

# The password is 'Mac'

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*It will get you into a low-profile club of trial lawyers whose offices run on computers known for their resistance to crashing and viruses. Here's why you might want to join.*

Like many other industries, the legal world relies largely on a complex, confusing, expensive, and easily exploited personal computer (PC) operating system called Windows. Instead, I have used Macintosh computers since I started practicing law in 1994.

I work with two other lawyers in a small general practice with five support staff and a receptionist. Each person has a Macintosh at his or her desk, and the Macs are linked to two servers. We also use two PCs to run three applications that do not have Macintosh counterparts. Everything else we do on the Macs, which I believe are the best computers for a law office. Here's why.

I am no slouch when it comes to technology: I was programming in 6502 assembly language (the processor in the original Apple II and Apple II+ computers) before I graduated from high school. But I use the Macintosh because it is simple. Now that my technical know-how has faded and been replaced with case law, statutes, juror psychology, and closing arguments, I need a machine that works straight out of the box. I need a computer that does not come with a huge learning curve for every new application I try.

When Apple developed the Macintosh, it imposed the strict requirement that software developers adhere to its basic interface layout so that all programs have the same look and feel. That is, what the user sees on the screen appears similar in layout and design, regardless of the program.

With the Macintosh, I can move freely among the 20 different applications I use regularly. For example, on a typical day

at the office I might use eight applications, and switching among my calendar, a database program, a word processor, and a spreadsheet is just like flipping between one window and another within one program on a PC, except these are all different applications.

PC users would find it difficult to gain much proficiency in 20 disparate applications. I use three programs on our office PCs: Demand Expert to tailor demand packages for insurance companies that use Colossus ([www.sequoiavisions.com](http://www.sequoiavisions.com)), TrialDirector for multimedia presentations in court ([www.indatacorp.com/software/trialdirector.asp](http://www.indatacorp.com/software/trialdirector.asp)), and The Crash Zone for accident reconstruction ([www.cadzone.com/index\\_crash.htm](http://www.cadzone.com/index_crash.htm)). Each program has a different interface, and none is particularly intuitive.

The manuals for the Mac programs I use sit in pristine condition on a shelf in my office; I have never read them. (Also, most Mac documentation is available online in searchable PDF format.) Next to them sits my Trial Director manual, which is dog-eared and marked up from reference.

Law offices often experience a high rate of staff turnover: About 20 people have joined and left our firm over the last eight years. Only a few employees came to the office with any Macintosh background. None of them had any trouble leaving the PC world and adjusting to the Macintosh, and many said it was much easier to use than the PC. Some of our staff have switched to Macs at home too, saying their families also find them more reliable and user-friendly.

Simplicity is just one reason to use a

Macintosh. Here are some others.

**Technical-support costs.** I have used Macs in practice for 10 years and have yet to hire outside technical support for office problems. I bought my first PC in 2002 and have already spent over \$1,000 on technical support. Offices that run on PCs often have a permanent line in their budgets for these costs; I don't know of any law offices that run on Macs that have to budget for this.

In our office, four paralegals and one lawyer can troubleshoot the computer network if it goes down. I am the office network administrator, but I spend less than one day a year working on the network, and I devote most of that time to updating the system and occasionally re-booting it.

In 2000, Apple introduced a new operating system, OS X, which is based on the UNIX operating system, an open-source code developed in the 1970s. I know nothing about UNIX and have never picked up a manual to learn to use it. Nevertheless, I continue to maintain our network, which runs the 10.3 upgrade of OS X known as "Panther." I don't understand why things work, but I can always make them work when I need to, which is really what counts.

As we've upgraded from older models to newer ones, our law office has used over 40 Macintosh computers in the last 10 years, and I have had to repair just three of them. I bought our first PC three years ago and have since replaced it and added one more. The three machines have each been to the shop twice.

**Stability.** Our office Macs have only two or three so-called crashes per month. With the Macintosh, a "crash" occurs when a single application goes down. A program that crashes does not shut down the entire system—I just reboot the program and keep going. While we may not be able to retrieve some of the recent information from that program, nothing else is lost. When the PCs crash—which they do twice as often—we may lose unsaved data from every application that is running, and I must reboot the entire system. The Mac's stability translates into less downtime, less time wasted restoring lost work, and less staff frustration.

