



Lawyer Responsiveness:

How Small and Mid-Sized Firms Can
Use Mobility to Become More Competitive
In the Face of High Client Expectations

AN INDUSTRY WHITE PAPER

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About the Author

The author of this white paper, Bruce MacEwen, is a lawyer, businessman, and consultant to law firms regarding the economics of law and the increasingly sophisticated approaches to the management of the business side of legal practice. His website, *Adam Smith, Esq.*, addresses the business side of the practice of law. It has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, is a member of *American Lawyer Media's* highly select "legal blog network," and experiences 250,000 page-views per month.

"Clients have come to expect immediate response from their lawyers. It makes no difference to the client where the lawyer is located, what time it is or what they were doing immediately prior to the client's call or email. A reasonably immediate response is expected."

This white paper shares the key findings of the 2006 *Altman Weil Responsiveness Survey among Small and Mid-Sized Law Firms*, and demonstrates how the findings of that survey bear on the value clients place on their lawyers being able to get their work done wirelessly, outside the office.

Altman Weil focuses solely on providing management consulting services to legal organizations. It offers a full range of consulting services, including strategy, profitability analysis, marketing and business development, and much more. Their surveys are the benchmarks for economic data about the profession.



Executive Summary

The legal industry in the United States consists of over one million lawyers working in about 48,000 private law firms, generating total annual revenue of approximately \$200-billion. It is an extremely competitive industry, with clients ranging from wealthy individuals to Fortune 500 corporations that hire, retain and change law firms at an ever-accelerating rate.

While large law firms tend to attract the most prominent media coverage, the vast majority of law firms are small. Indeed, nearly 90% of all law firms consist of fewer than 40 lawyers and 80% of all lawyers work in firms of from 2 to 39 lawyers.

The distribution looks like this¹:

	2—10 Lawyers	11—50 Lawyers	51—100 Lawyers	101+ Lawyers
Number of Law Firms (US)	42,601	4,225	381	358
% of All Law Firms	89%	9%	<1%	<1%

Despite the predominance of small and mid-sized firms, a perception remains among some lawyers and clients that smaller firms are at a competitive disadvantage compared to their larger brethren—and that larger firms will eventually capture most of the available legal business. But is that perception accurate?

To answer that question, one needs to know why clients switch law firms. The nationally recognized and widely respected consulting firm Altman Weil, with over 35 years of experience focused exclusively on the legal industry, has data gathered from over 100,000 buyers of legal services, and has found in study after study that the number one reason clients stop using a law firm is “lack of responsiveness.”

To explore how small and mid-sized firms measure up on that critical competitive consideration—“responsiveness”—Altman Weil conducted another survey in the summer of 2006. This survey, targeting small and mid-sized firms, explored their attitudes towards client responsiveness and asked what measures they were taking to enhance it.

The key finding is that firms are adopting tools that enable their lawyers to respond to clients quickly and with solid information at their fingertips creating a competitive advantage *whether or not the lawyer is in the office*. And the key tool for enabling prompt and knowledgeable responses was the wireless multifunction device such as the familiar BlackBerry® device.

The Competitiveness of the US Legal Industry and Why Clients Switch Law Firms

Annually, Altman Weil conducts a survey of corporate counsel that explores what aspects of a law firm’s performance clients value—as well as what disappoints clients and causes firms to lose business. A key finding of Altman Weil’s research, as well as that conducted by the Association of Corporate Counsel (www.acca.com) is that 60% of companies report having fired at least one law firm used by their company during the past year.

What keeps clients satisfied—the desirable attributes—may not be that surprising:

- Successful results
- Quality work
- Honest evaluation of our position
- Responsiveness and accessibility

¹ Source: American Bar Association, American Lawyer Media

What is surprising is the relative importance by which clients rank undesirable attributes. “Failing to control expenses and disbursements” and “overworking projects” both make the top-five list, as do “poor quality legal work” and “mishandling critically important matters.”

Yet all these substantive reasons for being dissatisfied with a law firm—which we may sum up as “expensive, bad work”—are out-ranked by something else entirely.

The #1 reason clients fire a law firm is “lack of responsiveness.” In this context, it becomes crystal clear—was it ever in doubt—that availability and accessibility to one’s clients are key competitive differentiators. What can firms do to score more highly on this with their clients?

This brings us to Altman Weil’s *Responsiveness and Mobility Survey* of small and mid-sized firms (the “Responsiveness Survey”). Conducted in the summer of 2006, the study explored attitudes towards responsiveness and how that might relate to the adoption of BlackBerry devices and similar wireless multifunction devices.

