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**Alternative Dispute
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LegalTech

Master of Your Google Domain

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We all know that Google is taking over the world. The meteoric rise of the once-simple search engine giant continues to take the technological world by storm with every product they develop or acquire. Here's my top ten list of Google services for your law practice:

10 Gmail:¹ Nothing screams “unprofessional” to clients like handing them a business card with an e-mail address from Yahoo, AOL, or even Gmail. If you don't want the standard Microsoft Outlook, you can pay a small fee to Google for the privilege of your own business e-mail address with a domain that matches your website—your clients won't know that it's Gmail. You get 25 GB for \$50 per user per year.² And, there's plenty of support for the theory that Gmail users get less spam, and have less threat of hacking and security issues than Outlook users.

Gmail is easy to use, automatically links all replied e-mails into one chain in the inbox, and uses labels instead of folders to categorize the messages. You don't need to pay your office tech wizard to get your e-mails sent to your smartphone, either. You can do it yourself in a few easy steps.

9 Searching: In 2008, Google searches comprised 63.5% of the total search engine market share, and Google managed 90% of the search engine growth.³ While it's easy to search for most things, users can perform advanced searches with Google. You can even perform searches that exclude pages with specific words, or search for specific file types (PDF, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.).⁴ By using

1 <http://www.mail.google.com>

2 <http://www.google.com/apps/intl/en/business/index.html>

3 <http://techcrunch.com/2009/01/28/google-gobbled-up-90-percent-of-all-us-search-growth-in-2008/>

4 http://www.google.com.au/advanced_search



Photo Credit: google.com

“site:” you can limit your word search to a specific website.⁵ Print out a cheat sheet and keep it next to your computer to maximize your searching power.

8 Google Docs:⁶ Many offices are relying less on Microsoft Office and merging to Google Docs, which features word processing, spreadsheet, presentation (like PowerPoint), and drawing programs. These documents can be saved “in the cloud,” meaning on Google's servers, and can be downloaded onto your computer like any other document. Importantly, you can work on the documents in real time in collaboration mode with other people who are online, if you give them permission to view your documents. You can even upload PDF documents and convert them to text using Google's optical character recognition. These documents are easy to use and free.

7 YouTube:⁷ Still the purgatory for funny dog clips and “what is that song” moments, YouTube can also be used for education, posting legal advertising, and generally spreading a lawyer's message with over two billion video views per day. Acquired by Google in 2006, it is free to upload videos, and once uploaded YouTube videos can easily be embedded on law firm websites, blogs and Facebook pages for further dissemination. Video marketing is the new legal advertising—you should be able to show your clients a little about how you can help them.

6 Calendar:⁸ Particularly if you do not have an electronic calendaring system, Google Calendar is a free and easy way to keep constant access to your schedule, to be able to share/synch your calendar with co-workers and loved ones, and to set up alarms and reminders. It even has a downloadable version to keep your appointments on your smartphone.

5 For a cheatsheet on advanced Google searching, go to <http://www.google.com/help/cheatsheet.html>

6 <http://www.docs.google.com>

7 <http://www.youtube.com>

8 <http://www.google.com/calendar>

5 Tasks:⁹ E-mail received through Gmail can be easily converted into any of your To Do lists (for example, work or personal). Also, you can configure your tasks to automatically synch into Google Calendar. The tasks can be accessed from your smartphone. They are easy to create, prioritize, print, copy, and check off.

4 Alerts:¹⁰ You can set up automatic instantaneous, daily or weekly Google searches on any search term. Google will perform these searches and e-mail the results directly to you. The searches can be limited to blogs, news, videos, or simply the entire world wide web. This is a terrific way to keep an eye out about your name or your law firm, specific clients or defendants, and even target products for product liability lawyers.

3 Chrome: If you're still using Internet Explorer as your web browser, you owe it to yourself to try out Google Chrome, which featured tabs long before it was popular. It is a simple, streamlined and secure browser, and the powers behind Google are continuously upgrading its features, including the addition of extensions,¹¹ which are powerful tools to help you quickly perform everyday web tasks (for example, share web pages with friends, update your Amazon wish list, and monitor your e-mail).

2 Google Reader:¹² Most up-to-date legal information is available in on-line secondary sources, and the majority of those secondary sources are blogs. Google Reader allows you to compile all of your favorite blogs into one convenient location. New blog posts are automatically placed into your reader, which allows you to quickly scan the posts you want to view and discard those that don't interest you. You can create separate folders for various blog categories, and mark blog posts as "favorites" to share with your friends, or mark them as read to remove them from your reader.

1 Google Desktop:¹³ The best Google service is Google Desktop, an application that you install on your computer to allow you search your hard drive as easily as the internet. You can pre-determine what aspects of your hard drive are searchable, but I opt for the full index which includes e-mail, documents of all types, instant messages and web history. This allows you to easily resurrect deleted and find old e-mails in seconds. I find the program particularly useful when I get a phone call from someone whose name I can't immediately recognize. If that person's name has ever

crossed my computer, I can identify him or her before my secretary transfers the call to me. And if you are paranoid about other people searching your computer, you can lock the desktop search function when you leave your desk.

Certainly, there are other Google applications out there—Google Analytics is great for tracking your web traffic, Google Maps rivals the old familiar MapQuest, Google Earth is an office favorite for finding bird's eye views of accident scenes for deposition and trial, and Google Sky is just plain cool (try the Mars view). Others, such as the mostly defunct Google Buzz and Google Wave, are not as well designed or popular. Whatever your technological need, it is likely that Google has, to borrow a slogan, created an app for it.

Biography

John J. Cord (Plaxen & Adler, P.A.) graduated from the University of Colorado School of Law. He concentrates his practice on assisting victims of automobile negligence, medical malpractice, and defective products. He is licensed to practice in Maryland, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Minnesota. He is a member of the American Association for Justice and is a former chair of the MAJ Technology Committee. Follow him on Twitter at @johnjohncord.

⁹ <http://www.mail.google.com/tasks>

¹⁰ <http://www.google.com/alerts?hl=en>

¹¹ <https://chrome.google.com/extensions>

¹² <http://www.google.com/reader>

¹³ <http://www.desktop.google.com>