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WSSFC 2026

Technology Track – Session 7

50 Tips in 50 Minutes

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About the Presenters...

Brent J. Hoeft is the Practice Management Advisor for the State Bar of Wisconsin's Practice411™ Practice Management Program. He guides State Bar members on increasing law practice productivity and efficiency and advises on all things law practice management, including legal technology, information security practices, technology competence, employee management, policy and systems implementation, business development and marketing, and improving client relationship management. Prior to his time at the State Bar of Wisconsin, Brent was in private practice since 2006. In 2010, he founded Hoeft Law LLC, Wisconsin's first completely web-based virtual law firm providing legal services in business law, cybersecurity, and estate planning. Brent was also the founder of FirmLock Consulting, LLC, a cybersecurity behavior awareness consulting firm focusing on assisting solo and small law firms with cybersecurity training, education, and implementation of policies and procedures to better protect law firm data. Brent is a frequent presenter on legal technology, practice management, and cybersecurity. Since 2018, he has served as co-chair of the Technology Track for the Wisconsin Solo and Small Firm Conference (WSSFC) Planning Committee and had the honor of serving as the Conference Chair in 2022. Brent received his B.A. in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and his law degree from Cleveland State University College of Law. He lives in the Madison area with his family, where he enjoys mountain biking, camping, photography, and all things Wisconsin sports.

Jeffrey S. Krause is part of Affinity's document management team. He specializes in corporate legal department deployments and workflow design and efficiency. Jeff practiced law for two years after finishing law school in 1996, but decided technology was a better path for him. He began working for a pioneering legal technology consultancy called MicroLaw in 1998. In 2003, Jeff started his own legal technology consultancy, which he ran until 2016, when he joined Affinity. Jeff's superpower is patience, and his favorite part of his job is the satisfaction of helping someone solve one of their business problems.

Nerino Petro (IL & WI) is President of the Erickson Group of companies in Rockford, IL and previously the Chief Information Officer for HolmstromKennedyPC. He served as the first Practice Management Advisor for the State Bar of Wisconsin's Practice411™ Law Office Management Assistance Program from 2006-2014. Licensed in Illinois and Wisconsin, Nerino uses his years of legal practice and experience being CEO/Senior Legal Technologist for CenCom Legal Technologies, to help lawyers and their staff deal with the technology and practice management issues confronting them. He has worked with numerous leading products including TimeMatters, NetDocuments, TABS® time, billing and accounting software, Practice Master® practice management software, and many others. Nerino was the ABA LPM Magazine Product Watch columnist through 2012 and is a regular contributor to other local, state, and national publications including the Illinois Bar Journal, Wisconsin Lawyer, Wisconsin InsideTrack and ABA GP|Solo Magazine. He has presented throughout the US and abroad and has served on the ABA TECHSHOW Planning Board from 2012-2014 and is serving again for the 2018 ABA TECHSHOW. He was the 2019 Chair for the State Bar of Wisconsin Solo & Small Firm Conference Planning Committee and is a longstanding co-chair of its Technology Track. Nerino was named to the inaugural Fastcase 50 list of the top legal techies in 2011. Nerino continues to provide technology consulting, training and practice management services to lawyers and firms throughout the United States through CenCom Technologies.

Bryan Sims is a shareholder and founder of Sims Law Firm, Ltd., where he concentrates his practice in the areas of commercial litigation, civil appeals, and real estate matters. He's a member of the Illinois Bar and the Northern District of Illinois Trial Bar and is also admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court, the United State Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, the United States courts in the Central District of Illinois, the Southern District of Illinois, and the Eastern District of Michigan. Bryan is a member of the Illinois State Bar Association, the American Bar Association, the DuPage County Bar Association, and the Will County Bar Association as well as a member of the ISBA Standing Committee on Legal Technology, where he has previously served as the chair three times and the newsletter editor for 5 years. Since 2006, he has been a member ISBA Solo and Small Firm Conference Planning Committee. He is a past chair of the DuPage County Bar Association Law Practice Management and Technology Committee. Bryan has spoken on legal technology issues at the ISBA Solo and Small Firm Conferences, Wisconsin Solo and Small Firm Conferences, for the DuPage County Bar Association, the Chicago Bar Association, the Winnebago County Bar Association, the Lake County (Indiana) Bar Association, the Lake County (Illinois) Bar Association, the International Technology Law Association, National Business Institute and at ABA Techshow. Also, he was the featured speaker at the 2014 Oklahoma Solo and Small Firm Conference. Bryan has contributed to TechnoLawyer and was recognized as the 2005 TechnoLawyer of the Year. He has also written for PDA JD and regularly wrote reviews for Law Office Computing. Bryan blogs about the intersection between law and technology at www.theconnectedlawyer.com. Before entering private practice, Bryan worked as a judicial law clerk for Illinois Supreme Court Justice S. Louis Rathje. He has also worked as a staff attorney for the Second District of the Illinois Appellate Court. He is a 1993 Cum Laude graduate of Wheeling University and a 1996 Magna Cum Laude graduate of Loyola University Chicago School of Law. While in law school, Bryan served on the staff of both the Loyola Law Journal and the Loyola Consumer Law Reporter.

