



Hanging Out a Shingle: Technology Every Solo Needs

Presented by:
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Biography

- Solo attorney
- Network administrator for 12+ years
- Practice law in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.
- Practice areas:
 - Civil litigation
 - Estate planning and administration
 - Intellectual property
 - Small business law

Topics Covered

- Communications
- Practice Management
- Computer/Network Security
- Office Machines
- Internet Presence

Communications: Phone Systems

- Phone systems are the lifeblood of the solo's office
- Voice Over IP (VoIP) vs. Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS)
- Reception provided through virtual office
 - No right to keep telephone number when you leave

Communications: Phone Systems

- Vonage
 - \$29/month (+ \$9.99/month fax line)
 - Voicemails are e-mailed in WAV and text formats:

Vonage Visual Voicemail from [REDACTED] - New Voicemail Received

[REDACTED]@vm.vonage.com

Sent: Wed 5/11/2011 5:02 PM

To: nick@proylaw.com

 Message  voice-message.wav (132 KB)

Date : May 11 2011 05:01:13 PM

From : [REDACTED]

To : Nick Proy Law Firm, LLC (14433528517)

"Hi Nick, it's Kerry returning your call from earlier. I just wanted to let you know that the papers are ready for your signature. If you could give me a call back we'll be good to go. I'll talk to you later. Thanks. Bye"

Communications: Phone Systems

- Besides Vonage:
 - 8x8
 - Lingo
 - Magic Jack
 - Ooma

Communications: Phone Systems

- Google Voice
 - Free service that provides a telephone number for your Google account that forwards to another phone
 - Ex: My Google Voice number (202) 656-PROY forwards to my office and cell
 - Allows you to schedule call forwarding
- Be leery about publishing your cell phone number
 - You will regret it at 6:00AM on a Saturday morning
 - Pass out your Google voice number instead

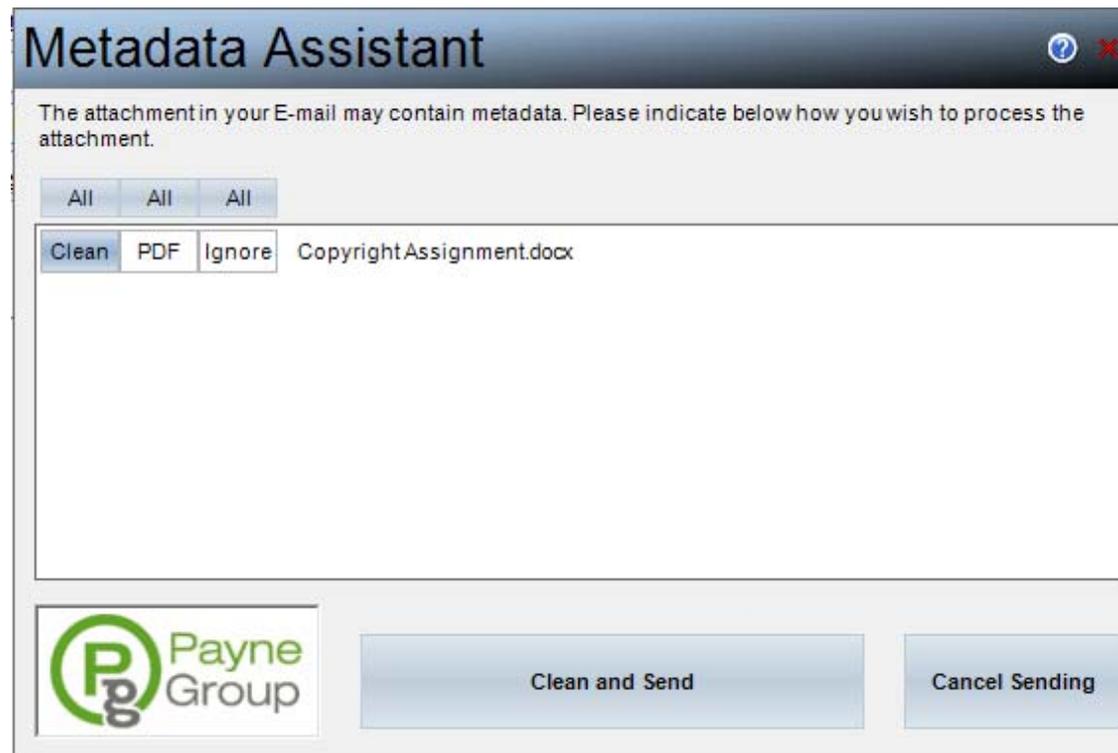
Communications:

E-Mail

- Keep e-mail addresses professional
 - No gmail.com, hotmail.com or comcast.net
 - Use your domain name (talk to your web hosting provider)
 - Ex: nick@proylaw.com

Communications: E-Mail and Metadata

- Metadata Assistant
 - Maryland is in the minority for allowing metadata searches



Communications: Facsimile

- Fax is not dead!
- Look for an all-in-one unit to avoid purchasing a separate machine
 - Printer, Copier, Scanner, Fax
 - Ex: Brother MFC-7840W
- E-Fax is available
 - Cost is roughly the same as a separate fax line
 - No control over the fax number

Practice Management: Office Suites

- You will need an office suite
 - Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Word is gaining popularity among younger attorneys
 - Open Office
 - Compatible with Microsoft Office and free
 - Corel Office
 - Word Perfect is less favored by younger attorneys

Practice Management: Accounting

- You will need some accounting software to keep track of IOLTA and operating accounts
 - QuickBooks
 - Quicken
 - GnuCash (free)
 - Peachtree Accounting
- This software does not replace your accountant!

Practice Management: Lawyer-Specific Programs

- Types of Lawyer-Specific Programs
 - Timekeeping
 - Conflicts Checking
 - Calendaring/Tickler Systems
 - Tickler systems are nagging reminders to make sure you stay on schedule
- Malpractice insurance carriers may give discounts for implementing these systems

Practice Management: Lawyer-Specific Programs

- Law Practice Management Software
 - These software suites bundle together almost everything you will need to run a law practice
- Most Common:
 - Abacus Law
 - Amicus Attorney
 - Clio
 - PCLaw
 - Time Matters
 - And many more!!

Practice Management: Legal Research

- You know about LexisNexis and West Law, but there are alternatives for the budget-conscious (ie: new solos):
 - **Google Scholar**
 - Free
 - Cases from all 50 states + federal courts
 - **Michie's**
 - Free
 - Up-to-date Maryland Code and Rules
 - **FastCase**
 - Benefit of being an MSBA member
 - All Maryland cases and statutes