**Security.** The pop-up ads, spyware, and

viruses that PCs attract are virtually absent when you use a Macintosh to go online. On a PC, pop-ups make using the Internet as grindingly slow as using a 56k modem. I rarely connect my PC to the Internet, but when I do, I run Norton AntiVirus ([www.symantec.com/smallbiz/nav](http://www.symantec.com/smallbiz/nav)) and Ad-Aware ([www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware](http://www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware)) afterward. Without fail, I find spyware or a virus has loaded on my machine.

In 10 years, our Macs have had only one bout with a virus. I have a friend who has two servers to handle the PCs in his

used it extensively. Less than 25 percent of attorneys actually use case-management software, and 60 percent have never used a computer in the courtroom. Before you decide the Mac doesn't offer enough specialty software for your practice, consider how often you actually use such programs.

I find that 90 percent of what our law office needs is available straight off the shelf for the Macintosh. All the major Microsoft programs—including Word, PowerPoint, and Excel—come in Mac versions. There are good cross-platform

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law office. He has to dedicate one server solely to sanitizing what comes in from the outside world before it passes to his office server. Devoting the capability of a server to the sole task of filtering e-mail is not cost-effective. Full use of both our office servers gives us greater network speed, which aids productivity and the bottom line.

### **Software**

In the general software category, the Macintosh has programs that are competitive with anything developed for the PC. However, when specialty legal software is an issue, the Macintosh is admittedly behind the PC world. And when there are Mac programs available, they may not be as sophisticated as their PC counterparts.

According to a fall 2003 American Bar Association survey ([www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/survstat.html](http://www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/survstat.html)), 97 percent of lawyers now have a computer at their desk, and the most commonly used forms of software are word processing (96 percent), e-mail (94 percent), Web browsing (83 percent), and spreadsheets (82 percent). Specialty software is not as prevalent. For example, only 78 percent of the respondents had access to time-and-billing software, and only 46 percent

database programs available as well, such as FileMaker Pro ([www.filemaker.com/products/fm\\_home.html](http://www.filemaker.com/products/fm_home.html)) and 4D software ([www.4d.com](http://www.4d.com)). (Cross-platform applications run identically on different platforms like the Windows and Mac operating systems.)

Software for many common office tasks is available for the Macintosh. Below are some of the major players in each category.

**Word processing.** Microsoft Word is available for Macintosh. Although you can download freeware versions of WordPerfect for Mac from the Internet, these are older versions that the manufacturer no longer supports.

Many law offices run WordPerfect on their PCs, which creates some readability problems for us because we use Word. To resolve this, we have the files sent to us as rich text format (.rtf) or text (.txt) files—simplified formats that both programs can easily read. Some complex

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formatting may be lost, but the basic appearance of the document is preserved. You can also use a program called MacLinkPlus Deluxe ([www.dataviz.com/products/maclinkplus](http://www.dataviz.com/products/maclinkplus)), which translates WordPerfect and dozens of DOS, Windows, and Mac word-processing, graphic, database, and spreadsheet formats.

**Spreadsheets.** Microsoft Excel is available for Macintosh. Mesa 3 is a simplified spreadsheet program without all the bells and whistles of Excel ([www.plsys.com/mesa.htm](http://www.plsys.com/mesa.htm)).

**Presentations.** PowerPoint is available for Macintosh. Apple also has a comparable program called Keynote.

**Document management.** Adobe Acrobat and its Reader come in Macintosh versions and allow us to file court documents electronically. Many plug-ins available for Acrobat can also help with document management. ARTS PDF Aerialist ([www.artspdf.com/arts\\_pdf\\_aerialist.asp](http://www.artspdf.com/arts_pdf_aerialist.asp)) offers Bates-stamping, as well as advanced document-linking, bookmarking, document-splitting, and file-merging features.