The name for this category of device that seems most apt is that coined by the technology research firm IDC, which calls them “converged mobile devices,” or “CMDs,” referring to their two key properties: That they enable the “convergence” of voice, email and data; and that they are designed from the ground up to function on the go. We will use this terminology in this paper to refer to BlackBerry devices and similar competitive devices.

The Altman Weil Responsiveness Survey went to 943 firms with 11 to 50 lawyers and to 947 firms with 51 to 200 lawyers. The overall response rate was 10%, a representative sample of the group as a whole.

The bottom line is that the results of this survey amply demonstrate that small and mid-sized firms can be every bit as competitive as large firms. Among respondents familiar with the capabilities of CMDs, **99% agreed** with each of these statements:

- “CMDs improve our lawyers’ responsiveness.”
- “CMDs improve client satisfaction.”
- “CMDs help our firm’s lawyers be more productive outside of the office.”

In This Paper

Large law firms have acted on client demands for responsiveness, and have adopted wireless technology with enthusiasm, enabling their lawyers to stay in touch 24/7, whether they’re on the way to court or at the airport gate. Research In Motion (“RIM”), leading designer, manufacturer and maker of the familiar BlackBerry device, reports that over 80% of the AmLaw 200 use its products. While wireless technology adoption rates continue to trend upwards for small and mid-sized firms, there is still a distance to go before use of this technology reaches the near-saturation levels seen in large law firms.

The purpose of this paper is:

- To discuss how small and mid-sized firms can enhance their responsiveness to become more competitive with larger firms in the face of higher client expectations.
- To share key findings of the 2006 Altman Weil *Responsiveness Survey among Small and Mid-Sized Law Firms*.
- To understand how the findings of that survey bear on the perceived value clients place on their lawyers being able to get their work done wirelessly, outside the office.
- To introduce a second dimension to “responsiveness” that goes beyond mere speed.
- To provide greater understanding of the fact that state-of-the-art CMDs provide functionality, and value, that goes far beyond serving as mobile phones and email devices.
- And lastly, to explore return on investment (ROI) from the use of CMDs in law firms.

Wireless Accessibility: Defining Our Terms

Among law firms that have adopted CMDs, the value of being able to send and receive email wirelessly in virtually any location is universally recognized. Indeed, their adoption has forever changed the way practices are run and just what client expectations for “responsiveness” mean.

But at the outset, it’s important to understand what we mean by enabling lawyers to get their work done wirelessly. It’s not just a cellphone, it’s not just email-on-the-road and it’s not just the combination of the two.

While voice connectivity (the cellphone) and email connectivity (which can be achieved with any laptop) are undeniably indispensable, they are only the start. Why? Voice and email essentially let the road warrior stay in touch with new developments and respond to them—but *only within the limits of the portable resources one has had the foresight or luck to bring along.*

Why is this important? Consider this scenario:

A lawyer working on a major piece of litigation receives a call while driving to an appointment informing him that opposing counsel has just filed an amended complaint which materially changes the causes of action asserted against his client. Next steps could include having someone read the amended pleading over the phone to him or emailing it as an attachment to be read on his laptop the next time he logs into the corporate network. And with luck, he’ll be able to reach the client using whatever contact information he has available to inform them of this significant development.

Now imagine another lawyer in that same situation who is equipped with a BlackBerry wireless device connected to his firm’s document management system, its customer relationship management system, its knowledge management system and Lexis/Nexis or Westlaw. He can not only receive the amended pleading and review it with his own eyes, but he can call up other documents in the case that the pleading may refer to; be able to look at the firm’s knowledge base for potential “exemplar” documents responding to such an amended pleading; and be in a position to advise the client.

In other words, lawyer #1 was essentially in passive, “learn and inform” mode. Lawyer #2 was in active, “respond and counterattack” mode. Which would the client judge more “responsive?”

The fundamental power of access to live data is simple: A firm is more efficient and more competitive when it can put the most up-to-date data into the hands of those who can do the most with it. And it’s always preferable to receive data now rather than later.

“Since emails consume half my day, a wireless device would be a great way to keep up or ahead of that daily headache. If that’s true for me, it must be true for everyone. I carry my laptop everywhere I go—a mini-laptop (wireless) would be a Godsend!”

Two Dimensions to “Responsiveness:” Speed and Quality

In the above scenario, either lawyer could respond as rapidly as the other. This is the first dimension of responsiveness: **speed** or immediacy.

But the second dimension of responsiveness is, in the lawyer-client context, at least as important: This is the **quality**, or effectiveness of the lawyer’s response.