Practice Management: Backup

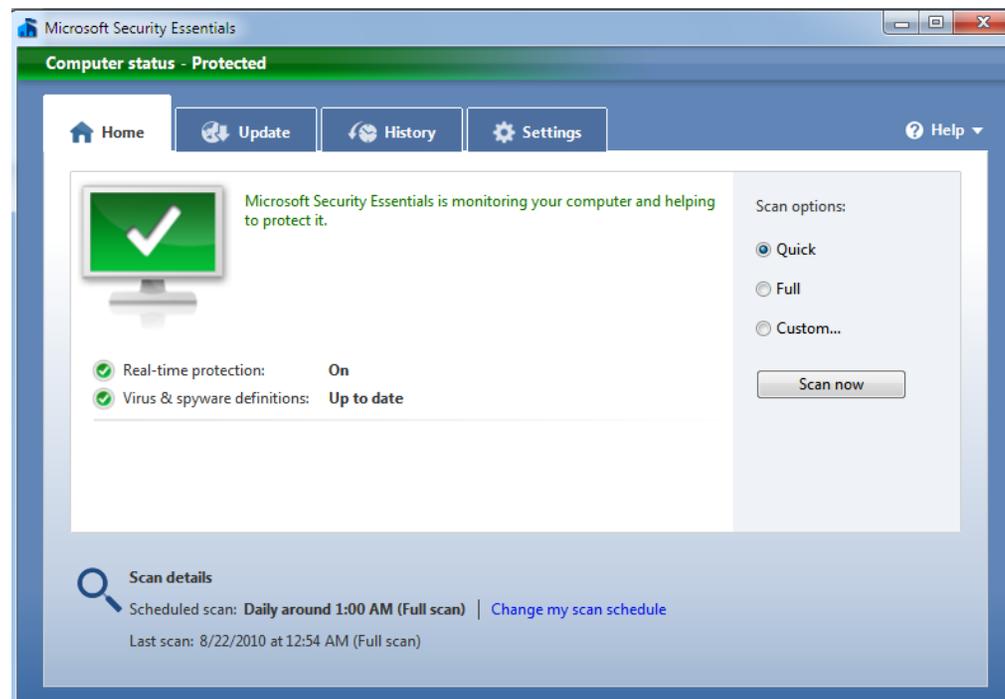
- Whatever you do, backup your data!
- Cloud solutions
 - Ex: Carbonite or Egnyte
- Local solutions
 - Local server that has backup software
 - USB hard drives

Computer/Network Security: Virus Scanners

- You need a virus scanner
 - Yes, even if you have a Mac
- You need to keep your virus scanner updated
- You need not pay for a virus scanner
 - There are many free virus scanners that perform better than Norton or McAfee

Computer/Network Security: Virus Scanners

- Microsoft Security Essentials
 - A free virus scanner from Microsoft
 - Keeps itself up to date and no recurring charges



Computer/Network Security: Malware Scanners

- “Malware” is anything other than a virus
 - Ex: Spyware, Adware, etc...
- You should have a malware scanner in addition to a virus scanner

Computer/Network Security: Malware Scanners

- I recommend Malwarebytes
 - Reasonably priced (from free to \$19.95)
 - Non-expiring license
 - Automatically updates itself
 - Prevents you from visiting infected websites



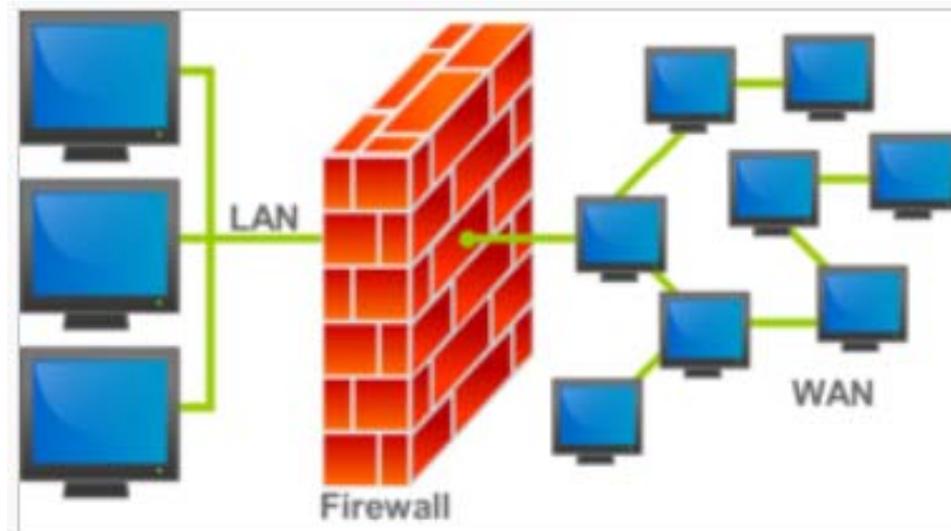
Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware



Successfully blocked access to a potentially malicious
website: 64.74.223.42

Computer/Network Security: Firewalls

- Firewalls protect your computer/network from outside threats
- You may need professional help installing and configuring a firewall



Office Machines: Printers, Copiers, Scanners and Fax

- All-in-one units work well for those just starting out
 - Lower cost than individual machines
 - Do not use any inkjet devices
 - Laser units are cheaper to operate and produce better printouts
- Biggest Disadvantage:
 - If the machine fails, you no longer have a printer, copier, scanner or fax
 - This is a major problem!