50 Tips in 50 Minutes

Wisconsin Solo and Small Firm Conference

Friday, October 23, 2026

Kalahari Resort

Wisconsin Dells, WI

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Table of Contents

Contents

Brent Hoeft 1

Jeff Krause 4

Nerino Petro 8

Bryan Sims 12

AI DISCLOSURE: AI assisted in preparing these materials. The presenters reviewed the content and accept responsibility for it, mostly because “the chatbot said so” remains a lousy defense. The AI carries no malpractice insurance, has no assets, and is remarkably confident for something that occasionally invents the law.

Brent Hoeft

1. Make that tab reappear

Ever wish you could bring that browsed tab back to life that you accidentally closed? Bring it back to life with Ctrl+Shift+T on any browser.

2. Schedule "Focus Blocks" Like Client Meetings

If uninterrupted drafting or analysis time only happens when the calendar accidentally allows it, it will not happen often. Put focus blocks on the calendar and protect them the same way you would protect a client meeting.

3. Document Common Tasks and Processes with Screen Recording (Clipchamp, Loom, Zoom Clips)

Every law office has procedures that live inside someone's head: opening a new matter, entering trust transactions, filing through the eCourts portal, generating invoices, running conflict checks, or updating client records. Instead of writing a three-page instruction sheet that nobody reads, record a short screen-capture video walking through the process. Tools like **Microsoft Clipchamp**, **Loom, or Zoom Clips** make it easy to create quick training videos with narration, callouts, and screen sharing. These recordings become valuable for onboarding new employees, answering recurring questions, documenting software procedures, and preserving institutional knowledge when staff leave. If someone asks the same "How do I do this?" question more than twice, consider recording a five-minute video and saving it in a centralized training library. The best procedure manual is often one employees can watch instead of deciphering.

4. Check if your email has been associated with data breach.

haveibeenpwnd.com will run a darkweb search of any email you provide to see if it has been associated with a data breach. This is valuable information as hackers will sell this information on the internet and the usernames and passwords obtained will be tested across many common login pages in an effort to find an account that you have reused the passwords on. If the search returns results that the email address was involved in a data breach be sure to go to that account and change the password along with any account where you have reused your password (I know none of you would have done that – especially those of you that have attended my cybersecurity presentations or read my articles. Right?)

5. Multifactor Authentication (MFA) Everywhere.

MFA is requiring something you know (a password) plus something you have (a temporary code). Enabling MFA on all accounts greatly increases the security of those accounts. Even if someone has obtained your password, your account will still be protected if they do not also have access to your temporary code. These codes can be generated by text, email, phone call, authenticator app, or physical device.

6. **Use the tech you already have.**

Often law firms pay subscriptions for software of which they are not using all of the features. Before looking for new technology to help solve a problem, look at the technology you already have to make sure the solution you are looking for isn't already in your tech stack.

7. **Microsoft Bookings for Client Appointments**

If you spend too much time trading emails to schedule consultations, Microsoft Bookings may be worth exploring. It allows people to view available times and schedule appointments themselves. Less administrative scheduling means more time for billable work and actual client service.

8. **Use Teams Chat Messages to Yourself**

Teams allows you to send messages to yourself. It sounds odd until you start using it. Drop in links, reminders, screenshots, notes, call-back information, or ideas you need later. It becomes a quick capture tool that is available on your computer and phone.

