was also a raffle for door prizes for those who had visited the sponsoring vendors earlier in the day. Repeating an event from prior years,



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on Friday evening the LPM Section sponsored the Taste of ABA TechShow featuring dining with the speakers at several Chicago area restaurants on a Dutch-treat basis. Free WiFi cloud access was provided for all registrants by CDW, who was one of the vendors. In addition, every registrant who visited the LPM booth in the exhibit hall received a free 1GB USB drive complements of DELL and \$20 worth of Book Bucks that could be redeemed at the same booth.

Probably of most interest to the readers of this column is the fact that the entire proceedings of TechShow 2008 were put onto a CD that was handed out for free to all attendees.

It can also be purchased at this time for \$295 (\$245 for LPM Section members) simply by going to the ABATECHSHOW website at www.techshow.com. Audio recordings of individual sessions are also available for purchase here.

With this background information, let us examine the details of some of the sessions that are relevant to the practice of estates and trust law and financial planning.

The session on upgrading to Microsoft Office 2007 was quite helpful for those of us who are facing this decision. The presenters were positive in their remarks about the advantages of doing this upgrade, although they also covered several compatibility tricks so that lawyers can continue to work with clients who have already upgraded. Included in their materials was an article explaining what the key features of Office 2007 are, including the ability (as has been the case for years with WordPerfect) to publish documents to PDF (it is about time). Another handy and much needed feature is a Metadata Checker. Their lecture materials also explained the eight different licensing options for Office. They also offered a variety of helpful hints on things you can do to make the upgrade transition go smoother. Another article deals with the exchange of files with older versions of MS Office. This is where you can learn to deal with those new Word.docx files that people

with Word 2007 are sending you, as Word now has four new extensions, PowerPoint has ten and Excel has six (what fun!). They also list a number of help websites, blogs and resources.

The Paperless Office track covered several sessions. The opening one was entitled "Eliminating the Paper Chase: From Boxes to Bites." The topics covered included what is the paperless office and how do you get there, what to do with the electronic data, what to do with the paper, the importance of backup, scanning issues, and remote access. They made a good case for moving in this direction given how the amount of electronic input and output vs. paper is increasing at such a significant rate. The next session was entitled "PDF-ing for Lawyers." The materials covered such things as why lawyers are using PDF, the

available tools for creating PDF, and working with Adobe Acrobat PDFs received from a variety of sources. The third session was entitled "Document Management in the Digital Office" and contained a helpful list of what to look for in document management solutions and a list of systems to review. The last session was entitled "Technology for the Paperless Mobile Lawyer" and stressed the bottom line that the best solution is to have a duplicate of each document you need on your portable computer when you travel so that you do not have to rely on remote access and other somewhat unreliable technologies.

The Solo and Small Firm track also had several interesting sessions. The first one was entitled "Beating the Startup Blues: A Tech-Survival Guide for the New Small Office." Topics covered included computers, printers, faxes, PDAs, software, scanners, backup and communications. This presentation contained a great deal of helpful information. The next session was entitled "7 Technology Must-Haves for Superlative Client Service." These included practice management software, scanning documents, document management software, digital dictation, unified communications, intelligent

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assembly systems, mobility, and what you need to do to be safe. Still another session was entitled “Open Sesame: Is Online Backup Ali Baba or the 40 Thieves,” which compared the features of selected online backup providers and demonstrated that this technology is now very mature and workable in the right circumstances. Another helpful session was entitled “Drafting Bills Clients Love to Pay” the purpose of which is rather obvious but the lesson to be learned from this were invaluable.

For those of you who are loyal MAC users, the session entitled “How Lawyers Practice Law and Serve Clients with MACs....Really” is the one for you. Presented by two loyal MAC users, they started off by telling us all the reasons why we should switch to MAC (none of which was enough to convince yours truly, who is a loyal PC user), although I will concede that the newer MACs finally can run PC software (this has been a long time in coming). They then talked about the advantages of using a MAC at home, although some of the uses in this regard are not very related to the type of law we practice, such as digital movies and music. Also, differences in Office for MAC and the PC were pointed out that bear consideration. They then discussed the many uses of a MAC at the office. Here they covered several of the available legal software products that are designed specifically for the MAC.

One of the Show Me How sessions that was most interesting was the one entitled “Managing Your E-Mail—Is There a Better Way.” While admitting

there is no perfect solution, the presenters pointed out several things you can do to allow you to begin to get a handle on this problem. One of their top recommendations was to make the effective use of a practice management software program and not rely on Outlook alone to do the job. Another was to use a document management system to store your e-mails. If you must use Outlook, they offered up several suggestions for improving that way of doing things. They also include a long list of suggestions as to how to cope with e-mail generally, some of which are nothing new but still helpful, needed reminders.

I could go on, but that would spoil the fun of your obtaining a copy of the CD-ROM from the ABA and exploring on your own all the things that were presented at this year’s TechShow. Besides, if I covered all of the sessions I attended, this column would be way too long and would have to be edited down by the CCH Editors. However, should any of you have further questions about what I have said here, please feel free to contact me.

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- FYI: Going Green (for lawyers by ABA)
- www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/fyidocs/gogreen.html
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