



Tech Tips

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Transforming Your Smartphone from Time-Sucker to Time-Saver

Smartphones. Love them or hate them, we all have them. In theory, smartphones are intended to save us time and make us more efficient. But for many of us, the fine line between “time-saver” and “time-sucker” often blurs when we fail to grasp exactly how to make the best use of that roughly five-by-six-inch piece of technology to which we have become so attached. Consider these tips to help you use your smartphone to your best advantage:

- 1. Voice reminders.** Most of us know we can use our smartphone to calendar appointments or set reminders. But how many of us use this feature to help us avoid wasting time doing activities on our smartphone that could be done later? When we’re not in the office, the ever-present smartphone preys on our “if I don’t do it while I’m thinking about it, I’ll forget” weakness. We interrupt whatever we’re doing to send a quick email or do some other small task, which results in wasted time and mental energy flipping back and forth between tasks. Instead, use your voice reminder to add the task to your calendar for a time when you know you’ll be at your desk. The added perk? You’ll be much less likely to forget to bill for the time you spend on tasks that otherwise might be lost between picking up dry cleaning and taking out the trash.
- 2. Your smartphone is not your computer.** Smartphones do not replace computers—at least not in the traditional way most attorneys use computers. Yet, when we’re not at our desk, we often try to accomplish computer-related tasks by using our smartphone. Mobile devices may be perfect for pulling up contact information or checking directions to a deposition, but they’re inefficient tools for typing long emails, performing legal research, or editing documents. Obviously, there are times when you require information in a pinch, and your smartphone comes to the rescue. But there is a big difference between can and should. Just because we can use our smartphone to perform a task doesn’t mean we should. Try limiting smartphone activity to tasks that truly make sense to handle with a mobile device. If a task isn’t one that can be done as efficiently from a smartphone as it can from your computer, let it wait—if it can—until you’re back at your computer where you can work more efficiently. And use that voice reminder to make sure you don’t forget.

3. But it can serve as a surrogate Dictaphone. Most smartphones now have voice recording ability that allows you to dictate directly into the device and send the message (i.e., your dictation) to your office. If your assistant helps with timekeeping, don’t forget to include a message asking him or her to record your time spent on the dictation.

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