

How Have You Used Amazon Alex in Your Practice?

I noticed that Alexa is taking over the world so I was curious to know how others have used Alexa and their office as well as their homes.

Not yet admitted to practice.

Given the recent controversies with what Alexa does and does not record and whether that info is subject to seizure, there is even less than a snowball's chance in hell that I'd have one in my HOME, much less a law office.

Wendi Lawson See, South Carolina

We have one in our kitchen and ask her to play the radio or songs by a specific artist. She also is good at telling us the weather or sports scores. She is kinda lame about answering questions - hoping she'll learn.

I was going to buy a google now - but we got the echo as a gift.

It is the wave of the future - so all you nay sayers get over it and get back on your flip phone :)

P. Jayson Thibodaux, Washington

I have two Dots (the small ~\$40 one, not the big \$150 one) in different parts of the house. It works well for streaming music, Audible.com books, and simple verbal commands (e.g. what is the weather, how's the traffic to the office, simple arithmetic, etc). Over the holidays, I discovered Alexa can sing public domain holiday songs, which was surprising.

I can't point to a specific work-related thing that Alexa is useful for aside from reading me my calendar, which is sometimes helpful. I Alexa'd a Dominos pizza one time, which made me laugh. I have Automatic (<https://www.automatic.com/>) on my car and it connects to Alexa so I can ask Alexa where my car is, how much gas is in it, etc.

One thing I have noticed is that one of my Dots is noticeably dumber than the other. I suspect it's due to room echo. The smarter one is in a smaller room so I suspect the microphones can hear me better. The dumber one is in a larger, more cavern-like room and I find that I have to stand within arm's reach of the Dot before it can hear me versus me shouting from across the room.

Alexa can learn things through skills. Most skills I've looked at are pretty useless (aside from that pizza-ordering skill, of course). Maybe if a lawyer somewhere programmed a skill Alexa would be more useful for lawyers.

Andy I. Chen, California

We got our Echo in December. I love it. We have it play songs. We ask it questions. I get weather updates and sports updates. Last night, I asked for the football scores. Alexa gave me the football scores - for the English Premier League.

Jonathan Stein, California

Alexa, write this appellate brief. I'll be back in the morning.

David A. Rubin, Missouri

I love Alexa .. but in all fairness, I'm a fan of Siri as well.

We use our Echo -- only at home -- but not because of the controversy. Rather, it's that the things she can do are most useful at home. Yes, we have her play music, and we ask the weather and sports scores, and when the next Patriots' game is.. and hubby likes to ask her to tell him a cat joke...But I love the fact that -- while cooking.. (ie, my hands are messy, and I neither want to pick up a pen, nor my phone).. I can tell her to add whatever ingredient I just used up, to the shopping list. Actually, I use her for my entire shopping list, but that's the time it's most convenient. At the grocery store, I pull Alexa up on my phone, and there's the list. If I'm only getting a few things, that's ok.. because I can check off which items I get.

Laurie Axinn Gienapp, Massachusetts

Amazon Echo (that's what it is actually called, "Alexa" is just the activation word) has been covered in other threads. If you search "amazon echo" in the archives you'll find it. Echo Dot does the same thing.

I've had one since about June, and each of my kids got one (from folks other than us/Santa) for Christmas.

We mostly use it to play music and podcasts, plus the occasional audiobook. It has had trouble recently with some NPR podcasts other than recent news, and I frankly don't like TuneIn, which is the podcast player it uses. It can sometimes answer very, very simple questions, but it also occasionally messes up. I asked it what the temperature was in our town last night (Sebastian, Florida), and it told me it was 12 degrees in Sebastian Florida. It certainly wasn't 12 degrees Fahrenheit, but it may have been 12 degrees Celsius. I then asked it what the temperature in Fahrenheit was in Sebastian, Florida, and it was unable to answer that question.

Keep in mind, if you are an Amazon Prime member, you get access to Amazon Music. Of course not every song is in there, but if you upload the albums you already own to Amazon Music, you can pretty much hear most of what you want. When we do a specific request (one I heard this weekend from one of my kids was, "Alexa, play 'Ants Go Marching'"), we are at about 90% hit rate of it being able to play what we want or some close approximation (sometimes a cover), regardless of whether we have purchased the song. The most frequent request in our house (again, by my kids) is "Alexa, play Top Pop" which I think plays the most frequently requested Amazon Prime songs. It seems like lots of Adele and lots of Pentatonix.

Like some other posters, mine lives in our kitchen. I read an article last year about a survey on the uses of the Amazon Echo, and it said that more than half of the owners of an Amazon Echo have it in their kitchen. That's where a handsfree device is very, very useful.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

Actually, Alexa can do cube roots, prime factors, statistics and factorials, and seems to know trigonometry, way above simple arithmetic. Haven't tried algebra or quadratic equations, and it seems that you do have to ask the question in the proper form. She also has a developing sense of humor, a trait I admire as it is often not present in clients.

James Moriarty, Iowa

Are we going to start a sub-group of Alexa owning attorneys?

My younger (28) son Noel is aghast and thinks that we have brought the leading edge of Skynet into our home, which will destroy us all.

I am not sure he's being cute.....

Mine knew it was 12 degrees C = 53.6 degrees F..... Even converts to Kelvin. Knows atomic weights for most elements, and knew that bronze was copper and tin.

You do have to enunciate and speak clearly, which are not bad things to do anyway.

James Moriarty

What do people think of the Google one?

David A. Rubin

I was just thinking about that when you asked the question:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/siri-vs-google-assistant-cortana-alexa-2016-11>

Anthony Reeves, Florida

It can play a video on your tube and send it to Chromecast. It answers questions, plays music and is entertaining.

Mitchell Goldstein, Virginia

.. and while the device is indeed an Echo, or a Dot... the app is Amazon Alexa.

My brother has a teenaged son. I understand that my nephew and his friends have a great time adding unusual items to the grocery list.

Laurie Axinn Gienapp

Heard a news story about Alexa ordering lots of dolls because it was listening to an ad on the TV. If I were producing TV ads, I could really mess with Alexa. I'm smelling an Amazon conspiracy.

Jon van Horne

If you're thinking of the same story I am, what actually happened is even more humorous.

As I recall, a little girl asked Alexa if she could play dolls with her. Alexa then ordered a dollhouse, along with several pounds (yes, pounds) of sugar cookies. When the dollhouse arrived, the parents figured out what happened, donated the dollhouse to a children's hospital, and put some kind of lock or restriction on ordering things via Alexa.

Then, a local news station picked up the story. And when the newscaster was describing what happened on the TV broadcast, people who were tuned into the newscast started reporting that THEIR Alexas started ordering dollhouses in response to the newscaster's statements over the air!

Ryan Phillips, South Carolina

One needs to turn off the order function from the app.

P. Jayson Thibodaux

I use the echo dot to turn on/off my lights in various rooms.

Michael Wright

I use them at home primarily for listening to music and the radio. I get terrible radio reception on AM and FM, but the Echo has no problem picking up the streaming radio reception. My listening to music (via Pandora) has increased greatly, and my TV watching has decreased dramatically. I used to use a Bluetooth adapter for my stereo to stream music off my phone, but the Echo is much easier and therefore gets used more often. The unanticipated side effect for me is that the increased music listening improves my mood.

Paul Hogan, California
