A Paradigm Shift

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce

Most corporate lawyers seem to consider touch-based interaction (TBI) graphic user interfaces (GUI) as generally far less useful than the more traditional and conventional mouse/keyboard-based GUI's that have been the dominant interaction model for the past 30 years. When Apple introduced the iPhone in 2007, people immediately saw the advantage of TBI from a smart-phone perspective — touch was far more useful on a small device than a standard cursor/keyboard approach — but when the iPad was released three years later, many considered it more of an adjunct to a laptop.

This was partially the result of ingrained experience and expertise. Most of us had, after all, spent many years becoming proficient at using the mouse and keyboard GUI to get our work done. We'd grown used to the paradigm and come to accept some of the inherent quirks and limitations of that interaction model because it beat the alternatives and provided capable tools.

Our preference for using PCs for work may derive from the fact that the early tablets just weren't powerful enough, and did not have enough well-built and valuable applications to be serious competition for the far more mature PC market. But that has been changing dramatically over the past six years. Some of the recent tablets have as much power as many PCs, and there are very useful apps that can help you do your work better than you could on a laptop. I will describe some of the tools and workflows I now use that may be of interest to others. Since iPads are my tablets of choice (I have also spent quite a bit of time on Android tablets and the MS Surface Pro), most of the apps I will mention are made for iOS, but many have Android or Windows counterparts.

PDF review, annotation, and editing

Most lawyers I know spend the majority of their time working in two document formats: PDFs and Word. We work with a lot of PDFs, and doing that on a PC can feel fiddly. But on one of the new

larger tablets, like the iPad Pro or MS Surface Pro 4, you can read PDFs in portrait mode at what is effectively the same size as a printed sheet of paper without having to scroll up and down to read the whole page like you often need to do on a PC. And there are many apps that allow you to easily highlight, annotate, and even modify PDFs that are better than the ones on PCs. My current favorites are: LiquidText, a free app developed by the Computer Science Department at Georgia Tech, which allows you to highlight, insert a comment, or tap to highlight a section and then drag it out of the document into a side panel where you can export it as a Word document; and PDFPen and Adobe Acrobat Reader, which allow you to highlight, annotate, modify, and create and fill form fields and sign documents.

Word documents

Word continues to dominate word processing. Even though I often work in plain text (using Markdown for formatting) that I later convert to Word, there is no denying the sheer power and ubiquity of Word. The good news is that Microsoft has built a phenomenal version of Word for iOS. Using the full-sized and very well built keyboards now available for the iPad Pro or Surface Pro, it is very easy to do almost anything on a tablet that you could previously have done only on a PC.

Note-taking

The new Apple and MS pencils/styli are so good that you can take notes on tablets about as quickly as you can on paper, with the added advantage that the notes are searchable and harder to misplace. This is something that conventional PC's cannot do. Furthermore, rumor has it that developers are working on advanced handwriting recognition software that will soon allow us to convert our handwritten notes to type. That would be a game changer.

There are many other things I like doing on a tablet better than a PC, such as task management and creating lists, mindmaps, outlines, diagrams and illustrations, and even presentations. I find myself increasingly using tablets as my primary device and PCs as my secondary, rather that the other way around. For those of you who are willing to try new things, modern tablets may be surprisingly useful tools.

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