9. **Understand what a hallucination is in AI outputs.**

The number one reason lawyers run into trouble with generative AI is hallucinations and failure to understand what they are and failing to verify all output. There are 3 kinds of hallucinations to look out for Fabricated Authority; Real Case/Quotation, Wrong Proposition; and Grey-Area Overconfidence. https://www.wisbar.org/NewsPublications/WisconsinLawyer/Pages/Article.aspx?Volume=99&Issue=5&ArticleID=31596

10. **Use dictation in Word and Google Docs to capture thoughts quickly while on the go.**

Both the Word app and Google Docs app has the ability to capture verbal dictation and convert it to text. Have something on your mind or experiencing an "Aha!" moment, pop open the app and click the microphone button and dictate it to the application. When you are back at the office you will be able to pickup where you left off.

11. **Make a Closing Checklist for Every Matter Type**

Every matter should end with the same basic questions: final bill sent, trust balance resolved, file retention date noted, original documents returned, disengagement letter sent, and future deadlines addressed. A checklist prevents loose ends from becoming grievances

12. **Document Retention Policy and Lifecycle Management.**

Retain all closed files for a minimum of 6 years is the general rule. Create a lifecycle management with reminders to determine what happens to files after they are closed. What happens between year 1 and year 6 of that closed file. Finally, what happens after year 6.

13. **Track Interruptions for One Week**

For one week, make a simple tally when you are interrupted: email, phone, staff question, client emergency, internal distraction, or app notification. You may find the problem is not "time

management” in general, but three specific interruption patterns you can actually fix. Constant task switching costs time and mental bandwidth. Set up times when interruptions are welcome and have staff hold their non-emergency questions to raise with you during that time.

14. Use Microsoft OneDrive App to Scan to PDF Instead of Taking Pictures of Documents

Need to capture a signed letter, receipt, business card, exhibit, or handwritten note? Microsoft OneDrive app automatically crops, straightens, enhances, and converts photos into PDFs, Word files, and searchable text. It often produces cleaner results than simply snapping a picture with your phone. It is particularly useful for scanning documents at court, a client's office, or while traveling. If your paper is headed for a client file, billing record, or evidence folder, make it searchable from the start.

15. Control client and staff expectations with Outlook's "Schedule Send" Feature

Not every email needs to be sent immediately. If you finish a client update at 11:00 p.m., consider scheduling it to arrive at 8:00 a.m. the next morning. Outlook's “Schedule Send” feature lets you write when it is convenient for you while controlling when it reaches the recipient. Sometimes professionalism is simply avoiding the appearance that everyone should be working at midnight.

16. Use Microsoft Forms for Intake, Surveys, and Event Registration

Need to collect information from clients or staff? Microsoft Forms can build questionnaires, intake forms, registration forms, polls, and surveys in just a few minutes. Results automatically flow into Excel for analysis. Before creating a complicated fillable PDF, ask whether a Forms survey would be easier.

Jeff Krause

1. Don't Just Ask AI to Summarize a Document — Interrogate It

One of the least interesting things you can ask AI to do with a long document is "summarize this." Instead, treat the AI like someone who has read the document and ask it specific questions: "What deadlines appear in this agreement?" "Under what circumstances can either party terminate?" "What obligations survive termination?" "Identify every provision dealing with insurance." You can also ask it to identify where in the document it found each answer so you can verify the result. This can turn a 100-page document into something you can explore conversationally. The important rule for lawyers remains the same: AI can help you **find what you need to review; it does not eliminate the need to review it yourself.**

2. Ask AI What's Missing

We usually ask AI to tell us what is *in* something. Try asking it what's **not** there. Give AI a draft agreement, letter, checklist, policy, presentation, or other document and ask: "What topics would you normally expect a document of this type to address that this draft does not?" You can make the question more specific: "What questions would opposing counsel ask?" or "What would concern a cautious client reading this?" This can make AI useful as a second set of eyes rather than simply a writing machine. It won't know whether something was omitted intentionally, so treat the response as an issue-spotting checklist, not a list of errors.

