



ABA Techshow 2008 – A Paralegal's Perspective.

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I can finally put away my thumb drive lanyard, bluetooth earpiece and pocket protector for another year. The 2008 ABA Techshow has concluded : (

For those that have not attended yet, the ABA Techshow is considered the top legal technology conference in the U.S. The conference is 3 days of legal technology emersion and occurs during early spring each year in Chicago, IL. The conference features some of the top legal technology minds in the U.S. and even borrows some expertise from our neighbors to the North. The conference is designed for everyone (i.e., judges, attorneys, paralegals, office administrators, IT professionals, litigation support professionals, etc.). There are 4 sessions per day, with 7 available tracks per session to choose from. The tracks include, "Advanced IT/Security", "Records Management", and "Litigation" (to name a few). This year's confernece featured new tracks on "Going Green" (building sustainable and environmentally friendly legal practices), and "Mac Track" (featuring cool looking computers that do not work with any mainstream computer applications and are prone to crashing unexpectedly, j/k – Mac people are free to send emails to feedback@indianaparalegals.org). Below are some of the highlights from 2008 Techshow.

Office 2007:

Earlier last year, Microsoft released its most recent Office Suite (Word, Excel, Outlook, etc.), Office 2007. This latest release has not reach widespread adoption in the legal community due to several factors. The first reason is financial. There are several different versions/levels of Office 2007 that each include different applications. The larger / more expensive versions features several new applications that most people have not heard of (i.e., One Note, Info Path, etc.) Also, there is no real necessity for most firms to update. Office XP and Office 2003 are great products that are getting the job done. The primary differences between Office 2007 and previous versions are based on visual interface. Office 2007 features a new menu system called "ribbons". The ribbons replace the traditional drop down menus and tool bars at the top of the screen in Word, Excel, etc. The ribbons seek to do away with traditional drop-down menus and make features of the programs easier to find. To be fair, Office 2007 does have some new features that will potentially take hold in the legal field. This includes some new diagram and charting tools that allow legal professionals to create custom professional looking flow charts, graphs, and exhibits. Also, Office 2007 features some powerful collaboration tools that allow users to host live, online collaboration of documents and presentations. There are also features that allow users to share their Outlook Calendars with people outside of the office for scheduling matters.

Records Management:

This track was very important and could not have been more timely. The issue of Records Management has typically been included as a subtopic when discussing other ideas (i.e. electronic evidence, e-discovery, litigation holds, etc.). Records Management now translates to management and coordination of electronic information. Increased regulation (in certain areas of practice more than others) as well as highly publicized legal cases involving storage and retention of ESI has created a climate where increased scrutiny has been placed on Records Management. This is especially true in an era where records and information is so fluid and dynamic, that retaining that information is very challenging. The vast majority of companies that I interact with do not have a perfect system in place. In fact, I believe that law firms are some of the worst offenders in this area. I have yet to meet an attorney or paralegal who believes that his/her firm has an adequate system for retaining case related e-mails. This track discussed back-up methods and technology, online and offsite storage of information, version control of documents, collaboration tools, and document retention policies.

Trial Presentation:

Nearly every document intensive case that I have seen go to trial in the last year or so, has included some form of electronic presentation equipment. Some are Power Point presentations, others are as simple as showing medical records or other records through some type of projector or LCD screens for the jurors (via ELMO or imaged documents on laptop). There were several sessions that discussed different presentation tactics as well as the new trial presentation software, [Verdical](#), (described as Sanction and Trial Director on steroids with the addition of the predominant features of CT Summation). These sessions also discussed different methods of presenting slide shows and slide show simplification (i.e., do not have a slide with 10 bullet points, one theme per slide, etc.).

Sustainable Law Practices:

There has been quite a buzz in the past year or so about law firms hiring "Sustainability Managers" to coordinate a firms' environmental policies. The practice of going green is catching on with law firms and their vendors. For instance, Adobe has been considered a leader in the area of going green. Adobe has created incentive programs for its employees to use shared commuting when coming to and from the office and has also created a work-at-home Friday program to lower commuting costs and their associated impact. Some other examples include the follow:

- changing paper supplies to more recycled paper
- installing automatic faucets
- installing motion sensitive lighting

Green legal practices was also mentioned several times during the client relations sessions where in-house counsel of several large companies commented that they are looking at a firm's commitment to sustainable practices when choosing outside counsel. In other words, green legal

practices are both eco-friendly and a practical (and perhaps necessary) move for businesses trying to appeal to more green companies.

In conclusion, 2008 ABA Techshow was very beneficial. The e-discovery tracks also discussed the impact of the changes to the FRCP and state courts that have followed by adopting their own version of the e-discovery trial rules (including Indiana). The Techshow also features hundreds of vendors to showcase their new products. The vendors that I found most interesting were the video conference specialists and video conference depositions. I have recently started utilizing video conference depositions and have found them to be extremely beneficial. Not only are they economically beneficial to the client, but I have found that some of the older attorneys that I work with are simply tired of traveling around state-to-state, living out of a suitcase, etc. Mark your calendars for April 2, 2009, ABA Techshow 2009 ([Outlook users click here](#)).

Websites of the Month:

Dropio: This website allows users to create instant online repositories ("Drops") for easy access. Drops are free to set-up and can each hold 100 MB of information. Drops can be password protected and even be monitored via RSS feed. Users automatically receive a free email address and fax number where outside users can send emails or faxes that go directly into the drop. Users can store documents and media files (music and video). It is a great solution to the problem of emailing a large files to someone. Instead, simply create a drop and email someone the link and password via email.

<http://www.drop.io/>

Blawg of the Month: ABA Techshow Blawg. Stay up-to-date on what is going on for the 2009 ABA Techshow.

<http://feeds.feedburner.com/ABATECHSHOWblog>