

THE PATH TO A PAPER FREE FIRM



What You Need to Know About Using Tablets Every Day and In Trial

In January 2012, Andrea George set out to convert the Federal Defenders of Eastern Washington and Idaho into the first paper free Federal Defenders Office nationwide.

This was an ambitious project. FDEWI has 14 attorneys, 8 investigators, hundreds of clients, and hundreds of thousands of looseleaf paper tucked away in banker boxes in the office.

There was some initial resistance from the Administrative Offices in D.C. about the costs to equip the entire office with iPads. Not to mention the resistance from a few of the more “old school” lawyers in the office who prefer the familiar feel of weighted, brown expando files in their arms when headed to court.

But it happened. And now, 9 months into this electronic conversion,

FDEWI is officially “paper lite” (it will take a bit more time to become officially paper free).

The result is nothing short of amazing. Financially speaking, monthly paper and toner cartridge orders are at an all-time low, which is saving the office thousands of dollars per month. Completed cases are no longer stuffed into banker boxes; instead, case files are

burned onto CDs and stored in envelopes, which is saving the office thousands of additional dollars per month in storage costs. Moreover, productivity is at an all-time high as staff no longer waste countless hours printing, organizing, and updating paper case files.

With respect to attorney benefits, discovery is just a few clicks away. So are briefs, research, court dockets, and correspondence. And everything is keyword searchable and indexed. And after hundreds of court hearings and client meetings, as well as multiple federal jury trials, I can officially report that practicing law with a tablet is incredibly slick.

If you are interested in converting, here are some recommendations on how to make the transition:

Equipment: Our office tested both the Samsung Galaxy Tablet and the iPad 3 (aka “the New iPad”).

iPad 3s are sturdier, sexier, and more intuitive for the less “computer savvy.” And they integrate seamlessly with PCs - all you need to do is download iTunes, which is free.

Applications: We spent months canvassing the iTunes store for helpful applications. Here is a list of “must have” apps if your firm plans to go paperless (or paper lite):

1. GoodReader. This is an easy-to-use, intuitive application for organizing and viewing PDF documents. Two (2) other options are iAnnotate PDF and PDF Expert.

2. Pages. This is Apple’s take on Microsoft Word. It is easy to create “case templates,” i.e., templates you can use and reuse for inputting case information such as 1) client contact information, 2) expert information, 3) store client meeting notes, etc.

Plus all documents can be stored on Apple’s “Cloud,” which means your documents are accessible anywhere with an internet connection, whether you have your iPad with you or not.

3. Keynote. This is Apple’s take on PowerPoint. It is visually stunning and incredibly easy to create slideshows for use in trial.

4. Evernote. This is another note-taking app in case you want another option besides Pages.

5. Azul. This is a great app for storing and viewing media (recordings, videos, etc.)

6. TrialPad. This app is expensive, but worth it. It is like TrialDirector, but easier to use. I used it a few weeks ago for the first time in a trial. You can easily call up exhibits and impeachment docs for witnesses (or depositions if you are a civil attorney). It has fancy



1. presentation tools like a laser pointer and highlight feature that make it easy for a jury (or judge) to follow along. I was able to speak with the jury afterwards about the technology, and they thought it was very helpful. They also commented that I looked incredibly organized when compared to the prosecutor, who was carrying around clunky 3-ring binders and constantly searching through his files for exhibits.

2. Red Rules Book.

This is a handy little app that contains the Federal Rules of Evidence, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and other legal sources. It also contains hyperlinks to case law, which is incredibly handy in a pinch.

3. Lexis Advance. A fantastic app if you need to conduct legal research on the road. Fairly user-friendly.

So those are your basic apps. Now how do

you use them? The key is organization. All of your discovery or files need to be converted into PDFs. This is easy to do on your computer - all you need is Adobe Acrobat. Then, while in Acrobat, you can open up a particular document and “bookmark” pages. Essentially what you are doing is creating an index. How you bookmark your documents and index your discovery is entirely up to you. Do you do it by witness? By legal issue? By geographic location? Each situation may call for a different technique. You will undoubtedly spend some time messing around with what technique works best - I certainly did.

Once your documents are bookmarked, you simply plug your iPad into your computer and use iTunes to load all of those documents on your computer onto your iPad. And just like that, your case files are on your iPad and ready to travel with you to your next client

meeting or court hearing. This last part I described, i.e., the whole converting your files into PDFs and organizing them thing, is really easier to show than explain in writing. So if you are interested in converting your office or firm into a paper free - or paper lite - environment, shoot me an e-mail. I’d be happy to walk you through what I have found works best.

And once you figure it out, you will wonder how you ever practiced law any other way.

John B. McEntire IV is a Trial Attorney with the Federal Defenders of Eastern Washington and Idaho in Spokane, Washington. He represents clients charged with federal crimes, including drug trafficking, gun trafficking, murder, sex trafficking, and bank fraud. He can be reached at jay_mcentire@fd.org



TrialPad
for iPad