On this quality dimension, the difference between a CMD with remote access to the firm’s document management system, vs. any other device or combination of devices disconnected from documents in the office, is significant. Documents, after all, are lawyers’ stock in trade. It is only by examining original and related documents, such as court opinions, that lawyers can get their work done and be in a position to intelligently and knowledgeably advise clients. And, as any decent lawyer (or savvy client) will tell you, the devil is often in the details. Having a

document summarized in an email or voicemail—or even read aloud verbatim over the phone—is simply no substitute for lawyers being able to see it, parse it, and study it, with their own eyes.

This is why we believe, in the most successful deployments—“enabling wireless business” is simply a return to first principles. The goal is not to “mobilize” applications for mobility’s sake; nor is to make lawyers have to learn and become conversant with a novel system. Rather, the most powerful applications are those already being used every day. The focus should be on extending your existing applications and resources (your document management and customer relationship management systems for example) to unleash their value in new contexts.

Optimally, lawyers should expect *the same* experience as they would have at their desktop, including seamless access to time tracking and billing and personal productivity software.

If the business benefits of wireless access to office applications are clear, what are the attitudes of small and medium-sized law firms towards adopting wireless technology? For that, we turn to the summer 2006 Altman Weil Responsiveness Survey.

2006 Altman Weil Responsiveness Survey of Small and Mid-Sized Law Firms regarding Wireless Technology

As noted, in the summer of 2006 Altman Weil surveyed nearly 2,000 small and mid-sized firms concerning their attitudes toward client responsiveness. These surveys were addressed to professional IT and law firm administrators as those in the best position to discuss their firms’ adoption rates of wireless technology. Following are some of the key findings.

The Impact of CMDs on Responsiveness

To begin, what has been the experience of firms that have deployed CMDs in terms of their impact on responsiveness, quality of decision-making, client satisfaction and productivity? Here are the numbers.²

Converged Mobile Devices Help Our Firm's Lawyers....	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Be more productive outside the office	67.9 %	30.3%	1.2%	0.0%
Make better decisions	38.2%	47.9%	5.5%	0.6%
Improve responsiveness	59.4%	35.8%	0.6%	0.0%
Increase billable hours	22.4%	43.5%	12.1%	1.8%
Improve client satisfaction	34.5%	52.7%	0.6%	0.0%

It’s safe to say that, across the board, respondents *resoundingly* endorsed these key benefits. 99% agree or strongly agree that CMDs:

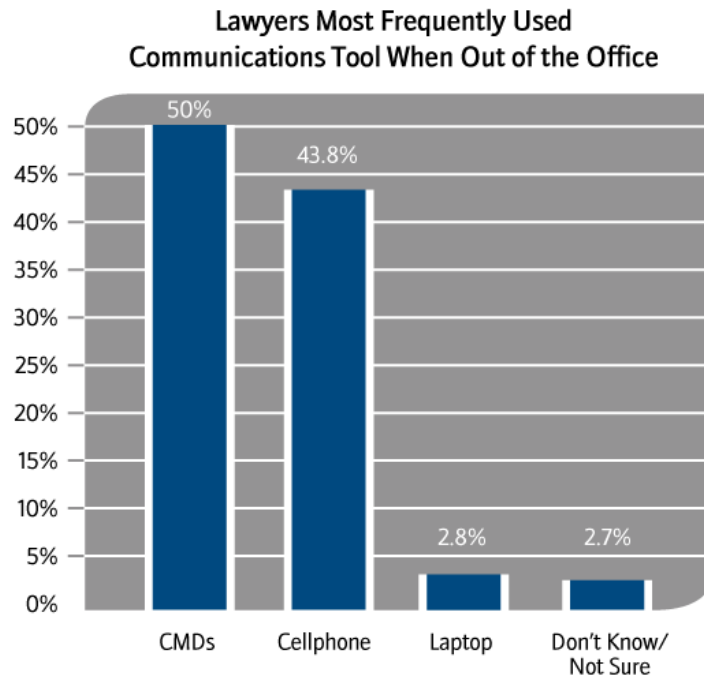
- improve responsiveness;
- improve client satisfaction; and
- enhance productivity.

On these points there is no dissent.

“The partners absolutely love their BlackBerry devices and will not give them up! I think their use makes them better equipped to handle the heavy workloads.”

² Note: “Unsure/don’t know” omitted.

