September 2007

The Legal Connection

KEEPING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS CONNECTED

My Favorite Season!

Colorful, crisp and comfortable ….

Fall has always been my favorite season. Summer is too hot & humid; Spring too wet; and Winter in NY in a word – DULL – the sky is grey, the snow is grey – everything is grey!

Fall brings with it not only the glorious colors of nature's ever changing masterpiece of leaves, but also the bounty of the harvest – when you reap the benefits of those seeds you sowed way back when you were still longing for the more carefree days of summer!

This makes Fall the perfect time to take a step back and evaluate some of your practice's processes to determine if how you are doing things is actually working – the most cost effective – or best possible way to get things done.   By taking a few hours now to go over your processes, you will be provided with enough time to research or implement any necessary changes before January 1 – which will be here before you know it!

And here's a friendly reminder: line up your year end promotional products and holiday cards now. Get it out of the way so you won't have to rush come December. If you're looking for items that are high quality and not just run of the mill, contact Jean McGuire of McGuire Pro Services (**http://www.mcguirepro.com**). Jean's been an Authorized Reseller of Geiger products for ages and she personally assists each client with picking out just the right "thing" to keep you and your business happily in the minds of your clients.

By the way, if you think you could use some help upgrading some of your processes – from how your practice actually gets the "work" done ~ to how you manage all the information you are bombarded with each day, drop me a line! As you know, I'm always *Virtually@YourService!*™

Until next time……..

LegalTypist

SMARTER TECHNOLOGY
Experience Counts

SPERRY SOFTWARE BOOSTS OUTLOOK FUNCTIONALITY

Although Outlook is a part of the Microsoft® Office suite, it does not necessarily perform all of the same functions as Word or Excel. For example, if you need to find/replace an area code in Outlook, you've got some involved steps to take! During a recent discussion with Microsoft® guru Andrea Kalli, I was reminded of a company I had reviewed years ago: Sperry Software. Sperry creates add on software that simply put, improves Outlook's functionality. To learn more about Sperry's products: www.virtualassist.net/sperrysoftware.htm
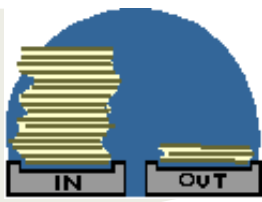
The Ins & Outs of:

tiny URL … *by Amber Drake, MVA*

Have you ever received an email where the sender included a URL and, when clicked, it was "broken"? You look at the URL and it spans several lines, but only part of it is highlighted as an active link? I encounter this frustration frequently, especially in text based emails or when receiving posts from ListServe type groups such as YahooGroups.

TinyURL takes about 5 seconds to use, and saves the recipient from potential frustration and wasted time trying to figure out how to access the intended site. This is especially important when that recipient is your client!

How does it work?

Basically, you copy an existing long URL to your clipboard, go to www.TinyURL.com, and paste that URL into their handy "make tiny" field.

Click the button, and it instantly provides the replacement URL on your screen. You copy that tiny URL text and paste it into your email. When a person uses that tiny URL, it goes directly to the intended site -- there are no gateway pages, advertisements, pop-ups or other unsavory elements experienced by the user -- it's completely transparent.

Can I see an example?

Sure. Say you want to provide a link to the UPS Store in my hometown. I could provide the map link in the original 351 character format:

http://www.mapquest.com/maps/map.adp?latlongtype =internal&addtohistory=&latitude=qY1jtcnh9yG9oOUd s6xKlA%3d%3d&longitude=3Z%2feJx8wtTOs%2fS% 2f1WHh8oA%3d%3d&name=UPS%20Store&country =US&address=1602%20E%20Seltice%20Way%20% 23%20A&city=Post%20Falls&state=ID&zipcode=8385 4&phone=208%2d773%2d6200&spurl=0&&q=ups%2 0store&qc=Mailing%20%26%20Shipping%20Services

Or, I could provide the following 25 character TinyURL:

http://tinyurl.com/256gj6

When would you use it?

Anytime the URL is long ... say 60+ characters. For example, when I send client invoices, I include a handy branded PayPal link. I'll convert the (very) long URL to a Tiny URL before sending, knowing I'll have a much higher success rate in receiving quick payment when my clients can quickly complete the payment process. Maps, direct page links within a website, emails to ListServes, form fields that limit the number of characters, and posts to community discussion groups are other scenarios where TinyURL really comes to the rescue.

How much does it cost?

Best of all ... it's FREE!

(They do have a tiny PayPal Donate button if you'd like to contribute).

Essential Admin is a professional virtual assistance company serving REALTORS® and Small Business Owners since 2002. Specializing in Real Estate Listing & Marketing Coordination, Desktop Publishing, General Marketing and Real Estate Support Services.

www.essential-admin.com

A Virtual Ms. Manners Tip:

Proper digital etiquette dictates a signature at the end of every e-mail messages or post to groups/list servs.

