Popular Threads on Solosez

Mac Users Only

What legal software programs do you prefer using on your Macs? Do you encounter any special problems you need to work around using Macs in a law office setting? Any other advice regarding the use of Macs in a law office would be most welcome. I'm opening my "formal" office next month and prefer to use a Mac system.

D.A. "Duke" Drouillard, Nebraska

iBiz and iBank are good, very inexpensive, and effective. Microsoft's Office suite works well. Entourage beats Mail any day - and lets you save a series of documents and e-mail as a project - case management for you with contact lists, etc.

I use iListen (voice recognition at a fraction of the price of Dragon) and makes dictation easy. I have a digital recorder that allows me to dictate while in my car.

I had a Dell about 5 years ago. Good machine, but the software cost me as much as the computer.
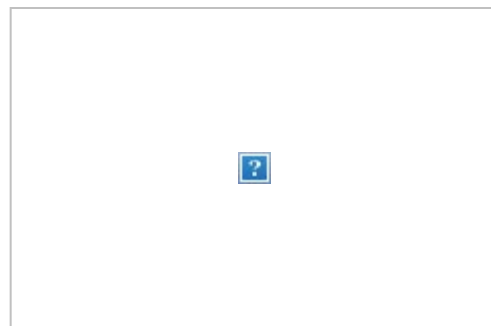
There was a great article in MacWorld about three months ago regarding VOIP applications and running your office phone through your Mac. I have no experience doing this, but can see the benefits.

Rich Hofmann, Noblesville, Indiana

It's $800, but Smartweal (www.smartweal.com)is a complete case management, timekeeping, billing, accounting, form letter solution that is cross-platform. Lots of choices for word processing, but Word seems to be the standard, and the files are cross platform. For scanning, Fujistu makes a Mac compatible compact scanner that scans both sides of a page into PDF and includes a copy of Acrobat (not just Reader), which can be used for OCR. If you have not yet purchased the Mac computer for the office, your timing is impeccable. You may wish to subscribe to the MacLaw chat list on Yahoo groups: about 1,000 Mac using lawyers sharing solutions.

Paul Hogan

 I have used a Mac since I went out on my own in the early 1990's.   My needs were simple. I used Word Perfect, Timeslips and a Palm. I have upgraded numerous times since then. I use Word sparingly and Pages (Apple's product) but will try Open Office. I am waiting for a new program, Clients Matter, to be ready so that I can replace Timeslips which stopped being supported for a Mac. I have a Treo 650 and use the Apple calendar, datebook, etc. I make charts instead of using spread sheets, which maybe I should learn, and the general other programs, like Adobe, etc.   I have very few problems and use the computer instead of

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reading about what to do when it crashes. My primary crashes now come from MS Word.   But, I suggest getting the 3 year warranty because I did have some problems with my Powerbook due to it running hot.

Lynne R. Ostfeld, Chicago, Illinois

An excellent source (and I haven't read all the replies in the thread, excuse me if I'm duplicating) is www.macattorney.com, which covers some of the specific needs of (sort of obviously) an attorney in a Mac setting.

The MS Office package is probably necessary and your best bet for compatibility with your PC counterparts who may send files or spreadsheets, etc. A new Mac will come with the iLife suite, which will handle any media needs, plus the Preview program which will open virtually any visual document. Acrobat reader is free and always a useful tool. I'm a big fan of Yahoo Widgets, by the way, which is really a toy and not a necessity, but one of the world's coolest programs (Mac copied the concept with Dashboard, but I think Yahoo Widgets, which originally was called Konfabulator, still trumps it).

If you use separate accounting software, you can get QuickBooks for Mac, which looks a bit different from the PC version. If you purchase a Powerbook, QuickBooks comes loaded on it, on a desktop you get a different suite of software (BTW, Mac just came out with a beautiful new 24" desktop model, high resolution, zippy fast Intel Core duo, it's gorgeous and the price is not sky high.)

Another program I'm a very big fan of, if you have a need for it, is Filemaker Pro. It's similar to MS Access but I believe more versatile and powerful as a database program, and it's seamlessly cross compatible between Mac and PC, and will work in a server environment as well as on the web.

Elizabeth Gloger

It should be very easy to do so, and the data you've generated in Access databases can easily be exported into a Filemaker database as well. I think Filemaker is an amazing program--whether you program from scratch as I prefer to do, or use any of their hundreds of premade database set ups (for everything from payroll, to file maintenance, to my using it to track all the data from my high school reunion!) There are many online discussion groups (I'm on one based at Dartmouth that is particularly useful) that has a number of experts happy to answer technical questions as well.

Elizabeth Gloger

Filemaker has a 30 day full function trial period if you download the program.

Paul Hogan

I have just started using TaskCapture (www.captureworks.com) which is a bargain compared to some other timekeeping software. Its key feature is that it will track multiple applications and then, when you close a document window or send an e-mail message, it will cause a window to

pop up so that you can enter the client, matter and description of the work. Of course it also automatically tracks the time that the window was open and includes that information in the pop-up window too. I used to take notes on how I spent my time, and then I would have to go back and spend hours typing up the formal narration for the invoices. Now I am forced to type the narration it at the moment the work is done, and not only is the narration more detailed and precise as a result, but best of all there is no more need to spend hours preparing invoices -- I just press a button and the complete time record pops out, ready to be sent to the client.

I don't use any "legal" software. I find that the standard software -- Mail, iCal, Office, Preview, Acrobat -- works just fine.   Occasionally I use OmniGraffle to make a graphic in order to get a point across. I could never understand the attraction of the all-in- one packages like Amicus or Abacus.

I should add that I encounter no problems whatsoever using a Mac in a law office. There are 11 other attorneys in this office and they all use Windows. I have never had a problem with incompatibility, and the advantages are many.

Keith Finch

So you've been happy with TaskCapture? It looks like just what I need. Perhaps I should try the demo.

Jake London