**Internet access, e-mail, and instant messaging.** Although Microsoft stopped developing Internet Explorer for the Macintosh at Version 5.2 (Version 6 is the latest available for Windows), Apple's browser software, Safari, provides equal access to the Internet with a well-organized portal. Apple has a great e-mail management program called Mail, and Microsoft's Entourage also works with Macs.

Several instant-messaging (IM) programs (two-way or multiple-party) for the Macintosh, such as Microsoft Messenger and AIM from America Online, make IM a breeze. We have IM on every computer in the office, running on a single high-speed Internet connection.

**Accounting.** Quicken and QuickBooks both run on the Mac ([www.intuit.com](http://www.intuit.com)). Other programs also come in Macintosh versions, including MYOB FirstEdge ([www.myob.com/us/products](http://www.myob.com/us/products)) and Microsoft Money.

**Graphics.** In this category, the Macintosh outperforms its PC counterparts. All of the major graphics programs from Adobe—including Photoshop, After Effects, and Illustrator—can help you develop your own demonstrative exhibits.

The Macintosh comes loaded with video-editing software called iMovie, which lets you import any digital video—of a deposition, for example—into the computer. Our office has used iMovie to assemble and edit video showing what a client saw when he or she went through an intersection.

You can edit clips of the scene or the deposition in the program and play them during opening statement by importing the clips into a PowerPoint presentation. You can also use iMovie to develop video settlement brochures for a

calendaring, with the 4D program. As we add features to it—for example, linking document assembly processing to the database—the number of open cases that our paralegals can handle continues to increase. We are developing additional features to speed up many basic record-gathering chores and handle pleadings. For example, with client and defendant names entered in the database, we can automatically generate a notice of service with the correct caption.

Other case-management programs that are available include the LawStream

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fraction of what it would cost to use a service.

For more advanced video and audio editing, Apple has a program called Final Cut Express. You can use it to assemble motion video and still video, then add voice-over with a second audio channel for sound.

Numerous shareware and freeware programs are available for developing graphic presentations. Still Life lets you zoom and pan across a still image to create a motion video. (For examples visit [www.grantedsw.com/still-life/gallery.shtml](http://www.grantedsw.com/still-life/gallery.shtml).) With Snapz Pro X ([www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/snapzprox](http://www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/snapzprox)) you can capture an image that appears on your screen in a high-quality animation graphic (.mpg) file. For example, you can capture video shots from the Internet or from a DVD.

**Case management and time-and-billing.** Programs for Macintosh are admittedly lacking in this area. When we started our firm, we used Timeslips, then moved to Amicus Attorney; both programs have discontinued their Macintosh versions. Now we use Trial De Novo for personal injury cases in conjunction with a case-management system that we developed for a small general law practice using the 4D database program.

We also handle our general practice-management tasks, including billing and

Law Office Management system ([www.lawstream.com](http://www.lawstream.com)) and Managing Partner ([www.scarahoof.com/CompDiv/MPBrochure.html](http://www.scarahoof.com/CompDiv/MPBrochure.html)).

**Trial presentation and litigation support.** There is no trial-presentation software similar to Trial Director or Sanction, or litigation-support software like Summation, available for Macintosh. We use Trial Director on a laptop PC for presentations at trial. We use Acrobat for litigation support—to place electronic sticky notes on documents, bookmark hot documents, link series of documents, and mark up documents to use with Trial Director.

A deposition sync-and-search program for Mac and PC called VISYNC ([www.visync.com](http://www.visync.com)) also helps with litigation support. The feature in Trial Director that allows you to sync deposition video with text is cumbersome and hard to learn; I don't need a program that requires two to three hours of reeducation for each of the several times a year that I use it.

I can use all VISYNC's main features intuitively and access the more complex features by taking five minutes to peruse its brief manual. As a cross-platform program, it works well with other offices that run PCs.

I recently finished a trial that had two witnesses who testified by video. Our jurisdiction does not require a certified

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videographer, so I shot the videos myself and imported them into iMovie on the Mac, creating two 4-gigabyte movie files of the depositions. I then synced the video with the text using VISYNC. I was able to edit out the objectionable parts of the deposition the same morning the judge ruled on them. (Since the ruling came on the second day of trial, this sort of speed was a lifesaver.)