Automatic signatures are a relatively easy function to set up in both on and offline e-mail applications. Use the inherent "Help" function to get step by step instructions.

Along with your full name, at a minimum, list your telephone number and website url/address.

E-mail – Take It Or Leave It …

One question I get asked frequently is how a person goes about accessing e-mail while not at their desk.

How you are granted access to e-mail is dependent on many things, including the particular software and technology your firm or company uses for its e-mail management.

To start, one item which is not readily known is that technically speaking, your website's host does not have to be your practice e-mail's host. So e-mail hosting and website hosting can be provided by two different vendors – or companies can host their own e-mail on internal servers and provide access to users through programs such as Outlook.

My first question to those looking to take their e-mail on the road is "What type of access do you need?" While everyone would like to have the ability to use e-mail exactly the same way from wherever they wish – the reality is, your access is dictated by the type of physical equipment you have and the technology behind your e-mail.

For instance, some e-mail is 100% web based – domains such as "yahoo.com", "optonline.net" and "gmail.com" are good examples of web based e-mail. Basically, users of these services need merely log into their web based account to review and send e-mail. Therefore, if you use a device which has internet capabilities, to access e-mail you could navigate to the appropriate website, enter your user information and viola… you have access to e-mail.

It starts to get a wee bit tricky when you bring in non-web based e-mail applications … such as Outlook, Lotus Notes and GroupMail. These examples are all desktop resident programs, which obviously makes them less portable.

The first decision you need to make is whether or not you must have the ability to respond while mobile … or if you just need to review your incoming e-mails in order to stay on top of what is going on.

I prefer to just remain informed. I can respond from my Treo, but I choose instead to schedule the time to respond from my desk. It's just one way I stay organized.

If your firm combines products from Microsoft such as Outlook, SharePoint and an Exchange Server, your IT department or web tech will need to set you up with portable access to company e-mail. This type of access is involved and can get tricky, so is best to leave it to a professional.

Now, if you use Outlook but not SharePoint or an Exchange Server or you use some other desktop resident e-mail application, you can still access your e-mail while on the road.

To Take It: You have a few options on how to take e-mail with you. You can (a) set up your domain to forward e-mails received to your mobile device's e-mail; (b) set up the e-mail application that is provided with your cellular service; or (c) use a unified messaging service such as Onebox, to have web based control that is independent of your cell phone service provider.

Many do not know it (and cell phone companies don't advertise this), but most e-mail enabled cell phones have their own e-mail address – usually the area code + number and then the carrier's url. For instance, my Treo with T-Mobile is 516603xxxx@voice-stream.net. Any message sent to that address goes ONLY to my Treo.

Now, you can also set up your e-mail to pull through the account provided by your cell phone carrier. Generally, you register and log in on line and then set up which e-mail addresses you wish to use with your portable device. For this you need to know your email address, password and the server for that address (i.e., mail.legaltypist.com).

My favorite option for portability, however, is to use a unified messaging service to control and access e-mail (voicemails and faxes) from anywhere. My preferred vendor is:

www.onebox.com
http://www.legaltypist.com/onebox.htm.

With a unified messaging account, it doesn't matter which company I use for my cell or office telephone … I control the number itself and point it where I want. I use Onebox to control ALL incoming communications from one login.

To Leave It: The biggest problem with portable e-mails is not in the receiving, its in the sending. As explained above, you can see e-mails from almost any device – received e-mails can load into multiple copies of Outlook, be sent to your phone or even a web based account. However, when sending e-mails, where does the sent copy go? If you're using web based mail, it goes into the sent folder for that application. If you're using a Treo or laptop, however, the sent copy is retained in the actual device's sent folder. No good!

If you use web based e-mail to manage your company's processes, you can resolve this issue by logging in and drafting your e-mails while on line rather than using the inherent e-mail on the device. Certainly not as expeditious as typing on your phone and hitting "Send", but it does keep everything in one place and organized.

Another work around would be to send a copy of all your sent messages to yourself (as a bcc). This at least places a copy of the message in your inbox (not the "Sent" folder).

If you don't use web based mail or you don't have an Exchange Server, you still have options. The best would be to get an account with LogMeIn and then from any internet connection literally log into your desktop computer and manipulate the software on it. LogMeIn is a great solution for users of Outlook, QuickBooks and other desktop resident software.

Using LogMeIn is not how I would like to work everyday (simply because there is a lag time between what I type and what displays on the screen), however, when I am traveling or on vacation, it's a great way to take care of the day to day management of my practice as though I were behind my desk.

Andrea Uses and/or Recommends*:

A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances,
but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes.