

TOY OR TOOL? – MY TOP 6 IPAD ATTORNEY APPS

By Carl Butzer

With the season of gift-giving nigh upon us, I suspect that a fair share of lawyers will begin the New Year trying to figure out how to fit an iPad into their legal practice. Having owned an iPad for the past month, I'd have to say -- it takes a bit of patience. As much as it seems like a computer, it's clear the iPad isn't (and never was intended to be). Although that conclusion may seem obvious to some, there are many who may attempt to routinely use the iPad for tasks that really should be performed with a computer. Another potential source of frustration is identifying the "right" applications from the thousands of downloadable iPad applications. Productivity apps abound -- legal research tools, note-taking apps, etc. This is further complicated by "product reviews" that are, instead, merely marketing ploys.

I've tested out a host of apps (legalese for playing with my iPad). One word of advice: take the process slowly. In my opinion, there are a handful of "core" apps for the lawyer. Below is a starter list of basic apps that can help turn your fun new toy into a useful legal tool as well.

Storage: **Dropbox** (free). This cloud computing service enables users to store documents in a single location that is accessible from anywhere you can get an internet connection. It also allows you to synchronize changes across devices. More and more iPad apps integrate with this service.

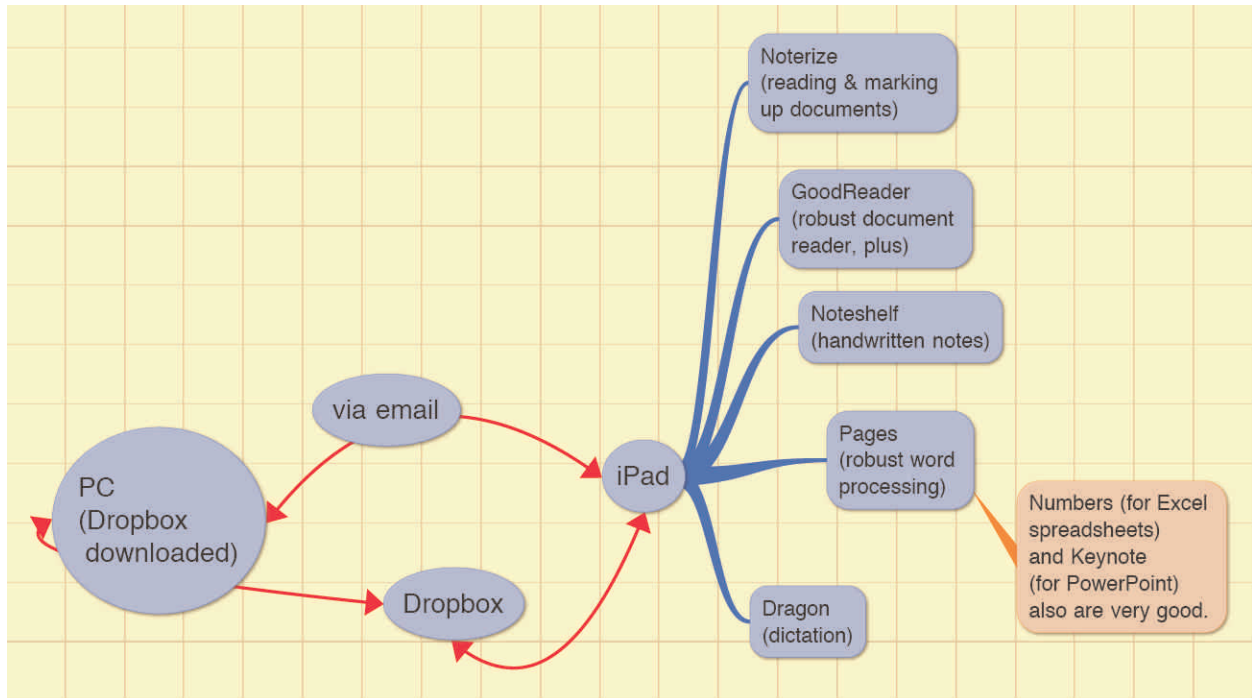
Reading and Marking Up Documents: **Noterize** (\$4.99). There are a number of apps that perform this function well. However, I've found Noterize to be the easiest to use. Without too much trouble I can highlight and make handwritten and typed comments in a PDF document and then either email the document or place it into Dropbox. Larger documents are probably easier to read using **GoodReader** (free).

Note-taking: **NoteShelf** (\$4.99). A simple note-taking app (for handwritten notes) that integrates with Dropbox. I recommend you use a stylus (although the app works remarkably well with your finger, too).

Creating and revising Word documents: **Pages** (\$9.99) is a robust application that allows the user to perform more complex word processing tasks. For example, if I'd like to work on a brief at home -- but don't necessarily want to turn on the computer -- I "slide the Word document into Dropbox and sync it. The document is then readily accessible from my iPad through Dropbox, which asks me to choose the program I'd like to open it with (which, for my purposes, is Pages).

Dictation: **Dragon Dictation** (free) is surprisingly accurate. I find it very helpful for dictating longer emails.

For those visual learners out there, I created a basic workflow diagram using an intuitive program called iThoughtsHD (\$9.99).



So, is it a toy or a tool? Seriously, it's a toy first, and my list of recommended "toy apps" is three times longer than my attorney apps tool list. But the iPad also has the ability to make the lawyer more efficient.