Next, the survey explored which communications devices are used most often when lawyers are away from their office. Expressed in terms of frequency of use, cellphones and CMDs dominate, with a 94% joint share, while laptops score barely 3%:

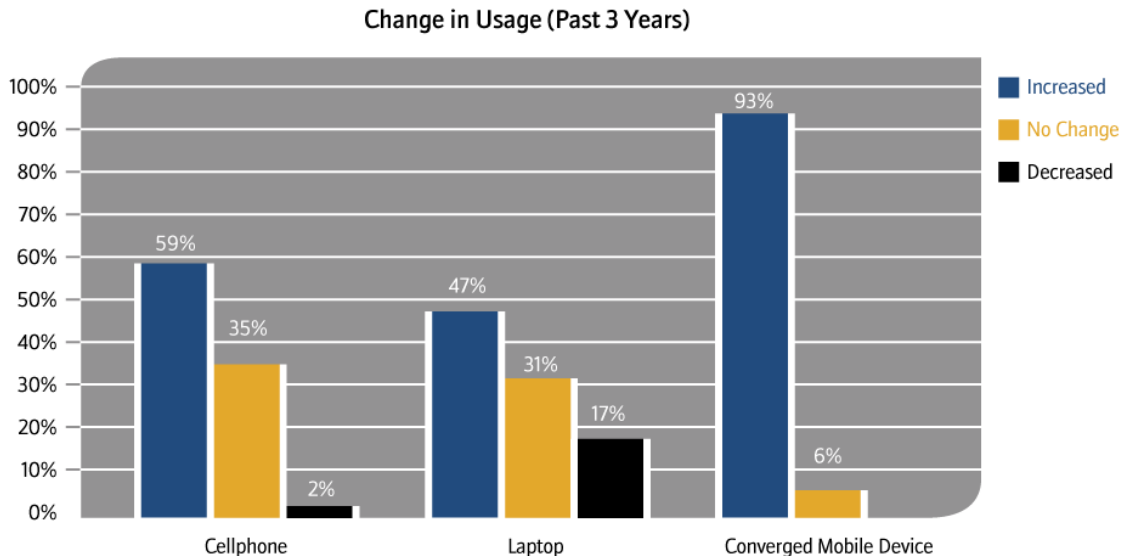


Increasing Market Penetration of CMDs

Clearly, firms are responding to client expectations that their lawyers be available whether or not in the office; that is essentially a given. But of greater interest is how the popularity in usage of these devices has changed in the past three years. Here, the most striking findings compare the percentage of firms reporting an *increase* or a *decrease* in usage of each device. (Firms that report no change do not provide much actionable intelligence.)

For cellphones, 59% of firms report increased usage in the past three years and only 2% decreased usage. Since cellphones have achieved near-ubiquity, this is not surprising; they are convenient, familiar and a “known quantity.” Such is not the case, however, with laptops: Although 47% report more usage, 17% report *less usage*. This reveals some level of disenchantment with the inconvenience of carting laptops on the road, uncertain where the next Wi-Fi® hot spot may be or what it will cost.

But the most striking statistic of all to emerge is that while nearly 95% of firms report an increase in converged mobile device usage, **not a single firm** reported a decline.



Respondents were asked to offer their observations on the rising use of CMDs. Here's what they said:

“We provide a ‘pool’ of laptops and a ‘pool’ of BlackBerry devices for those who do not have one of their own. We have seen a huge increase in the use of the ‘pool’ of BlackBerry devices.”

- “Wireless multifunction seems to be overtaking laptops with email.”
- “More lawyers are looking to increase their use of multifunction devices rather than using a laptop.”
- “Dramatic increase in multifunction usage.”
- “I expect that almost all lawyers will use a BlackBerry device within the next two years.”
- “BlackBerry devices are showing exponential increase.”
- “More lawyers are opting to use BlackBerry devices instead of laptops; it’s easier than carting a laptop.”

The message these remarks deliver, individually and cumulatively, is a powerful one:

- Usage of CMDs is increasing dramatically because they are more convenient and less cumbersome than laptops
- And nothing else meets the client expectation of virtually immediate – and well-informed – response.

“I expect lawyer usage within our firm to continue increasing to almost 100% within the next 18 months. I also expect an increase in the usage of more functions made available by the improving quality and speed of connectivity.”

Isn't there a downside to this constant connectivity? Doesn't being wedded to a BlackBerry detract from family and personal time? To the contrary—as we'll see below—a strong majority of users report that being able to work when they want where they want actually *increases* the family and personal time they have available. A poll recently conducted by *The New York Times* among 472 BlackBerry device users responding to the question, “Has using a

BlackBerry device (or other CMD) increased or decreased the amount of time you're able to spend with your family?"³ The answers were:

- Increased family time: 40%
- No change: 48%
- Decreased family time: 12%

Favorite CMD Brands of Small to Mid-sized Law Firms

Next, let's look at which brands of converged mobile devices are actually in use at these firms. To gather this data, we asked respondents whether "none," "some," "most," or "all" lawyers used each of three brands of CMDs: BlackBerry device from RIM; Treo from Palm; and the Q from Motorola. Unfortunately, at this writing (August 2006), the Q was so new on the market that figures for it were not meaningful.

