



## MAC USER: Closing a Practice in the Post-PC World

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### MAC USER: Closing a Practice in the Post-PC World

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By Victoria L. Herring

[Victoria L. Herring](#) practices in Des Moines, Iowa, in an office that has used only Apple/Macs since the early 1980s.

Because the theme of this issue is “Buying, Selling, or Closing a Law Practice,” with all sorts of articles about whether and how to move out of the legal realm, I thought I’d focus on how I’m doing so and how my various Apple appliances are assisting me. I’ve written before on related topics, but I thought perhaps it would be good to revisit the subject. Particularly as the assertion from both Steve Jobs and now Tim Cook, his successor as Apple CEO, is that we are in a post-PC world, and that probably does affect how we move from active work to active life.

Over the years since my son died in 2008, I’ve been pulling back from an active engagement in the practice of law. The culmination of that process—not taking new cases, finishing up on what clients and cases I could, and referring out other cases—came just this month as I realized that I have no legal work staring me in the face. As a long-time solo who always feared not having a live body contact me from time to time, I’m not sure how I feel about this. But, for now, that’s the shape of things. I don’t think of myself as retired (I’m not that old!), and if the right case or client showed up, I’d probably take it on. But for now, things are pretty open these days. Fortunately, this also comes at a time when I’m pretty much technologically “filled up.”

By that I mean that I have my desktop computer (a 2009 MacPro that works just fine running Lion and has loads of space, what with four internal drives), my laptop computer (a 17” MacBook Pro that is great but is really heavy and not something I haul around on flights easily), my iPad, and my iPhone, plus all those other accessories and instruments that knit them together. I have moved to the iCloud and use other cloud software and way

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stations.

With more time available, I find myself doing one chore that is essential but that I detest: going through files and papers and cleaning things out. I'm very cautious in doing so, generally keeping papers and files well beyond ten years, but the time has come to get through things and clean them out. I can more easily do so these days because I have a Fujitsu ScanSnap 1500M, a great scanner that can create digital copies of many of the papers filling my basement storage. Because retention of duplicative pleadings and the like isn't called for, fortunately, and as I've been digitizing almost everything for about eight to ten years now, there isn't that much left. And I need to make sure the backup method and access method remain current and solid, but I do this by using both hard drives and DVDs for backup and scanning to PDF, a standard format. So, contra Cook and Jobs, we are still in the PC world when it comes to putting the firm out to pasture—I still need my scanner attached to my computer to do so. That's fine with me.



In addition, because there is more time, there are other uses for my technology. My husband and I recently took a week's vacation to Turkey. Both of us brought along our iPads and iPhones, and nothing else. We stayed in lodging that had WiFi (although there were Starbucks and McDonald's all over) and were able to "teleport" ourselves back to our offices if we had to. And, of course, e-mail was received and sent as if we'd never left town. On my laptop, I use and like [ShareTool](#) for the teleporting process. On my iPad, I have started using [Remoter](#), which works just great. It's somewhat surreal to see my computer display screen reflected on my iPad and to be able to access files off that computer from miles and miles away.

Another trick up my sleeve is using [Dropbox](#), or [Evernote](#), or some other options such as [IDrive](#) or [SugarSync](#) to hold documents in the cloud for easy access from everywhere. Before I left for Turkey, I put our travel documents in Dropbox and also transferred them to my iPad. I use [TripIt](#) to organize my travel plans, making them accessible everywhere and on all devices through its applications for the iPad and iPhone. If I want to take some reading materials, I can do so through using [iBooks](#), which reads PDFs and e-pubs, and the Kindle app for iPad and iPhone,

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American Bar

which allows access to downloads from Amazon's Kindle site.

There is one important caution, however. If you use Dropbox or Evernote, you need to sync or actually transfer the documents to your iPad/iPhone before you go because access to the actual content of the items via these services is dependent on some sort of WiFi or cellular connection. I found that where I had not already opened and saved to iBooks various PDFs I left in my Dropbox and was not connected to the Internet, I couldn't access the content of the documents (other than their headlines) until I was able to again connect. So, I learned to make sure that any essential documents were printed out and synced and saved on the device, not in the cloud alone.

Another use of both the iPhone and iPad while away from work, or even in your work as a lawyer, is to take pictures. The iPhone takes great photos and movies. The iPad (I have the new, third-generation model) takes photos, though that is a bit clumsy. But the real value is when you have opened a map or other item on your screen and you want to save it for later—you can easily take a screen shot on the iPad or iPhone. Just push the Power and Hold buttons simultaneously—you'll hear a camera click, and the photo will appear in your Camera Roll. So, while in the hotel, I'd use a WiFi connection to gather up maps from Google or other such information, then do a screen shot of what I found and save it to my device. With Apple's new PhotoStream (which I'm not sure I've gotten the hang of or like, yet), even if I don't have my device with me, I can go onto my iCloud area on any computer and find those pictures in the PhotoStream.

One more thought on the topic of using Macs and Apple devices and software when winding down a practice: At some point the real end will come, and if you don't save your various passwords and access methods or instructions somewhere safe for your heirs, partners, or whomever, they won't be able to access essential information to deal with former clients, former employees, or other situations that can spring to life well after you've left the practice. Just as you should have a will, at the very least, you should have technological instructions explaining what machines you have, where the various storage devices are and what they hold, and what the passwords are to them and to your various accounts. I use the software application [1Password](#) to save and generate my various logins and passwords (there are several other fine options), so whoever is to handle my firm issues or family issues would need access to that database. My will and other end-of-life planning documents include explanations and instructions for access to the technology I have and other resources. A recent blog post by [Mike Vardy](#) discusses options for allowing others access to your 1Password account in case of emergency. Whether you use 1Password or some other

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password-memory system, it's an article worth reading. The author even provides helpful forms to assist you.

These suggestions for emergency planning are no doubt applicable for those who use other systems than Apple's or those who even still use paper, but they are particularly crucial in the post-PC world because the cost of breaking a password to gain access to important information might be exorbitant—and it might even be impossible to do so.