

## TL NewsWire: Special Edition Part 2: Pain Points and Predictions

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We usually cover five new products each week in this newsletter. But we occasionally publish special issues. Today, we have two special issues for you.

In Part 2, nine legal technology pundits who frequently contribute to TechnoLawyer discuss legal technology pain points and offer a prediction with a high likelihood of becoming reality.

We asked them these two questions:

*When CaseMap first appeared about ten years ago, it revolutionized how litigators worked up their cases. What need among lawyers is currently being unmet or underserved by legal software and/or SaaS products?*

*Legal technology predictions are notoriously unhelpful, reflecting the dreams of pundits rather than the reality in the trenches. Try to come up with one prediction that has a high likelihood of reality over the next year or two.*

### **THE UN-LAW FIRM ...**

Lawyer and document assembly and practice management expert and consultant [Seth Rowland](#) has noticed a curious trend — the rapidly disappearing law office. He writes:

*The concept of the 'law firm' is changing from a bricks-and-mortar operation to a more ad hoc collection of specialists and referral sources at multiple locations.*

*Practice management (and document management) software needs to evolve to recognize the new business models to enable these 'groups' to function cohesively as firms. Attorneys need a secure way to access their documents and practice information from anywhere and from any device, and to selectively share that information on a 'need to know' basis.*

### **KEEP IT SIMPLE ...**

eDiscovery expert and consultant [Brett Burney](#) has a tip for software developers:

*Simplicity. There is of course a fine line because software and hardware need to be simple for wide adoption, but at the same time, everyone wants products to do more. The goal in software marketing is to release new features so you have something flashy to talk about.*

*Simplicity doesn't mean software should be primitive, it means that additional care must be taken by software developers to ensure their products are truly intuitive, efficient, and useful — which apparently is harder to do than just gluing on an additional feature.*

Lawyer and legal technology consultant [Ross Kodner](#) probably sees more pain than anyone else thanks to his many speaking engagements. He hears what Brett hears:

*Simplification is what people want. After generations of increasingly complex software, there's a strong indication that fewer features and better usability are now priorities over continual feature-creep.*

*SaaS products fit within this definition, although sometimes at the expense of expected core level functionality (i.e. lack of usable offline modes in the event of loss of connectivity, as an example).*

*Vendors of traditionally installed applications should pay close attention to this growing groundswell of discontent related to overly complex applications and product replacement cycles that disregard the*

*end user's interest in actually mastering their application before an "upgrade" (often of dubious incremental benefit) is foisted upon them.*

Legal technology consultant and trainer [Adriana Linares](#) approaches this concept from a slightly different perspective, writing:

*CaseMap chased — practically stalked — their new customers until they attended training and really learned to use the product, making their failure rate low. Very few of today's vendor do that. There needs to be a bigger emphasis on training in today's sales packages.*

Lawyer and former true blue IBMer [Ed Zohn](#) has an idea or two about where legal software development needs to head:

*Even though I am an inveterate DIYer, many law firms would benefit from a case management 'integrator' or shell that combines standard software into a basic practice management system but does not change or modify data from these standard applications. Even the small firm practice management systems are just too expensive and too complex to be useful.*

### **SAAS NOT YET RIPE ...**

Award-winning lawyer and legal marketing expert [Lee Rosen](#) likes SaaS products in theory, but not in practice. He writes about his own pain point:

*I desperately want to move my case management system to the cloud and shift responsibility for software development and maintenance. Sadly, the existing SaaS products just aren't ready for prime time. They haven't achieved parity with traditional software, and they're way behind non-legal SaaS products like [Central Desktop](#).*

Document management and practice management expert and consultant [John Heckman](#) sees a need for traditional software and SaaS to play nicer with each other. He writes:

*Better email and document management integration with Google Mail, the [BlackBerry](#) and other cloud-based products. Some SaaS products have these capabilities to a degree, but it tends to be spotty and incomplete. For example, if an email is sent from a BlackBerry, it generally does not integrate with programs such as [Worldox](#).*

Lawyer and legal technology futurist [Mazyar Hedayat](#) sees a huge gaping hole for SaaS applications to fill:

*Time and billing (a/k/a workflow) is the most underserved need in the legal world. SaaS products, with their ability to follow lawyers anywhere and be on all the time, should be well-suited to fill the gap left by desk-bound programs. We'll see.*

### **PRIVACY? WHAT'S PRIVACY?**

Lawyer, author, and legal technology evangelist [Nicole Black](#) — don't miss her new book, [The Lawyer's Guide to Social Media](#) — is concerned about privacy and security. She writes:

*Lawyers need to begin using encrypted client communications. Email is notorious for its lack of security. Although a number of ethics opinions have concluded that unencrypted email may be used by lawyers, I predict that state and national regulations will trump that conclusion.*

*Various state and federal regulations are moving in this direction and require encryption to be used for many types of sensitive information. Legal communications are not far behind. SaaS providers need to ensure that simple, intuitive methods to of encrypted communications are a part of their platforms.*

### **JUST AROUND THE CORNER**

And now for some realistic predictions from our panel of experts.

Lee Rosen sees trouble for bar associations:

*Bar Associations will diminish in size and importance after being replaced by [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and others. Associations don't protect the profession, they don't facilitate networking, and they charge too much for membership. The ABA is starting a death spiral by cutting dues and others will follow. Don't worry, we'll get greater benefits from our social networks than we ever did from bar associations.*

Brett Burney predicts greater respect for technology professionals:

*Lawyers will perceive IT professionals as equals. Litigators will regard litigation support professionals as critical as paralegals.*

Adriana Linares thinks mobile lawyering has a bright future:

*Thanks to emerging and effective Web-based services and a community wide paradigm shift in accepting those types of services, I think more lawyers will provide more services from more places. Agility and mobility (and better QoL) will be king.*

John Heckman sees the past reflected in the future:

*SaaS products will mature in the next couple of years. This is a new wave of products analogous to the advent of [Time Matters](#), [Amicus Attorney](#), [Tabs3](#), [PCLaw](#), etc. in the late 1980s early 1990s. Barring a major disaster (failure of a SaaS product and massive loss of client data), this trend should become dominant in 2–3 years.*

Seth Rowland predicts a massive shift to the cloud:

*Within two years, a large number of solo and small firms will opt to go entirely with 'non-traditional' software and dispense with any file servers, relying entirely on their Internet connection to communicate and collaborate with their clients and their colleague down the hallway. This new-found mobility will transform both the 'where' and the 'how' law is practiced. Cloud-based services such as [NetDocuments](#) for document management, [AdvologixPM](#) for case management, and [Google Scholar](#) for legal research, are only the tip of the iceberg.*

Nicole Black has a few concerns, but also sees a cloudy future:

Cloud computing is undoubtedly the wave of the future, but there remains ample room for improvement. Cloud computing is changing the ways in which business is being conducted, allowing small law firms to compete with much larger ones. However, cloud computing providers who wish to succeed in the legal marketplace will need to ensure that a number of security measures are in place to make their products palatable to their target market. As the providers respond to the very valid security concerns raised by lawyers, cloud-based platforms will become increasingly prevalent in law offices.

Ross Kodner sees a best of worlds — the best SaaS applications integrating with the best software:

*SaaS everywhere with the issues I've written extensively about — ethics of third party control/access, offline modes, and business continuity solutions in the event of vendor insolvency, as well as integration with locally installed document management systems like [Worldox](#) and [iManage](#) — resolved satisfactorily. SaaS in 2011 will be a norm, not an exception.*

**Mazyar Hedayat** wonders only about the degree to which SaaS and mobile apps will rule, not if they will rule:

*The highest likelihood prediction for the legal industry is (broadly speaking) more SaaS and more mobile-lawyering (think iPad for trial lawyers, Tempo for the iPhone, Clio for the iPhone, etc.). Guaranteed to become reality by 2011. The only question is how SaaSy we'll be by then.*

Ed Zohn thinks the SaaS marketplace will mature:

*SaaS providers will consolidate because law firms will question the utility of not retaining complete control of their data.*

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