**Other specialty software.** Several specialty programs available for Macintosh are worth mentioning.

- TimeLiner for making time lines (not as powerful as CaseMap, but very effective) ([www.tomsnyder.com/products/product.asp?SKU=TIMV50#](http://www.tomsnyder.com/products/product.asp?SKU=TIMV50#))

- OmniGraffle for creating diagrams and flowcharts ([www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle](http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle))

- Stickies for electronic Post-it notes (free with Macintosh)

- A.D.A.M. for interactive anatomy illustration ([www.adam.com/aia](http://www.adam.com/aia))

- iphoto for still-photo cataloging (free with Macintosh)

- Multimedia Tiler for viewing two or more motion videos on the screen simultaneously ([www.chaoticsoftware.com/ProductPages/MultimediaTiler.html](http://www.chaoticsoftware.com/ProductPages/MultimediaTiler.html))

- Audio Hijack Pro for capturing sound streams from the Internet ([www.rogueamoeba.com/audihijackpro](http://www.rogueamoeba.com/audihijackpro))

- GraphicConverter for reading numerous graphic file formats and converting them to other formats ([www.lemkesoft.de/en/graphcon.htm](http://www.lemkesoft.de/en/graphcon.htm))

- iStopMotion for time-lapse recording and stop-motion animation ([www.istopmotion.com](http://www.istopmotion.com))

For more information about programs for law office Macs, see [www.apple.com/business/solutions/legal.html](http://www.apple.com/business/solutions/legal.html). Another helpful site that lists Macintosh versions of popular law-office software is [www.macattorney.com](http://www.macattorney.com).

When software is available only for the PC, there are two options. You can buy a PC to run the program, or you can go the less-expensive route and get a program called Virtual PC ([www.microsoft.com/mac](http://www.microsoft.com/mac); click on "Virtual PC for Mac").

This program emulates a PC so you can run PC-only files and applications on your Mac. We use both options and hook our two PC laptops to our office

network so that data can flow freely between Mac and PC.

### Hardware

When you're ready to buy a Mac, you have plenty of choices. The new iMac G5 desktop unit comes with a 17-inch or a 20-inch flat-screen monitor, keyboard, and mouse. There is no separate hard-drive tower; everything has been miniaturized and condensed into one compact unit. The G5's fast processor—1.6 or 1.8 gigahertz (GHz)—will run your programs efficiently, and the iMac offers up to 2 gigabytes (GB) of memory. This top-of-the-line machine starts at \$1,299.

The standard desktop Macintosh, the PowerMac G5, is sleek and attractive. Its high-speed processors range from a single 1.8 GHz to dual 2.5 GHz, offer up to 8 GB of memory, and run quietly. We use this machine, which has proved trouble-free and easy to use. It starts at \$1,499.

The PowerBook G4 is a super-light (4.6 to 6.9 pounds) laptop with a 12-, 15-, or 17-inch screen. With processor speeds of 1.33 or 1.5 GHz and up to 2 GB of memory, it's as powerful as many desktop computers. It comes with built-in wireless Internet capability. It starts at \$1,599.

The iBook G4 is a portable electronic notebook that can be used for sending and receiving e-mail, basic word processing, playing games, listening to CDs, watching DVDs, and more. It has a memory capacity of up to 1.25 GB and a processor speed of 1.2 GHz to 1.33 GHz, and it comes with wireless Internet capability. It starts at \$999.

Virtually every printer includes a Macintosh driver. Our office runs standard laser jet printers, inkjet printers, Label-Writers (which print labels), a high-end Canon photocopier printer, a 42-inch wide-format printer, and a color printer—all work with Macs.

The Macintosh is not just for the creative and artistic anymore—it's for parents, teachers, students, and attorneys, too. I will run my office with Macs as long as Apple keeps producing them. The benefits are more than monetary. I could probably have spent a little less money outfitting my office with PCs, but I would have spent far more for tech support, replaced parts, and wasted time. ■