With respect to the two evident market leaders, BlackBerry devices and Treo, the most significant findings involved relative levels of penetration of each device both at the "high" and at the "low" end:

"It is a reasonably well known fact that it is easier to reach someone by wireless multifunction device than any other means. So it has become the most popular mechanism for communication..."

- For law firms that are heavy users of CMDs (firms reporting that "all" or "most" of their lawyers use one of the devices) the evident market leaders are BlackBerry devices and Treo. These users tend to be more familiar with options in the marketplace, generally more expert, and often more demanding.
- The key finding here is that among heavy users, BlackBerry device usage outranks Treo by a factor of over 3 to 1.

Back-End/Infrastructure Integration and Ease of Management

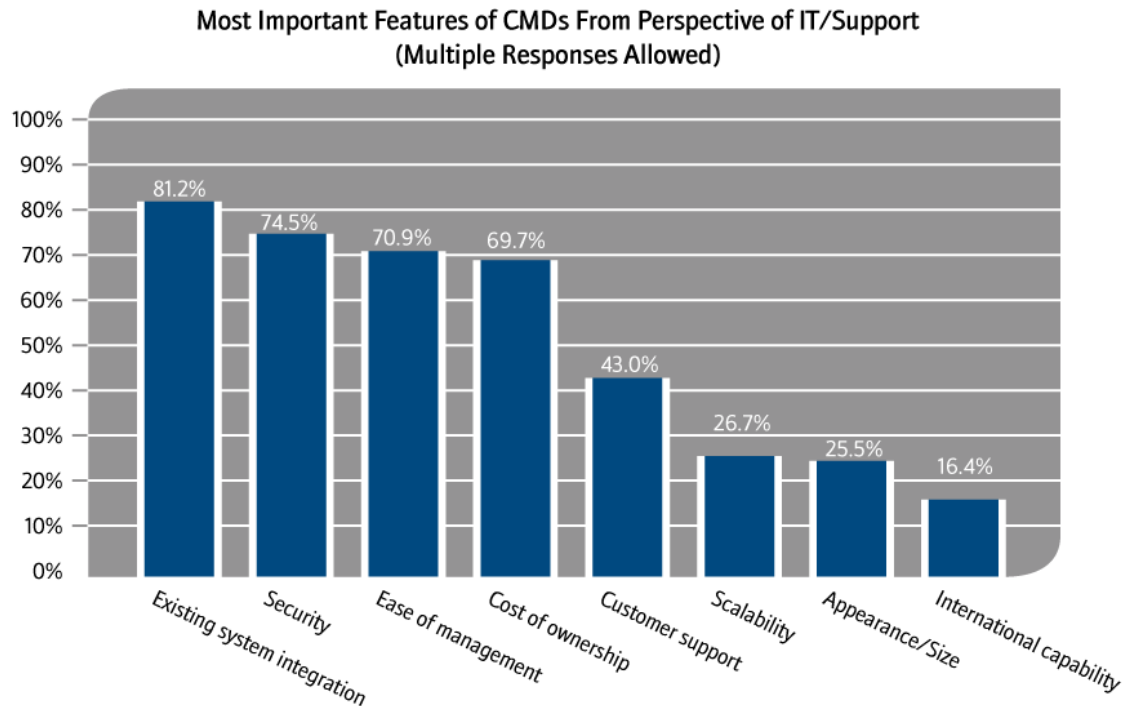
BlackBerry devices' strong lead in market share leads to the obvious question: Why?

One important clue comes from the criteria that executive directors, office managers and professional IT personnel use to evaluate technology infrastructure installations and which features of a new system are most important in their eyes. They are the people, after all, responsible for exploring, evaluating, and implementing new ways to enhance law firm productivity, with its spill over benefits for profitability. Moreover, they are in the best position to understand what current and emerging tools are in the marketplace to help lawyers respond to clients, and how seamless or disruptive it would be to integrate those tools into their firms' infrastructure.

More than four out of five of these law firm professionals—81.2%—identify the most important feature as being able to readily integrate the CMD platform with existing systems.

³ Available at <http://poque.blogs.nytimes.com/?p=70>

Also ranked highly are “ease of management” (70.9%), “cost of ownership” (69.7%), and, of obvious concern in a law firm environment, “security” (74.5%). Here are the complete results:



There are few surprises here. Simple and seamless integration with existing systems is number one in importance. If you combine that score with “ease of management” (70.9%) and “customer support” (43.0%), both of which also address the simplicity of installing and maintaining the converged mobile devices, solutions that are easy to install, easy to use and secure and easy to manage are critically important.

