

Popular Threads on Solosez

Open Office and Other Free Office Software

Does anybody using a PC use OpenOffice or another type of free office suite? I'm interested in feedback. I'm particularly concerned about compatibility with Word-type documents and with Time Matters software. Thanks!

David Tarvin

I use OpenOffice when I need to generate MS Word documents, or when I run across an Excel spreadsheet Quattro Pro cannot read. It's terrific. I don't know about Time Matters compatibility, but give it a whirl: you will be very surprised at how sophisticated it is.

Mike Koenecke

My understanding is that the state of California is switching the entire government open to open source and particularly OpenOffice.

Some employers and governments are investigating.

But I suspect lawyers, as a group, shall be last. I've used OpenOffice in the past and would consider using it if I had to purchase a full price copy of MS Office. OpenOffice is not bad, by any means, just not what I'm used to using.

Roger Traversa

I may be one of the list's biggest supporters of open source software. Open Office is pretty good on Windows. It opens and edits MS Office files, such as Word, Excel and Powerpoint. Sometimes it is a little quirky with the Word files, but the overall performance is acceptable for it being a free version.

It is at this point, I must (once again) plug Linux. Open Office runs better on Linux than Windows. I suspect it was originally designed for Linux. If there is anyone out there like me, that is concerned with the size, cost and overall control that MS exerts over the computer world, then Open Office is a must because it lets you completely replace MS Office.

One tip on the Windows version, don't load a lot of fonts (I mean lots and lots). Open Office wants to load them all every time you right click on the mouse. It slows it down quite a bit.

I can't help yet with Time Matters. I may use Total Practice Advantage in the future, but we'll see. I will certainly try to use it with OO.o.

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Zale Dowlen (Last year in law school... I hope..)

I agree with Zale, except that I use it on a Mac which is also unix based. No clue with regard to Time Matters. If you use Open Office you won't be plagued with constant "security" updates.

D.A. "Duke" Drouillard

I too use Open Office for all my MS Word requirements and the spreadsheet from time to time. Both are very functional. Don't use Time Matters.

Steven Boster

I found OO superior when it came to handling images placed in a text document. MS Word tended to give images minds of their own, and they would constantly pop around whenever I made significant edits. OO handled them intuitively and flawlessly.

I did a slide presentation in OO, with the audience impressed when folks learned it wasn't PowerPoint.

The only drawback for me has been how slowly it loads (Windows and Mac).

John Mitchell

I seem to remember it having a quick launcher feature that pre-loads some if to speed up the load, but I've not played with it.

Zale Dowlen

I think it would be very useful if the legal community threw its weight behind OO. In my view, most of the improvements in WORD and WP add very little to the creation of legal docs, but add a big overburden that slows machines.

Beyond basics like spell check, the features that concern me are: footnotes, auto-correct, auto-paragraph numbering, and auto-T/C for appellate briefs--the last is very onerous if not automatically updated.

How is OO for those

John Page

When I was using it regularly I found a quite nifty "OutlineCrossReferences" macro that really enhanced OO's outline numbering feature. It worked quite well. Since it's open source, there are a lot of enhancements available. I dunno about tables of contents and such, but I expect that feature would work well too, since open source projects

are ordinarily tilted towards academic use.

Mike Koenecke

I use it, and it's worked well so far.

Daniel X. Nguyen

My lovely wife's wintel computer craped out at the end of December. We changed to Mac. Without any experience, it was tricky to begin to learn after decades in wintel environment. The mac came pre-loaded with a trial of MS OFFIICE. I insisted we avoid MS and we tried (again, with no experience) OO. It works great and was easy to learn. I now am migrating to it for my law office too (although I'm stuck in Wintel-land for a while, due to the limited means of a fledgling solo). I recommend it. It seems to load quickly enough for me on both computers, though I don't even know whether the Mac is Unix or something else.

My only disappointment has been trying to create Avery mailing labels from the spreadsheet. Any tips?

Phillip Laurin

While I'm sure you will find Mac literate lawyers here, the best source of Mac related legal matters is the MacLaw list. You can find the info at <http://www.maclaw.org>.

Most of the people on that list are small firm people, and they are extremely knowledgeable about using Macs in a law firm. They know about word processors, time and billing programs, and anything else you need for a practice. Macs aren't just for college kids and that hip guy on the TV commercial. Real professionals use them every day.

Susan DiMaria

I use OOo (OpenOffice) and GPL (GNU Public License) apps in a totally Ubuntu (linux) environment. Can't comment on Time Matters. Where there's a potential issue with sharing documents with Word users has to do with unusual fonts and table of contents and index of authorities, bookmarks and cross-references and multiple embedded formatting codes, etc. OOo imports 95% of Word and Excel and Powerpoint files perfectly; it's that other 5% which can drive you nuts, especially when time is of the essence.

I almost fell down the other day when I saw the price of the new MS Word and Excel, etc. The costs of running a fully licensed MS office are just insane. My multiple (networked) linux PC's are totally loaded up for business and multimedia (personal) use and I think I spent about \$100 or so (if that much) combined on fully licensed software applications.

Jacob Grassi

Not sure if this any help but this article talks about MS alternatives - including Mac products. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/macman/word-up/2007/03/14/1173722475519.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap2>

Jacob Grassi <jacobgrassi@gmail.com> wrote: I use OOo (OpenOffice) and GPL (GNU Public License) apps in a totally Ubuntu (linux) environment. Can't comment on Time Matters. Where there's a potential issue with sharing documents with Word users has to do with unusual fonts and table of contents and index of authorities, bookmarks and cross-references and multiple embedded formatting codes, etc. OOo imports 95% of Word and Excel and PowerPoint files perfectly; it's that other 5% which can drive you nuts, especially when time is of the essence.

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Sam Hasler

I use Open Office, and like it a lot. I use it on both a PC and on my MacBook. My one disappointment with OO on the MacBook is that the quick launcher doesn't work the same way that it does under Windows, so it takes a long time to load.

[technical details]On a Mac, OO requires the X-Windows Linux binaries to launch first, and then OO executes. As long as X11 is already open, OO is pretty quick. But if you quit the X11 process, you have to go through having it start up again first, then OO.[/technical details]

There is an alternative version of OO for Macs, called NeoOffice. I haven't really had a chance to play with it much yet. It's advantage is that it uses Java to access the Macs native user-interface elements, so it doesn't need X-Windows (and it looks more "Mac-like"). The downside is that it's got a MUCH smaller development community, so it doesn't appear to be updated as frequently. Interestingly, the most recent version of NeoOffice claims to support Office 2007 Word documents and Office 2007 Excel macros (even the next Mac version of Microsoft Office is not expected to support Excel macros, because Microsoft has said that it is removing VBA support from Office for Macs).

Aaron Rittmaster

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