Office Machines: Computers

- Desktop or Laptop?
 - Laptops are more expensive and more likely to be stolen
 - You will need to encrypt the hard drive
 - Desktops are useless if you are mostly out of your office
 - Desktops are cheaper than laptops for the same performance

Office Machines: Computers

- *Mac v. PC* (Yes, I went there)
 - Macs are becoming more popular in law offices, but PCs are still dominant
 - Not all practice management suites run on a Mac
 - Macs are more expensive to repair and more expensive upfront
 - Macs are still susceptible to viruses, but less susceptible than PCs

Office Machines: Network Equipment

- Do you want wireless internet (WiFi)?
 - If so, you will need a WiFi access point or router
- Do you want a hardware or software firewall?
 - There are advantages and disadvantages to each
- Does your VoIP service require a specific setup?

Office Machines: Postage

- You may want to consider getting a postage scale to weigh outgoing mail
- Postage meters have recurring monthly rental fees in addition to postage used
- The Dymo Label Writer allows you to print your own postage without recurring fees
 - They have many models available

Office Machines: Business Card Scanner

- How do you keep track of all of your business cards?
 - CardScan
 - It scans business cards to a database
 - Not necessary, but nice to have



Internet Presence: Your Website

- You need a website
 - Even if it is simple
 - Many times your contact information is misplaced and people turn to the Internet
 - Do not display ads on your website
- You can get new clients through Internet searches
 - You will need to use search engine optimization (SEO) techniques

Internet Presence: Your Website - SEO

- SEO allows you to optimize your website for certain words for search engines
 - Ex: “Baltimore Estate Planning Lawyer”
- The theory is that if you optimize your website properly, it will rank higher in the search results
 - And if it ranks higher, you can get more clicks
 - More clicks = More clients

Internet Presence: Your Website - Analytics

- Aside from SEO you will also need analytics
 - This is detailed reporting of your visitors:
 - From what city they visited your website
 - What search terms they used to find your website
 - How long they stayed on each page
 - What Internet browser they are using
 - From what sources you are getting web traffic
 - Search engines, direct visits, links on other websites
- Google Analytics is free and powerful
 - You may need help setting it up

Internet Presence: Social Media

- Facebook
 - Keeping in touch with social friends
 - Keep it professional!
 - No drunken nights on the town
- LinkedIn
 - Keeping in touch with business acquaintances
 - Recommended if you want referrals
- Online communities
 - Forums
 - Blogs

Internet Presence: Ethical Considerations

- Is what you are doing creating an attorney-client relationship?
- Are you soliciting a potential client using real-time electronic means?
 - MRPC 7.3(a): “A lawyer shall not by ... real-time electronic contact solicit professional employment from a prospective client when a significant motive for the lawyer's doing so is the lawyer's pecuniary gain...”

Internet Presence: Ethical Considerations

- Is what you are doing considered attorney advertising?
 - MRPC 7.2(b): “A copy ... of an advertisement or such other communication shall be kept for at least three years after its last dissemination along with a record of when and where it was used.” *Emphasis added*
- Retain previous revisions of your website!

Internet Resources

- MSBA listservs
 - Listserv just for Maryland practitioners
 - The Solo & Small Firm listserv is very active
- ABA Solosez listserv
 - Listserv for legal professionals across the country
 - Warning: No attorney verification process

Wrap-Up

- Technology can make your life easier
 - But it can also make your life more difficult when it fails (and it will fail)
- Always remember ethical rules
- Online and offline reputations last forever
- The best piece of technology to invest in:



Thank You!

Are there any questions?

Feel free to contact me:

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