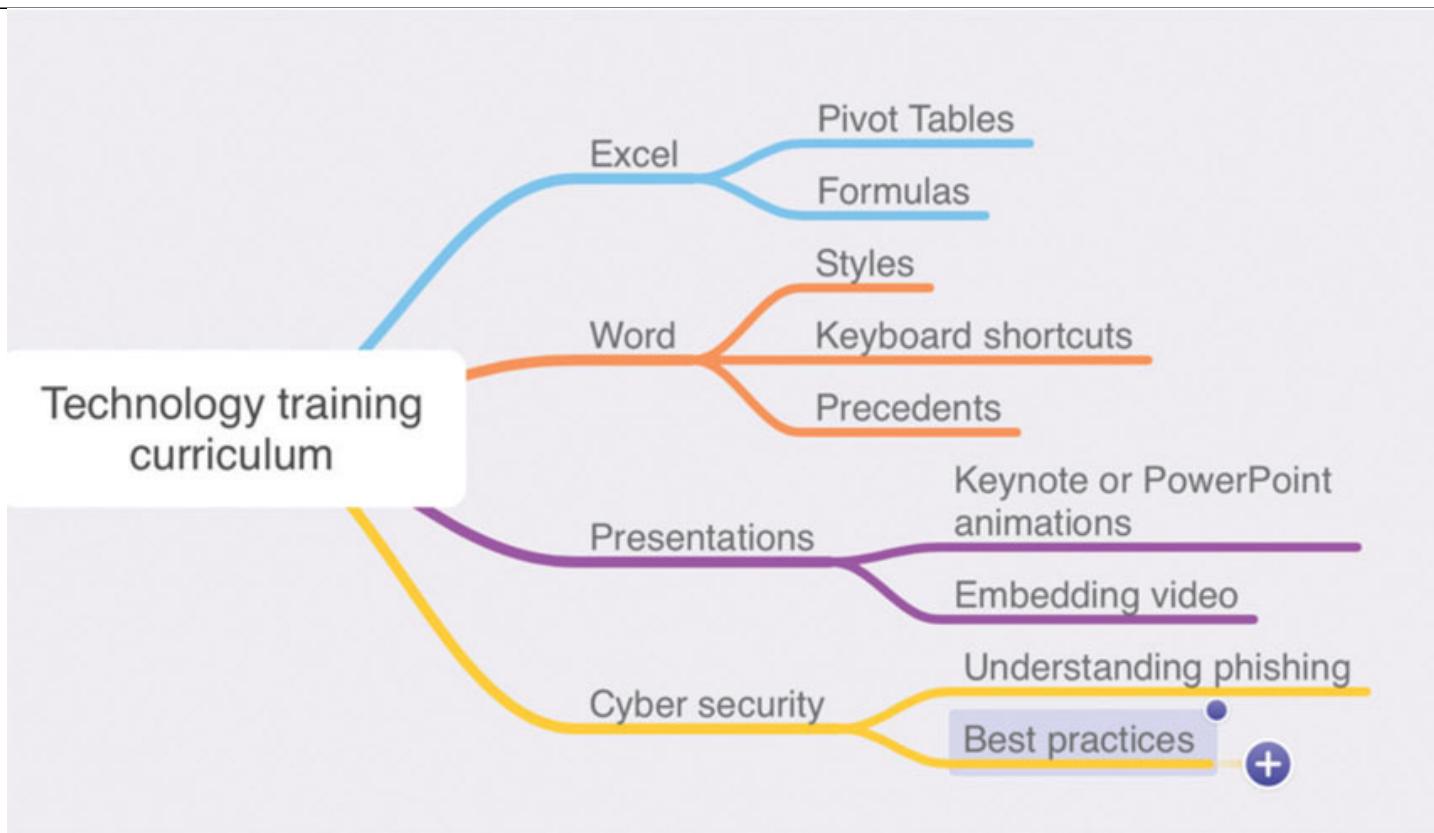




Training Yourself in Technology

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce



I have written before about the ethical requirement for technology competence in lawyers, and lately I have been writing about tips for working from home. For this Docket issue focused on careers, I decided to focus on ways you can take a proactive approach to develop your own, personal home tech training curriculum. I strongly believe that making yourself proficient at technology is one of the best ways to advance your career, or at least make that advancement possible.