3. Make AI Argue Against You

Confirmation bias isn't limited to humans. If you tell an AI why your position is correct and ask it to strengthen your argument, don't be surprised when it agrees with you. Instead, deliberately give it the opposite assignment. Tell it: "Act as opposing counsel. Identify the strongest arguments against my position, weaknesses in my reasoning, facts you would attack, and additional information you would want." You can even follow up with: "Now rank those arguments from strongest to weakest." AI doesn't have to win the argument. Its job is to identify the argument you haven't adequately considered before a real opponent does.

4. Don't Know How to Prompt AI? Make AI Interview You

Sometimes the hardest part of using AI is figuring out what information you need to put into the prompt. Turn the process around. Tell the AI what you ultimately want to accomplish and then say: **"Interview me one question at a time until you have enough information to do this well."** Instead of trying to construct one enormous prompt, you answer a series of questions. When the AI thinks it has enough information, have it produce the requested result. This works particularly well for brainstorming, planning, creating outlines and checklists, preparing presentations, and other tasks where you know the desired destination but aren't sure what information the AI needs to get there.

5. **Windows Clipboard History - Your Computer Remembers More Than the Last Thing You Copied — Windows + V**

Most Windows users know Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V, but fewer use **Windows key + V**. Windows Clipboard History lets you see multiple things you've recently copied instead of only the last item. Copy a case citation, email address, paragraph, phone number, and website address, then press Windows+V and choose which one you want to paste. Frequently used items can also be pinned so they remain available. Clipboard History must be enabled the first time you use it. Once you get accustomed to having a clipboard that remembers more than one thing, going back to ordinary Ctrl+V seems limiting.

6. **Stop Making People Type URLs — Your Browser Can Make a QR Code**

If you want someone to visit a webpage, don't make them type a long URL. **Microsoft Edge and Google Chrome can create a QR code for virtually any webpage without installing additional software.** In Edge, open the page, right-click, and select **Create QR code for this page**. In Chrome, this feature can be found under "Cast, Save and Share." Download the resulting image and put it into a PowerPoint slide, Word document, handout, email, or sign. Anyone with a modern smartphone can point the camera at the code and go directly to the page. It is particularly handy for presentation materials, client forms, online payment pages, appointment scheduling, surveys, or any other web resource you want people to reach quickly.

7. **Windows Recall: Your Next Computer May Remember Everything You Do**

Your current computer probably can't run Windows Recall. Your next one might. Recall is available on supported Copilot+ PCs, and as more firms replace aging hardware, it will show up on lawyers' desks whether they ask for it or not.

Recall saves periodic snapshots of your screen so you can search for something you saw earlier. That's convenient, but for lawyers it raises an immediate concern: those snapshots may capture client information, email, documents, research, billing data, and other confidential material.

Microsoft has added meaningful protections. Recall is opt-in, snapshots are stored locally and encrypted, authentication is required to access them, and you can exclude specific applications and websites.

If your new machine supports Recall, understand it before you turn it on. Know what it captures, where that information is stored, what you can exclude, and what your firm's policies say about it. Treat it as a confidentiality decision under SCR 20:1.6, not just a convenience setting.

8. **Try Talking to Your PDF Editor**

17. AI is starting to change PDF software from a collection of menus into something you can simply tell what to do. Current versions of Adobe Acrobat, for example, have been adding natural-language capabilities for working with PDFs. Instead of hunting through menus, tasks can increasingly be performed by describing what you want done—such as reorganizing pages, changing text, adding a watermark, or otherwise modifying a document. This is **an** area worth watching even if you don't

use Acrobat. The larger trend is significant: software that once required knowing **where the command is located** increasingly lets you describe **what result you want.**

9. Turn Your Reading List Into a Listening List

If you have more documents to read than time to sit in front of a screen, text-to-speech applications can turn PDFs, articles, reports, and other documents into audio. Applications such as Speechify offer natural-sounding voices and adjustable playback speeds, making it possible to listen to CLE materials, articles, reports, and other reading while driving, walking, or exercising. But lawyers should pay attention to where the document goes. Some services, including Speechify, upload or synchronize documents with their servers rather than processing everything exclusively on your device. Before uploading client or confidential material, check your firm's policies and the service's current privacy and confidentiality terms. For confidential material, an approved application or a text-to-speech feature that processes the document locally may be a better choice.

