

Business & Careers

Smartphones improving, making choice tougher



Luigi Benetton
Hi-Tech

Smartphone operating systems as a discussion topic can sometimes prove as inflammatory as religion and politics. The major manufacturers are battling for greater share of the lucrative business smartphone market.

Lawyers historically are BlackBerry users, but are adopting other platforms. So *The Lawyers Weekly* asked them about the features available from four leading vendors: Apple, BlackBerry, Google and Microsoft.

Security

During a summer visit to a New York investment bank, Norton Rose senior partner Andrew Fleming noticed that bankers car-

ried two phones with them: an employer-provided BlackBerry, and a phone for personal use. His colleague, patent agent Anthony de Fazekas, saw the same phenomenon during a recent trip to Europe.

Citing security concerns, many employers prohibit staff from using business phones for personal purposes, even if they use out-of-the-box tools to password-protect their phones and enable find-your-phone and remote-wipe features.

Fleming understands the company view. In his opinion, security is “table stakes if you want an operating system for a law firm,” he says.

Each smartphone operating system handles security in several ways. BlackBerry, which enjoys a long-standing reputation for security, upped the ante with its recently created Balance feature. “You get a work space and a personal space on the same piece of machinery,” Fleming explains, noting that Norton Rose counts BlackBerry as a client.

Balance may be the most elegant out-of-the-box solution to date for security concerns stoked by the bring-your-own-

device (BYOD) trend.

Other platforms and manufacturers are innovating to catch up. Heenan Blaikie partner Subrata Bhattacharjee’s Android phone actually recognizes him. “The screen activates when I hold the phone close to my face,” he says.

The security argument doesn’t sway all lawyers equally. Pitblado Law partner Adam Herstein, for instance, views security first and foremost as his responsibility, not that of the handset. “I take care with what I e-mail and what I don’t e-mail,” Herstein offers as an example of his security practices. Besides, “from what I understand, the security argument is getting weaker” as security on other platforms improves, he adds.

IT support

The biggest BlackBerry fans at law firms may be members of the IT department. The company has catered to this group for years, offering tools like the BlackBerry Enterprise Server and BlackBerry Enterprise Mobility Management.

This latter system helps IT manage security, applications and other facets of smartphone administration. BlackBerry’s mobile device management system also handles handsets from other manufacturers. For all the recent hardware and operating system changes on the BlackBerry front end, the server end is still familiar to IT professionals.

Many firms also support iPhone, and are starting to accept Android and Windows phones as well.

Keyboard

Many people love the physical keyboard, but Norton Rose partner Chris Hunter figures its days are numbered.

Not that it matters to him. “The predictive typing on the Z10 is mind-blowing,” he says. “It learns your typing habits over time. I tried a demo unit and it was really easy to use.” Hunter’s experience with iPhone’s predictive typing wasn’t as successful.

Self-described “power typer” de Fazekas claims the Z10’s predictive typing has made him faster and more accurate, traits which help him with the “thinking work” he does on mobiles. “I’m not just texting and using abbreviations. I craft e-mail memorandums, (and) e-mail advice to clients,” he says.

More so than other platforms, iPhone is famous for funny autocorrect anecdotes. Herstein figures autocorrect can trip up people using any platform. “You have to proofread your stuff, but that’s no different than it’s ever been,” he says.

“Typing was my biggest concern on iPhone,” Herstein admits. But “within 48 hours I didn’t worry about that anymore. The editing process is pretty good too.”

Physical keyboard diehards like Davis LLP associate Brigitte Lenis gladly admit their preferences. “Had the BlackBerry not had the physical keyboard, I would have gone for iPhone,” she says, noting encouragement from her firm’s IT department to try Apple’s device.

On certain platforms, users can’t configure their keyboards much. Not so on Android. “I didn’t like the stock Android keyboard, so I switched to SwiftKey,” Bhattacharjee says, noting that the new BlackBerry on-screen keyboard mimics SwiftKey.

E-mail and messaging

Next to making phone calls, e-mail may be the biggest draw for lawyers.

Hunter likes filing e-mail on the BlackBerry so he doesn’t need to do so on his computer later.

De Fazekas prioritizes his e-mails, but lately he’s been fielding increasing numbers of LinkedIn InMail messages from clients. “Some of my clients use LinkedIn as their primary method of communication,” he says. “I didn’t prioritize LinkedIn messages the same way previously.” He now uses the new BlackBerry Hub to handle different stream of messages.

Next time, we’ll continue our “smartphone showdown” as we cover insights into synchronizing business data, available business apps and more.



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