Begin by evaluating what areas of technology would be the most useful in your work and to your career and start capturing those in a mind map or outline. If you are like many lawyers who basically focus on email and word processing, it may make sense to start with those. But don't limit yourself. Would you like to do more and better presentations, be more proficient with spreadsheets, automate your file management, or even start doing some web development? If so, add those to your mind map. There are so many resources available these days that it really isn't that hard to master just about any skill in any area you think might help your career.

Once you have some basic areas, you will want to build your tree to pick specific skills. Here is a very basic example:

You may already have an idea about some of the skills you'd like to learn, but I recommend also checking with any of your friends who are geeks, or simply doing a search online for "valuable skills related to [name your app or device]". And by all means, share your map with your manager or colleagues or others whose opinion you respect. Not only may you get (and give) some great ideas, but you may find learning partners who can join you and make your studies easier and more fun.

Once you've set up your study area curriculum, the next step is to find some resources to learn

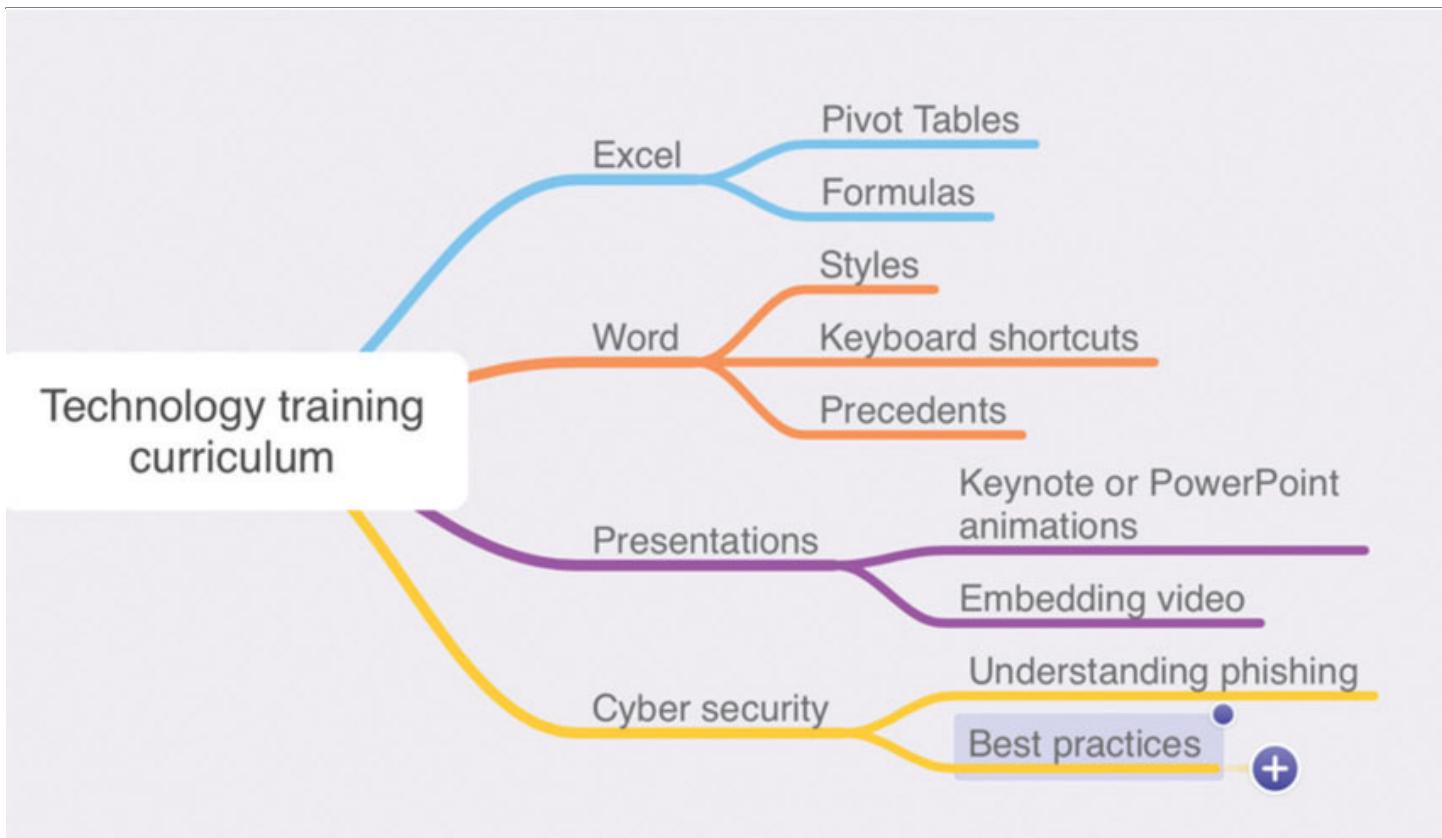
them. There is a nearly unending supply. From YouTube videos (like some of the Legal Tech Institute CLEs), to LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com), to Kahn Academy, to Harvard Online Learning, to Udemy to ... well, you get the idea. Some of these are free, some of them charge, and many of them are a mixture of both. The internet is a smorgasbord of learning options such as we never dreamed of when I was starting out.

