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Techno ... Tech? No!

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce



When you hear the phrase “technology leader,” what comes to mind? If you are of a younger generation, it probably evokes no emotions whatsoever. However, if you are a bit older, maybe your first thought is fear. Certainly, when I think of tech leaders, I think of the Googles and Apples of the world, those technology giants who are at the forefront of creating the gadgets and apps that power our daily existence. I don’t usually think of corporate lawyers around the world as the technology leaders of our times, nor most of the companies they work for. In reality, however, that is far from the truth.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, technology means “the application of scientific knowledge to the practical aims of human life or, as it is sometimes phrased, to the change and manipulation of the human environment.” And Merriam-Webster defines technology as (1) the practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area or a capability given by the practical application of knowledge; (2) a manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods, or knowledge; and (3) the specialized aspects of a particular field of endeavor.

This means that pretty much everything that is said, done, and known that is used to create the things that we see and touch is technology. So, why is the mere mention of technology so scary for so many? And for others, why is being without the technological conveniences of life tantamount to being without oxygen? These questions provoke even bigger ones: What can you, as a leader in your organization, do to change the perception amongst your more tech-phobic lawyers? Or the thoughts of those who seem to have chips already embedded in their heads and hands?

As with many things involving change, leading by example is the path by which you can lead others. Whether you are apprehensive or not, show others that technology is simply a tool for getting work done. Take the first step by embracing technological advances in how you communicate and using

them to accomplish work. Some of you reading may not recall a time when there wasn't a computer on every desk or in almost every home. Believe it or not, it wasn't all that long ago. Bill Gates' mission of every home having a personal computer was revolutionary in 1980.

Today, people strive to disconnect. Your attitude is an example you need to model by placing boundaries around the use of technology after hours, on vacation, and other times when disconnecting would be an advantage, such as meetings and intimate settings. I know the world is constantly telling us we can't disconnect, that business is moving at the speed of light and if you step off the merry-go-round, you'll get left behind. But, in fact, the opposite is true. It is in those moments where we choose to let go and recharge that we can then open ourselves up to new insights and levels of creativity. And yes, that's true even for lawyers!

Another opportunity to display tech leadership is when you are selecting tools for your team to use. You should never choose the new bright shiny object at the expense of productivity. Often, out-of-the-box solutions are selected because they appear to be cost effective. However, after adding in training and the cost of implementation, or worse, the cost of non-implementation when no one uses it, you must decide whether you dig in or scrap the technology altogether. This is a situation that will test your leadership mettle, as your team will be watching to see if you stick your head in the sand or push an unworkable product.

Your team will look up to you for guidance, and they're more interested in your honesty than an arbitrary commitment to technology. But, at the end of the day, whether it's fear or some other emotion preventing your team's embrace of technology tools, just remember that you can provide them with both strong leadership skills and the technological drive that will help everyone overcome their concerns and place their trust in you to lead them in the right direction.

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