10. Take a Picture Before You Crawl Under the Desk

Before installing a computer, monitor, television, router, printer, docking station, or other electronic device, take a few pictures with your phone. Photograph the model and serial number label, the ports on the back, and—after everything is connected—the cables and where they go. Six months later, when you need the model number or need to determine which cable goes where, you won't have to crawl under the desk with a flashlight. This is especially useful for wall-mounted equipment and devices installed in cabinets. Put the pictures in an album called "Equipment" and you've created a simple but remarkably useful hardware inventory.

11. Stop Emailing Files to Yourself

You need a document that's on your office computer when you're using your laptop or phone, so you email it to yourself. It works—but now you've created another copy of the document sitting in an email system. If your organization uses OneDrive, SharePoint, Dropbox, Google Drive, or another approved cloud-storage system, learn how to access it from all of your devices instead. Properly configured cloud storage lets you work with the same file rather than creating a chain of attachments called Agreement.docx, Agreement-final.docx, and inevitably Agreement-final-FINAL.docx. For lawyers, fewer uncontrolled copies of client documents is an added benefit. **Do not sync everything.** This will cause lot of problems, especially if multiple users start doing it. If you absolutely need a file or two on your local computer, create a Local Sync or Travel Sync folder, move or copy files to and from that folder and sync only that folder.

12. Headphones That Don't Go in Your Ears — Try Open-Ear Audio

If you dislike earbuds stuffed into your ears or headphones covering them all day, take a look at **open-ear headphones**. Bone-conduction models transmit sound using vibrations through the bones near your ear, while other open-ear designs use small directional speakers that sit just outside the ear canal. Either way, your ears remain uncovered, so you can listen to music, podcasts, navigation, or calls while still hearing what's happening around you. They can be particularly comfortable for long listening sessions,

walking, exercising, or working around the house. The tradeoff is that sound quality and isolation generally won't match good conventional headphones, especially in noisy environments. But sometimes hearing the rest of the world is a feature rather than a defect.

13. Build the Binder Before You Have the Documents — NetDocuments SetBuilder

If your firm uses NetDocuments, take a look at SetBuilder. Instead of downloading documents and manually assembling them into a closing binder, exhibit set, mediation binder, estate-planning binder, or similar collection, SetBuilder lets you create an organized outline directly inside NetDocuments. Add section headers and placeholders for documents you don't have yet, then drop documents into the appropriate locations as they become available. Because the set links to documents already stored in NetDocuments, you don't have to create another collection of duplicate files. When you're finished, the set can be compiled into a hyperlinked PDF or structured ZIP file. Even better, an existing set can be cloned and reused as the starting point for the next similar matter.

Nerino Petro

1. **Microsoft "Spike" Clipboard -** Word has a clipboard feature that has been hiding in plain sight for years. The Spike lets you collect several separate pieces of text, tables, or other content and paste them all at once. Select an item and press Ctrl+F3; repeat for the other items. Ctrl+Shift+F3 pastes the entire Spike and clears it. One warning: Ctrl+F3 cuts the selected material. This is handy when reorganizing a long brief, contract, or set of seminar materials and you want to move several pieces in one trip. Microsoft Support: Use the Spike to cut and paste multiple items in Word.

2. **Turn Off Windows Notifications -** You do not need Outlook, Teams, OneDrive, Windows Update, your printer utility, and three other apps all waving at you while you are trying to draft or talk with a client. Go to Settings > System > Notifications and turn off the noise you do not need. Windows also gives you Do Not Disturb for uninterrupted work. Every notification is an invitation to stop doing the work you are being paid to do and look at something else. Microsoft Support: Notifications and Do Not Disturb in Windows.

3. **The Most Dangerous Document-Automation System in America Is Probably 'Save As' -** We have all done it: open the last agreement, engagement letter, motion, or estate-planning document, choose Save As, change the names, and start editing. It is fast - until the prior client's name, dollar amount, pronoun, or confidential fact survives into the new document. If you create substantially the same document more than a few times, build a clean master template. Better yet, automate repetitive fields and clauses with Word templates, content controls, Quick Parts, or document-automation software. My rule of thumb: if you draft it three times, ask whether it should become a template.

