

ASK THE EXPERT

How Small Is Too Small for Working on the Go?



Ryan Alban



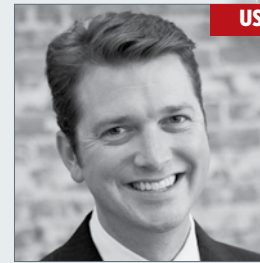
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David Gardiner



David Gardiner is the EMEA Server Operations Manager at Mayer Brown LLP and has 17 years of experience in IT operations in professional services firms. David is responsible for Mayer Brown's global messaging infrastructure and recently led the project to introduce iPhone, iPad and Android devices into the firm. He is also leading the firm's messaging platform upgrade to Exchange 2010. David can be reached at dgardiner@mayerbrown.com.



Justin Hectus



Justin Hectus is the Director of Information for Keesal, Young & Logan, the only law firm recipient of a 2003 InfoWorld 100 award for innovative mobile initiatives. Justin received a 2011 ILTA Distinguished Peer Award for the development of a learning environment that measures skill levels across all applications and job functions, provides personalized training opportunities and credit for participation via a custom-built Web-based system. He can be reached at justin.hectus@kyl.com.



Steven Shock



Steven Shock is the Chief Technology Officer for Irell & Manella LLP. With over 20 years of experience in legal information technology, he has held roles as an

IT director, system integration manager, lead systems engineer and IT support specialist. Steven is currently a member of ILTA's Server Operations and Security Peer Group Steering Committee. He can be reached at sshock@irell.com.



Charlotte Washington



Charlotte Washington is the Manager of Technology Services for Sheppard Mullin. She has led and participated in software upgrades and implementation projects for nearly 100 law firms and corporations. Charlotte serves as the Communications Liaison for ILTA's User Support Peer Group and is a featured speaker at ILTA conferences and regional events. She can be reached at cwashington@sheppardmullin.com.

In this new age of consumerization, law firms are expected to support devices of every size and brand. With lawyers and support staff utilizing mobile devices in their always-connected lives, it's only natural that there is an increasing demand for mobile access to work functions and applications. But when does a device become too small to feasibly perform work? Several ILTA members recently sat down at a virtual roundtable to share their views on this very topic. Each person's interview can be heard in its entirety on the accompanying podcasts.

What is the smallest device that you allow to connect to your firm's network?

David: Our firm allows the connection of some small phones and tablets, including BlackBerry, Android, iPhone and iPad devices. We're currently evaluating Windows Phone version 7.

Ryan: I think the smallest device we allow to connect to the firm's network is the BlackBerry Pearl 9100. We don't have many, but that form factor reflects the desires of our users who want a very "pocket-able" device at the expense of screen size and keyboard input.

Steven: I'm with everyone else; in terms of form factor, the smallest device we allow is a smartphone like iPhone, Droid or BlackBerry.

Charlotte: If it is within our protected network, then we allow any device that has an identifiable MAC address. Outside of that, we allow any device that has a Citrix or Good Technology client.

Justin: We don't have any size restrictions, and we encourage our professionals to let us know if they come across any device that they think would be a good fit, because the trend we're seeing is that users are becoming more sophisticated and practical about evaluating what's optimal for their needs. We've entered into this period where big is the new small, and people who have consistently moved toward increasingly smaller and more powerful devices are now looking at tablet PCs and iPads.

What are the most common work-related tasks that lawyers can perform when using a mobile device?

Charlotte: It's critical for our attorneys to have reliable accessibility to email messages from any device. Another important task is the ability to read attachments, particularly Word and PDF documents, from their devices. This is

possible on small devices such as an iPhone, but it's certainly more appealing on ones with some size, such as an iPad or even a seven-inch tablet.

Steven: Email messaging is the primary activity, and our users have remote access via published applications and the published desktop on their devices, as well as some reference and internal information portals.

Justin: We have developed apps for workload distribution on the road, including access to financial reporting, expense reporting and other functions that tie into our intranet. One of the great things about the time entry app we use is that lawyers can get a reminder to bill a case whenever they end a call. Those hooks that tie standard functions into your important revenue-generating work tasks are important. What I really like about mobile application development is that you can quickly put together a mobile app without a significant investment of time or money and deliver it to someone who's been looking for something, such as an expense report application, and find out whether it's really going to be used before you scale it to a full-blown app for the desktop or laptop.

Ryan: Email messaging and phone calls are still the most common tasks performed by our users. Other uses vary by work responsibility. Some people are creators of work product and need familiar methods for fast input and manipulation (*i.e.*, a keyboard and mouse). Others are consumers of information and are more focused on reading, annotating and contributing to existing work product. We see more attachment viewing and editing from mobile devices today, but not much document creation yet.

David: The primary uses we see are reading and responding to email messages and viewing calendars and attachments. Like Ryan, we've also recently started to see some use of tablets to edit documents on-the-go.



What challenges do you face in supporting users who utilize mobile devices to perform legal work?

David: We have to ensure that any mobile solution that we support meets stringent security requirements to prevent data leakage. Another challenge we face is in the different feature sets that are available with each model of device. And that can drive some users to want multiple devices, which can then affect cost. We have also had to agree and communicate very clearly with users what we do and do not support, so that we manage their expectations.

