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Newsletter/Post

In Defense of My Mac Mythbusters TechnoFeature

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In her recent TechnoFeature, Mythbusters: Should Your Law Firm Switch From Windows to Mac?, Christel Burris wrote:

>"Mac OS X is an elegant operating system, which I suspect
 >offers a superior experience for certain industries such as
 >publishing. But can it outperform Windows in the legal
 >profession? Absolutely not."

William R. Shilling responded:

>"Great article ... just think, the author had 25 years
 >working with Windows-based systems and 18 months with
 >Macs.. working with over 200 Windows-based workstations and
 >4 Macs ... this MUST be a totally unbiased review ...
 >yeah.

>"Loved all the assumptions, such as the "unrealistic view"
 >of working efficiently on a Mac after using a Windows
 >computer. Yes, it might take some time for a Windows user
 >to "unlearn" the utter counter-intuitive system that
 >Windows forces upon the masses, but at the end of the day,
 >the user who actually immerses themselves in the Mac OS
 >will become the more productive worker...."

In his CM's Note, Neil J. Squillante wrote:

>"Christel's TechnoFeature article has people talking. For
 >example, read William Wilson's "An Open Letter to
 >TechnoLawyer." I don't know why he's addressing
 >TechnoLawyer as a whole, but at least he sticks to
 >critiquing the article thereafter."
 ><http://www.themaclawyer.com/2009/08/articles/switching-to-macs/response-to-technolawyers-misleading-article-about-macs-in-law-firms/>

I would have been impressed if Mr. Schilling had taken each and every "myth" and presented a clear argument as to why each one of my "myths" was not valid. But, he did not. And, after reading his response to my article, I am compelled to bust another myth:

Mr. Schilling states, "... leaving the Microsoft world, or at least getting some distance from the endless updates, ...". This statement implies that the Mac OS is free of "endless" updates. Well, that's just flat out wrong. Here's a direct quote from the Apple Support site: "Apple frequently releases software updates that you can download." Note the word "frequently" in that sentence; I think we might also be able to interpret that as "endless." Check out this link for a Mac user's comments on Mac OS updates:
<http://www.macfixit.com/article.php?story=3D20090806101459903>

It is possible to turn off those endless updates on the Mac OS and many people do that;

but it is also possible to turn off the updates on a Windows machine. It is just not advisable to turn them off on either platform. (As an aside, our only major (TOTAL) crash of our Mac Pro was the direct result of installing one of those "rare" OS updates.)

As for Mr. Wilson's "Open Letter to TechnoLawyer," he is absolutely incorrect that the current Mac OS is immune to viruses/malware. Here is an excellent, recent, article on malware on the Mac platform: <http://www.romow.com/computer-blog/mac-viruses-and-trojans-becoming-more-prevalent/>

And Mr. Wilson's assertion that I could have repaired the bad Mac hard drive myself is true. However, doing so would have voided the Mac warranty. However, if I have to repair a drive on a Dell machine that is still under warranty, I can do so without affecting that warranty.

Regarding Mr. Wilson' statement "I can count on one hand the number of times my MacBook Pro has locked up in the past month," I can say that my Dell Studio XPS running Vista 64-bit has not locked up once since I purchased it 4 months ago.

It was not the intention of my article to say that the Windows OS is better than the Mac OS. But, conversely, the Mac OS is not better than the Windows OS. It was my intention, however, to let people know that the "Cult of Mac" is misrepresenting the Mac OS legal technology computing experience. The reality is that Macs have the same issues as Windows PCs. Both operating systems are tools to accomplish a job. A sledge hammer can be used to drive a nail into a wall, but a tack hammer is better suited for that job. In the legal technology universe, the Windows OS is a more adequate tool.

We can argue the benefits of the Mac platform versus Windows all day, but the point is, in the legal technology and the larger business world, users are hampered by the software choices available for the Mac platform. There is little to no integration with the most widely used business/legal programs, and essential Windows business tools that have been ported to the Mac or redone with a different name (Entourage for example) are often crippled in some way. Yes, you can run VMWare Fusion or Parallels and run Windows on your Mac but why would you do that if most of your apps are Windows apps? All you've done is spend an awful lot of money turning your Mac into a Windows PC.

One more fact that I'd like to bring up when discussing Windows users moving to the Mac platform is a simple (and some would say silly) issue. There is no Delete key on a MacBook keyboard; there is only a backspace key on MacBooks. And, there are other Mac-to-Windows keyboard inconsistencies that can create major headaches depending on what software is running while using VMWare Fusion, such as the Control key function (or dysfunction). Yes, there are a myriad workarounds, trick key combinations, Unix code tweaks, etc., that appear all over the Internet for dealing with these and other issues. However, in a law firm environment, who has time to be tracking down all the "tweaks" that would help a Windows user transition efficiently to a Mac.

Oh, and by the way, does anyone else see any similarity between this debate and the "Word vs. WordPerfect" debate? I say we take the emotionality out of the debate over our technology tools and start researching and paying attention to facts. Don't trust me and don't trust the "Cult of Mac." Do your own research but do it thoroughly so your decision to move to the Mac (or not to move to the Mac) doesn't come back to bite you.

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