4. **Watch Excel Calculate Complex Formulas with Evaluate Formula -** When an Excel formula is wrong, staring at it harder is not always the answer. Select the cell, go to Formulas > Evaluate Formula, and Excel will walk through the calculation one step at a time. It is especially useful with nested IF statements or spreadsheets calculating damages, rent escalations, interest, distributions, or settlement numbers. It will not magically fix a bad formula, but it usually shows you where things went off the rails. Microsoft Support: Evaluate a formula one step at a time.

5. **Never Put Something on Your Calendar Only Once -** A critical deadline deserves more than a single calendar entry on the day it is due. Calendar the actual deadline, then add meaningful advance dates - 30 days, 14 days, 7 days, 2 days, or whatever fits the matter. For statutes of limitation, appeal deadlines, and other drop-dead dates, use the firm's docketing or calendaring system and make sure someone else can see the date too. The goal is not calendar confetti. It is enough warning to act before the emergency. A reminder that appears at 8:00 a.m. on the due date is an alarm clock, not a calendaring system.

6. **Your Webcam Matters - Don't Look Like a Ghost -** Lawyers spend a lot more time on camera than we used to, and the built-in webcam is not always doing you any favors. Put the camera close to eye level, have the light in front of you instead of a bright window behind you, and make sure the right

camera is selected before the meeting starts. A modest external webcam and small light can make a noticeable difference. Courts and clients should be paying attention to what you are saying - not wondering why you look like you are calling from a cave. Microsoft Teams device settings.

7. **Have Monitor, Will Travel -** Once you get used to two monitors in the office, going back to one laptop screen on the road feels painful. Portable USB-C monitors have gotten lighter and easier to carry, and many can take both video and power over one cable. Put your notes or exhibits on one screen and Zoom, Teams, email, or your draft on the other. Before buying, check weight, brightness, stand quality, and whether your laptop's USB-C port supports video output. WIRED: The Best Portable Monitors for Taking Work on the Go. If you have an iPad, you already have a second monitor with the use of a app such as Duet Display https://www.duetdisplay.com/ ; Apple Sidecar https://support.apple.com/en-us/102597 ; Spacedesk https://www.spacedesk.net/ ; Splashtop Xdisplay https://www.splashtop.com/products/wiredxdisplay and others.

8. **28 Tips to Take Your ChatGPT Prompts to the Next Level -** A useful 2026 WIRED article collects 28 practical ideas for getting better results from ChatGPT. Several translate well to legal work: give the AI examples of the output you want, provide a starting point instead of always asking it to create from scratch, ask it to critique your draft, tell it what format you want back, and give it enough context to understand the job. Better input usually produces better output. But context is not the same thing as confidential client information - know the tool, your firm's policy, and the applicable ethics rules first. WIRED: 28 Tips to Take Your ChatGPT Prompts to the Next Level.

9. **Glary Utilities -** Glary Utilities is a Windows toolbox with utilities for cleaning temporary files, managing startup items, uninstalling software, finding duplicate files, checking disk usage, and more. There is a free version and a portable version. I find it so useful, I have the paid version. However,, a word of caution: start slow and focus on the targeted tools rather than blindly running a registry cleaner or clicking every repair button because it is there. Create a restore point, know what you are changing, and download it from the official site. Glary Utilities.

10. **AI Hallucination Cases - A Database Every Lawyer Using AI Should Bookmark -** Damien Charlotin's AI Hallucination Cases database tracks legal decisions in which courts or tribunals addressed AI-generated hallucinated material - fake cases, false quotations, misrepresented authority, and similar problems. When these materials were prepared on September 5, 2026, the database had already passed 2,000 decisions worldwide. It is searchable by jurisdiction, party, AI tool, type of hallucination, and sanction. It is a terrific teaching resource because the lesson is hard to miss: AI output that looks authoritative still has to be verified. Your name is on the filing, not the chatbot's. AI Hallucination Cases Database.

11. **Put a Disengagement Letter at the End of Every Matter -** Do not leave the end of the attorney-client relationship fuzzy. When the work is finished, send a short closing or disengagement letter saying the representation has ended, identifying any remaining responsibilities or deadlines, addressing the final bill or trust balance if appropriate, and explaining what will happen with the client file. Wisconsin SCR 20:1.16(d) addresses a lawyer's duties when representation ends. A clear closing letter also helps prevent the client from assuming six months later that you are still watching a

deadline you thought was their responsibility. Wisconsin Lawyer: When Is a Client a Former Client? and Wisconsin Ethics Opinion EF-16-03.