Charlotte: Security is certainly a challenge, as is the concern of storing firm work product on any of these devices. We're implementing Good Technology to connect all iOS and Android devices firmwide, and this allows us to manage devices at an enterprise level. Another challenge is the ability of a limited technology staff to support the seemingly endless number of mobile devices available to our attorneys. In addition, the inability to connect to these devices remotely, especially Apple devices, hampers our ability to support users who may be experiencing difficulty.

Justin: We find ourselves challenged with making our users understand that not all mobile devices and applications are as easy and seamless to connect as Apple's products and the App Store. Another challenge is finding that balance between personal and professional use. iPhones, particularly, are the best personal devices you can get but aren't necessarily the best professional devices. Finding that middle ground between a device that users love and one that delivers their work applications smoothly and securely can be a bit daunting.

Steven: Security and connectivity are our biggest challenges. We use a device for our wireless access that acts like a firewall between our wireless infrastructure and our internal production network. We jump through quite a few hoops so the user doesn't have to authenticate each time they use the device, so we do a lot of MAC address tracking for each device. That puts a bit of a load on administration. And, of course, security is always a big challenge with these devices: instigating policy, trying to be sure people are keeping devices locked down, etc. Users are carrying around firm intellectual property with documents and email messages, so of course we want to protect against loss. Security for handheld and portable devices is an area that's very young, so we're currently relying on the

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built-in tools for mail infrastructure and looking elsewhere to expand that. It's going to be interesting to see where we go with security for these devices.

Ryan: We find it especially challenging when the support person and the mobile device are in different places, which, by their nature, is common. Remote management utilities are a “must have,” as are remote control utilities, which is why it's so important that your target platform supports those capabilities. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then remote control of a device is worth a million. You can save valuable attorney time and patience by connecting and resolving the problem instead of trying to walk through the steps over the phone. And your support capabilities will vary not only based on the devices you support, but the purpose for which they are deployed. Support for a “thick-client” laptop looks much different from a tablet deployed as a virtual-desktop terminal.

Do you envision that devices will continue to get smaller and further enable lawyers to complete daily work on the go?

Justin: The important thing we all need to come to terms with — and in many ways, we already are — is that there is no one perfect device or form factor that fits all work styles or personal needs. So a year or two from now, you may have two, three or even four devices that will provide different ways for you to interact with your work environment; say, a laptop for generating heavy work product, a tablet and certainly some sort of smartphone. We may even have a smart wristwatch that's connected to a calendar and GPS — that knows where you are, where you're going, what you're doing and when you're doing it. It'll be able to feed you information on your wrist that helps you make good decisions about, for example, what traffic routes to take or whether you need or don't need to get to the airport early.

Ryan: The most common complaint I hear about smartphones today revolves around reading small fonts on a small screen. We already have the technology to make smaller devices, but as long as it's people that need to use them, the human-computer interaction, or HCI, necessitates the sizes and form factors we see. It's been fun to watch the market try to meet the demand for a device somewhere between a phone (small, always-on and always on your person) and a computer (larger and sitting in your office). It's a modern technology identity crisis. Some smartphones have grown to nearly five-inch screen sizes, almost becoming minitables. Meanwhile, tablets are shrinking from the 10-inch iPad and to the new seven-inch Amazon Fire, Lenovo IdeaPad and Nook Tablet. Notebook computers range from large desktop replacements to 10-inch netbooks, with a happy medium around 11-inch ultrabooks, like the MacBook Air. Balancing usability, portability, performance

and battery life is challenging, but I am excited to see what comes next.

Steven: I can't imagine how much smaller we can get! There's going to be a point where you won't be able to read content on these devices. I'm pretty comfortable with the current footprint, but I don't think I'd go much smaller. Maybe we could lose some of the borders and expand the screen a bit or, like Justin mentioned, have a small wrist-worn device that has a hologram pop-up of the screen. But it would be amazing if we could get much smaller and be workable. As for application development for current devices, it's a bit siloed — you have to go through the device manufacturer to get an application out there to distribute. Although, I think it's quite easy to register with the manufacturer and start building applications. I know there are a number of firms that have started working that way and creating reference and administrative applications that connect to their home base. That's where we're going, instead of trying to tailor content in a Web-based format. The ILTA conference app is a good example of that.

David: The physical size of devices probably won't change very much because we're currently constrained by physical issues like screens and keyboards, although devices will probably get thinner and lighter. The amount of functionality that we can get with any given size of device will increase, and, in the future, we may see mobile phones with the power of desktop PCs, allowing users to effectively carry their PCs in their pockets and dock them when they're in the office. Also, improvements in voice recognition and speech-to-text will facilitate document production and editing while on the go.

Charlotte: As others have noted, we may be approaching the limits of what the human eye can efficiently utilize. However, I do foresee smaller devices becoming increasingly powerful. Being able to edit documents will grow in importance, and devices will need the ability to run software such as Microsoft Office locally. I believe that will be the key to enabling lawyers to complete work on the go — not so much size, but the ability to use applications on devices that support their practice. **ILTA**