TAPAs: Technological And Practice Advice

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We have just completed our fifth book, *Tech Tips for Seniors, Volume 2.* The ABA will publish it and the Senior Lawyers Division will market it. The last chapter contains a list of some of our favorite apps, along with a description of why we like them. We enjoyed doing that and thought it would prove useful to you if we devoted this month's TAPAs column to tips about some of the apps we think might help you in your practice and/or personal life. We hope you find some that you do not know about that will make your life better. If you find this overview particularly useful, let us know and we can repeat it occasionally, highlighting different apps.

Tip 1: TextExpander. TextExpander can save a lot of time and effort. You set up abbreviations using a few characters to represent a block of text. When you type the abbreviation, the program inserts whatever text you have tied to that abbreviation. Easily set up, the program works quickly and efficiently. You can cut and paste a few words, a sentence, a paragraph, or several into the software, assign a couple of characters, and move on to the next shortcut. For example, if I type "lof, the program inserts the firm name and office address. It comes in particularly handy for certain repetitive forms such as contract terms or portions of pleadings. The software recently converted to a subscription basis (it costs less than $40 per year). If you connect the app to the Internet, snippets you include on one device will automatically transfer to your other devices linked to the same account. They have two versions: the single-user version and the team version. The team version will allow your staff to link to the same account and share shortcuts.

Tip 2: TranscriptPad. Designed primarily for litigators, this app works only on the iPad. We have found no good equivalent on the Android platform. If you practice litigation, this app may be a good enough reason for you to get an iPad. The app lets you work efficiently with your transcripts, reviewing, marking up, highlighting, flagging, issue-coding, underlining, and commenting on the transcript using the app. Currently it comes as a one-time purchase; however, there are rumors that the three apps from this developer (TranscriptPad, DocReviewPad, and TrialPad) will convert to a subscription basis in the imminent future, along with a fourth program (not yet officially named) to build timelines. By the way, the company's other two existing apps, TrialPad and DocReviewPad, are also excellent, and you will probably want to look into them.

Tip 3: The Great Courses. For those not familiar with The Great Courses, it is The Teaching Company's branding to market its (mostly) college-level programs. You can get excellent programs presented by leading academicians from major colleges and universities from the company. You can access their website at thegreatcourses.com. FYI, do not pay retail price for any course as they always have a sale in progress. Just wait for the rotation to get to the programs you want. Once you buy a program, it goes into your digital library, and you can listen to it online using your computer or on a mobile device using the app. They also have a second app (thegreatcoursesplus) for their subscription Great Courses Plus program. The difference is that with the subscription you need not buy any courses, but you can access and stream any of their library of programs to your device. If you plan on making yourself a lifelong learner, consider the subscription as it will save you a lot of money. Both of these apps work on iOS and Android devices, and you can access the courses on your computer through your browser.

Tip 4: OpenTable. OpenTable can help you find good restaurants throughout the United States. After you make your selection, you can use the app to make reservations. You can also modify existing reservations as to date, time, and number of guests. OpenTable will recommend restaurants based on price, cuisine, and location. It also provides you with access to the menu for most restaurants it lists. The app also presents reviews from restaurant guests to help you make your decision. It works on both Android and iOS devices, and you can also access it using a browser at opentable.com. OpenTable has helped us find many excellent restaurants in our travels throughout the country and even in our own local areas.

Tip 5: VPN Unlimited. VPN Unlimited is a commercial VPN (virtual private network) that enables you to use one of its numerous servers to securely connect to the Internet from an insecure WiFi hot spot. Available on a subscription basis, often at substantial discounts, it is easy to set up and use. It comes on both the iOS and Android platforms, and you can even get it to work with your computer.

Bonus Tip 1: Banking Apps. Instead of identifying a particular app, we will identify a class of apps for you to choose among. Most financial institutions have developed applications for both the iOS and Android platforms that give you a multitude of banking services and great convenience in all things bank—except receiving cash in your hand (for that you need a physical branch or an ATM machine). Whatever bank(s) you use, get their apps and use them for deposits, bill paying, money transfers, and other financial activities. Many of these apps also will provide current credit rating information.

Bonus Tip 2: Airline Apps. Again, this tip is for a broad class of apps for you to choose among. Most regional and all major airlines have developed applications for both the iOS and Android platforms that give you a multitude of services and great convenience regarding booking flights, checking in, confirming reservations, checking on schedules and delays, checking on your frequent flyer accounts, and other services. Some (such as United's) also give you access to streaming entertainment in flight over the airplane's WiFi network. Whatever airlines you use, get their apps and use them. The airlines you fly regularly should live on your smartphone. If you need to conserve memory on your device, you can delete apps for airlines you fly occasionally and re-download them only when you need them.

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