12. **USB Cables Matter -** USB-C solved the problem of which way the plug goes in. It did not solve the problem of knowing what the cable can actually do. Two USB-C cables can look identical while one handles basic data and charging and another supports high-speed data, video, and enough power for a laptop. Pay attention to the cable's power and data rating, buy from a reputable source, and label the good ones so they do not disappear into the office cable drawer. USB-IF certification uses power markings such as 60W and 240W. USB-IF: Cables and Connectors. If you notice a device is charging slower than you anticpated, try a cable rated for the correct or higher power output.

13. **Turn On BitLocker - or Microsoft May Do It for You -** Full-disk encryption is one of the easiest ways to protect client data if a laptop is lost or stolen. On supported Windows systems, Device Encryption or BitLocker may be enabled automatically, and the recovery key can be saved to a Microsoft account or work or school account. That is good security - unless you need the key and nobody knows where it is. Check whether office computers are encrypted, confirm where the recovery keys are stored, and make sure the firm can retrieve them. Encryption you understand is protection. Encryption you discover during an emergency is a scavenger hunt. Microsoft Support: BitLocker overview.

14. **Your Microphone Matters for Web Conferencing -** People will tolerate average video much longer than they will tolerate bad audio. A decent USB headset, speakerphone, or external microphone can be a major improvement over a laptop mic, especially in a room with hard surfaces or background noise. You do not have to break the bank to get a decent microphone. $30 can get you a JLab Go Talk, Tonor TC-777 (I own this mic). Expand your budget and between $75 and $150 can get a top of the line mic such as AKG Pro Audio Lyra Ultra-HD, Logitech Creators Blue Yeti USB, Elgato Wave 3 or a HyperX Quadcast. Keep the microphone reasonably close, learn where its mute control is, and test before an important hearing or presentation. Teams includes a test-call feature and controls for microphone selection, sensitivity, and noise suppression. Use them. Microsoft Support: Manage audio settings in Teams meetings.

15. **Ditch Your Car's Built-In USB Port - Get a High-Output Charger -** The USB port built into your car may be fine for music or slowly charging a phone, but many vehicle ports were never designed to fast-charge today's phones, tablets, and laptops. A good USB-C Power Delivery charger in the 12-volt outlet can provide much more useful charging power. Match the charger to the device you actually carry - 45W, 65W, 100W, or whatever it needs - and use a cable rated to carry that power. Cheap travel insurance when your laptop is at 12 percent and the next meeting starts in 20 minutes. I have the CHIPOFY 300W USB C Car Charger, 6 Ports (4 USB C + 2 USB A) from Amazon for $38 .

16. **Excel Show Formulas -** Sometimes you do not want to inspect one formula - you want to see every formula on the worksheet. Press Ctrl+` (the grave accent key, usually just to the left of the 1 key), and Excel switches from showing results to showing formulas. Press it again to switch back, or use Formulas > Show Formulas. This is a quick way to spot accidentally hard-coded cells, inconsistent formulas down a column, or calculations that were quietly replaced with numbers. If a spreadsheet

influences a client decision or settlement, it is worth knowing where the numbers came from. Microsoft Support: Show and print formulas.

17. **Improve Your AI Prompts with the 'Echo Prompt' -** One easy way to improve an AI prompt is to have the AI help improve the prompt before answering. A useful version of the so-called Echo Prompt is: *"If my request is vague, rewrite it into a clearer, more effective prompt before answering."* Add that to an ordinary request and the model has permission to clean up a vague prompt instead of charging ahead with a guess. For important work, ask it to identify missing context or assumptions, rewrite the prompt, and then answer the rewritten version. It does not replace your judgment, and factual and legal output still needs to be verified. Tom's Guide: I finally fixed ChatGPT's bad habits with the 'Echo Prompt'.