One thing I like to do is try to support small, independent education providers. One of my favorite tech gurus is David Sparks, a lawyer also known as MacSparky. David offers a variety of screencast/video courses at <https://learn.macsparky.com/courses>. Some of them are free, but the paid ones are, in my opinion, well worth the money. For example, he offers a fantastic course on Shortcuts, the Apple iOS automation app that can save you tons of time and enable you to do useful things on your iPhone or iPad you simply couldn't do in any other way.

He also offers a series of Field Guides digital books with hours and hours of video embedded in them. My favorite is the one he did on Presentations, which gives you loads of very useful advice on how to make yourself a better presenter. For example, he provides tips on how to make your slides more readable, how to practice and prepare for the actual presentation, how to use slide transitions and animations, how and when to embed videos, and so forth. He also discusses the differences between MS PowerPoint and Apple's Keynote (the latter of which both he and I highly recommend if you can use it), and ways to use them on both laptops and iPads.

You may be worried that training yourself in this way will be too much of a time commitment. It isn't. Not only do most of these resources allow you to pick and choose some tips and tricks that will make a world of difference in your work without a big investment of time, but they also wind up saving you a ton of time you would have spent doing things your old, harder way. And, since they tend to be fun to learn, the whole process winds up being an endorphin fix, which is something we can all use right now.

Another great way to learn useful technology skills is through podcasts. It's funny. I was never really much of a radio or TV talk show kind of guy, but there is something about podcasts that makes them feel like being in a conversation with colleagues or friends. I fell in love with them a decade ago and have never stopped. There are many kinds of podcasts that focus on technology — news podcasts, business analysis podcasts, futurist podcasts, and many others. But my personal favorites are ones that contain useful tips or discussions about how people actually use their technology.



Some of these, like Brett Burney's *Apps in Law* podcast or Dennis Kennedy and Tom Mighell's *The Kennedy-Mighell Report*, are focused primarily on technology for lawyers. But many are shows in which various geeks describe the tips and techniques that have turned them from typical users into power users. One of my favorite of these, *Mac Power Users*, also happens to feature the aforementioned David Sparks who, even though he is a lawyer, tries to make a podcast in which anyone in any profession can learn some useful tips in every episode. It has been a reliable source of useful information since 2009.

Now that we have such good videoconferencing apps, we also have the ability to learn from and teach our colleagues directly. If there is a geek in your department and you know she could teach you some of the skills you'd like to learn, why not set up a screensharing session where you can watch her chops as she shows you some of the things that have made her work easier or more entertaining? And by all means, if you are a geek who knows some tricks, offer to do the same for others.

You don't need to limit it to your fellow employees, either. If you know of another ACC member who could teach you something, ask them if they would be willing to walk you through it (and vice versa). It is a great way to share and one of the many areas in which a rising tide raises all boats.

In fact, I will make that offer here and now. If you would like to contact me to see if there is an area in tech in which I could show you how to do something you would like to learn or you would like to show me something you think is cool, or if you just want to discuss developing a self-training curriculum, feel free to email me at greg.stern@outlook.com. I like to share.

For more of Greg Stern's insights on working from home, read his "In-house at Home" column on ACCDocket.com.

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