The other two high vote-getters, security (74.5%) and cost of ownership (69.7%), are obviously key considerations as well for any firm-wide technology deployment.

At first blush, ease of management and existing system integration may not appear to relate directly to how well it serves to improve lawyer responsiveness. But if your firm’s professional support staff balk at installing or maintaining a CMD platform, it could be the best in the world and do you no good.

“Multifunction devices have diminished the need for carrying laptops—and to some degree the need for voicemail. Most who use CMDs let others know that is the best way to reach them and obtain the fastest response.”

Since the BlackBerry platform and the BlackBerry platform alone supports access to document management, client relationship management and time and billing—and since its installation and support at the back-end is far simpler than alternative CMDs—it’s not surprising that the International Legal Technology Association (www.iltanet.org), in its 2005 annual technology survey, found an even stronger skew towards BlackBerry devices over Treo, with 63% of firms responding that they provide financial support for BlackBerry devices, but only one-quarter as many, 16%, saying the same for the Treo. Other hardware brands were all in the single digits.

For its 2006 survey, just released, ILTA did not ask a directly comparable question, but did report:

“Speaking of PDAs [what we’ve been calling CMDs], more firms than not have decided to limit the extent of their technical support to one PDA platform, thus simplifying PDA support and maintenance, which was one of the top five most frequently cited annoyances in last year’s survey. And the PDA of choice? A BlackBerry device, of course, powered by a BlackBerry® Enterprise Server. Just over three quarters of all firms (77%) indicate that they use BlackBerry devices and most of them have a BlackBerry Enterprise Server.”

In part this also reflects the history of the design and development of the BlackBerry device as opposed to other brands of CMD. Whereas other devices typically began as PDAs or cellphones with additional functionality subsequently grafted on, the BlackBerry device has operated from day one as an always-on, always-wirelessly-connected remote device, not reliant on tethering or docking to synchronize or update. An additional consequence of this history is that the “ecosystem” of software and services built around the BlackBerry platform has been growing for several years whereas support for and add-ons to other devices are still relatively early in their development cycles. This means both that there are *more* features for BlackBerry devices, but also that those features are more mature, robust, and stable.

Finally, the single focus of the BlackBerry device on wireless mobile convergence of voice, email and data has allowed it to remain, from a design and architecture standpoint, a straightforward and unencumbered platform. Designed to perform as an always-connected remote device, “the BlackBerry device’s strength is in its simplicity,” as one IT director put it.

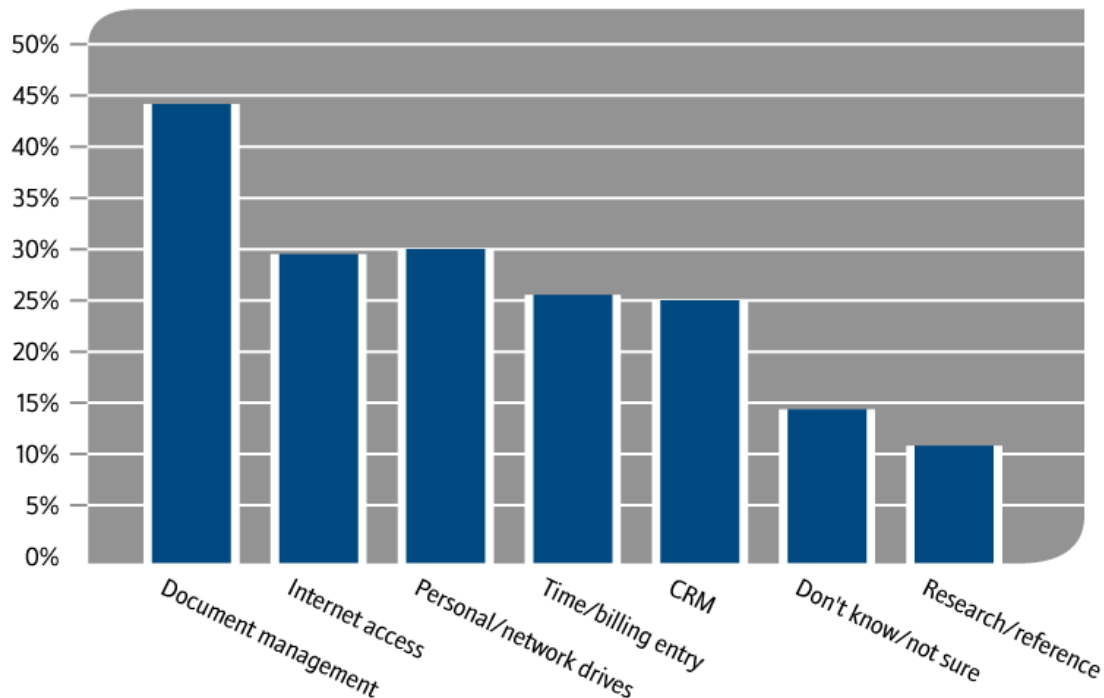
“The ease of use and multifunction of the handheld device is gaining popularity by the fact of its compact design and full features.”