Bryan Sims

1. **Use Styles in Microsoft Word**—Microsoft Word was designed be used with styles. That is how the formatting was designed. If you are still manually formatting your document, you are fighting against how Word is designed to work. The are many benefits to using styles, not the least of which that it allows you to leverage other features built into Word. If you have no idea what I am talking about, check out this 3 minute video that introduces styles.
2. **Use Cross References in Word**—When you need to refer to other paragraphs or pages in a document, don't do that by hand. Word has a feature for this called Cross Reference that allows you to link the referred to section, allowing it to automatically update if it changes.
3. **Understand Your Text Selection Options**—In Word if you double click on a word, it selects the entire word. If you triple click, it selects the entire paragraph. If you Ctrl+Click, it selects the entire sentence.
4. **Use Split View**—This is feature that you didn't know that you needed. Have you ever been working in a document and you need to reference some other section of the same document and you keep scrolling back and forth? If so, split view is for you. It displays your document in two panes on you computer and allows you to scroll each portion individually. Select View > Split View.
5. **Use Read Aloud to Check for Typos**—You know that you can proof a document 20 times and it will still have an error that you find only after you send it out of the door. Use Word's read aloud function to do a final error check on your document before you finalize it. Many times your ear will catch an error that your eyes miss. Many years ago we were told to read the document out loud. Now Word will do that for us. Select Review > Read Aloud.
6. **Use Navigation Pane to Move Through Your Lengthy Document**—When you are working on a long document it can be frustrating trying to navigate through a document to get to a specific section. Word has a built-in navigation system that is found at View > Navigation Pane. This pane is especially useful if you use styles, because it will contain a list of all of the headings in your document.
7. **There are PDF Programs Other than Acrobat**—Adobe Acrobat has been the gold standard in PDF programs since they invented the format. If you want to use Acrobat, that is fine. That does not mean it is your only option. There are many other programs that will allow you to handle PDFs. Alternatives include programs such as Foxit PDF Editor, Tungsten Power PDF Advanced, ABBYY FineReader, and Nitro PDF.
8. **Use the Search Function in Acrobat**—The main reason that I don't regularly use Adobe Acrobat is that I dislike the user interface. I like to use menus and toolbars and Acrobat just doesn't do that well in this version. On the other hand, its search feature to allow you to search for tools is

excellent. So, if you are working in Acrobat and you can't find the tool you want, search for it. Acrobat likely knows what you are talking about.

9. **In Outlook Use Conditional Formatting to Change the Color of Emails from Certain Senders**—Outlook has a feature called conditional formatting. You are already using it if your new messages are bold. That is just a function of conditional formatting. You can create your own conditional formatting. Select View > View Settings > Conditional Formatting. From there you can create whatever formatting you want. For example, you can make emails from certain email addresses appear in particular color. This works great for spouses, or efiling addresses, or opposing counsel that you don't like.

10. **Ignore Outlook Conversations**—Have you ever been stuck in an Outlook email thread and you don't know why. You have nothing to do with what is going on and people insist on copying you any way. You can ignore that conversation by pressing Ctrl + Delete. This will delete the conversation and send future emails directly to your deleted items folder.

11. **Use a Bluetooth Headset with Your Phone**—When using your desk phone, don't tie yourself to the desk. Use a bluetooth headset. This makes it easy to talk to the person on the phone while accessing the client file on your computer or retrieving a document from across the room. These don't have to be expensive. I use one from Leven that cost $40. https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0C6DLM914

12. **Track Your Milage Using Mile IQ**—To claim a mileage deduction on your taxes or get reimbursement from your employer, you need to keep contemporary records. Your phone is already tracking you. Put that to good use. Mile IQ tracks your drives and allows you to easily categorize the drives as either business or personal. https://mileiq.com/

13. **Locale**—This app is available only for Android phones. If you have such a phone this app is very powerful allowing you to automatically control features on your phone such as ringer volume, Bluetooth, and wi-fi, all based on your location, or other phone states. https://www.twofortyfouram.com/

14. **Logitech ERGO M575S**—This trackball is the best trackball/mouse I have ever used. It works great and it's better for your wrist than a mouse. I own one for every desk that I work on my computer at. https://www.amazon.com/Logitech-Trackball-HEKA-BLE-B2C/dp/B0BBQ3ZYNY

15. **Use AI for Tech Support**—One thing that AI is great at is solving your tech problems. It's the best tech support available. I use it anytime I am having a problem with a program. Not only does it almost always give me the right answer, if it is wrong, I know immediately.