Another comparison we heard more than once likened the BlackBerry device to the Mac® and the other devices to Windows PCs. With a Mac, you are entirely in “Apple land:” Apple builds the hardware, provides the operating system and customizes the applications. So with a BlackBerry device, RIM builds the device; writes the device operating system; provides a server known as the BlackBerry Enterprise Server to manage integration to existing enterprise infrastructure; and has created an integrated development framework known as the BlackBerry® Mobile Data System which enables clients to create their own customized applications, though customers can also choose from a wide variety of off-the-shelf wireless solutions developed specifically for law firms by the growing network of independent software vendors and BlackBerry Alliance Program members.

We will not dwell on the technical architecture of these environments; but the business point is clear enough. Because the BlackBerry device lives entirely in a hardware and software environment created and controlled by RIM, all the pieces work seamlessly together. By contrast, to add functionality to non-BlackBerry devices often involves purchasing different components from multiple vendors, inviting finger-pointing and murky lines of responsibility when things go wrong. BlackBerry devices offer no such buck-passing opportunity.

But back to the key criterion, enhancing lawyer responsiveness. The survey asked, “Which are the most useful features of CMDs to enhance lawyer responsiveness?” Again, the ultimate goals are clear, by putting the most pertinent available data into the hands of your lawyers—whether at their desks or at their clients’ offices—you enable faster, more informed, higher-quality decision-making. This is what respondents had to say:

**Most Important Features of CMDs to Enhance Lawyer Responsiveness
(Multiple Responses Allowed)**



Having remote access to documents via a document management system—is clearly number one (cited by 46.1% of all respondents), especially if access to “personal/network drives,” an additional 33.3%, is aggregated with that response. And this makes perfect sense. Few things are more valuable to lawyers than written work product and primary sources from which they are derived; being deprived of that resource can seriously crimp productivity and even the ability to counsel clients with confidence.

This reflects the reality that “responsiveness,” as noted at the outset, really has two independent dimensions:

- One is simply **speed**, or the immediacy of the response. There’s a tremendous difference between five minutes, an hour, and a day.
- But an equally important aspect is the **quality** of the response. Again, consider two scenarios:
 - A lawyer with just email and voicemail, but no remote wireless access to the firm’s document system, who learns the opposing side on a complex transaction has just made a new counter-offer. The best he can do is alert the client and promise to relay the substance of the new offer as soon as he can get his hands on it. Having the new offer read out loud over the phone, even word for word, won’t suffice; subtleties of punctuation, footnotes, and cross-references are all critical to a fully informed, well-reasoned evaluation of the offer.

- By contrast, a lawyer with a CMD and remote access to his firm's documents can review the exact text of the new offer remotely. This matters because in the real world, a "counter-offer" is going to be more complex than a single number. For example, the first offer might have been for all-cash but the counter-offer involves financing. Only by having the text in front of him can the lawyer be confident he understands its fine points and nuances and advise the client on the spot in a knowledgeable and informed fashion. This lawyer, in other words, can truly be a "trusted advisor."

Even remote access to time and billing is clearly seen as beneficial—for lawyers on the billable hour, time truly is money. The most effective and painless way of fully capturing time spent on client matters is to automate the collection of that information through a CMD, which will do it on the spot, with no manual re-entry later back at the office.

The fact remains that time-tracking applications designed for use with CMDs that integrate securely and in virtual real-time with a firm's existing time and billing systems were designed by lawyers for lawyers and help to remove much of the pain associated with manual time tracking. Not surprisingly, the ability to "auto-track" time tends to increase recorded hours by eliminating the loss of time forgotten or unable to be reliably reconstructed in retrospect. This paragraph seems out of place and if used would appear to belong in the ROI section focused on time tracking applications.

What Can We Say About ROI?

In the Altman Weil Responsiveness Survey, over 98% of respondents said CMDs helped lawyers "be more productive outside the office." As early as 2004, Ipsos-Reid conducted a study entitled, "*Analyzing the Return on Investment of a BlackBerry Deployment*"¹⁴ and among the key findings were these:

- The median end user reported recovering 47 minutes of productive time *per day* by having BlackBerry connectivity, which annualizes to 196 hours per year (assuming a five-day workweek and 50 workweeks per year).
- Additionally, the median end user reported recovering 27 minutes per day of otherwise lost personal time. Interestingly, this finding is in line with the *New York Times* poll cited earlier on page 8.

We can in fact directly estimate the financial benefits of a CMD deployment in terms of additional billable hours generated and captured. Consider the following table, which lists hourly billing rates down the first left-hand column and hypothetical billable hours recovered per week across the top row.

The table obviously specifies results across a wide range of variables, but for simplicity's sake assume a lawyer with a \$250/hour billing rate, who recovers 1.5 hours per week of otherwise-lost billable time thanks to having a wireless CMD (integrated to existing time and billing systems) that provides all the functionality of his office when he's not at his desk.

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For this hypothetical, the value of the recovered time—the additional contribution to annual firm revenue—would be: $(\$250/\text{hour}) \times (1.5 \text{ hours/week ["new-found time"]}) \times (48 \text{ workweeks}) = \mathbf{\$18,000}$. Here's the full table:

Hourly rate	Number of hours recovered per week (48-week year)									
	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0
\$200	\$4,800	\$9,600	\$14,400	\$19,200	\$24,000	\$28,800	\$33,600	\$38,400	\$43,200	\$48,000
\$250	\$6,000	\$12,000	\$18,000	\$24,000	\$30,000	\$36,000	\$42,000	\$48,000	\$54,000	\$60,000
\$300	\$7,200	\$14,400	\$21,600	\$28,800	\$36,000	\$43,200	\$50,400	\$57,600	\$64,800	\$72,000
\$350	\$8,400	\$16,800	\$25,200	\$33,600	\$42,000	\$50,400	\$58,800	\$67,200	\$75,600	\$84,000
\$400	\$9,600	\$19,200	\$28,800	\$38,400	\$48,000	\$57,600	\$67,200	\$76,800	\$86,400	\$96,000
\$450	\$10,800	\$21,600	\$32,400	\$43,200	\$54,000	\$64,800	\$75,600	\$86,400	\$97,200	\$108,000
\$500	\$12,000	\$24,000	\$36,000	\$48,000	\$60,000	\$72,000	\$84,000	\$96,000	\$108,000	\$120,000

Ultimately, the only justification for deploying converged mobile devices (or making any other technology investment, for that matter) is if there's a solid business case for the value that can be contributed to client service and satisfaction, lawyer responsiveness, the quality and/or speed of decision-making or the firm's productivity and profitability.

Conclusion

If "responsiveness" is the coin of the realm, the benefits of providing lawyers with "virtual any time, anywhere" access to the fundamental array of applications they depend upon to get their work done in the office—including immediate access to critical documents—speak for themselves.

The marketplace for small and mid-sized law firms is growing more and more competitive with each passing year. Institutionalized relationships are giving way to "who can get it done now?" In this landscape, clients have reported again and again that "responsiveness" is the key differentiator when they evaluate lawyers' service orientation.

At one time, three days was a reasonable response time. With the advent of email, it was shortened to something more on the order of three hours and now with wireless connectivity it may be 30 minutes. Whatever the expectation is—and our survey found that it depended on the client, the matter, and the precise circumstances—it is shorter by an order of magnitude than it was even a few short years ago. For that reason, lawyers at firms of all sizes are discovering, if they haven't already, what the big firms already know: Equipping lawyers with CMDs is not a "nice to have," it's a competitive requirement.

Based upon the responses to the Altman Weil survey of firms that have deployed converged mobile devices, this is inarguably the case. The key findings are worth repeating here: 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that lawyers with CMDs:

- Are more responsive;
- Are more productive outside the office; and
- Increased client satisfaction.

Furthermore, the business and economic benefits are equally tangible.

The ability of any specific brand of CMD to deliver on these promised benefits depends on how seamlessly it can deliver the closest possible experience to that the lawyer would have if he or she were in the office: Email and voicemail alone are yesterday's news. And, from the

Lawyer Responsiveness: How Small and Mid-Sized Firms Can Use Mobility to Become More Competitive In the Face of High Client Expectations

perspective of administrative and IT/support staff, a deployment of CMDs that is hard to implement, hard to support, and hard to integrate into existing systems is a non-starter.

Higher client satisfaction; better-quality, more informed decision-making; improved productivity and recovery of otherwise-lost billable time: These are indeed the “bottom line” when it comes to providing your firm’s lawyers with converged mobile devices.

Bruce MacEwen, Esq., Publisher, "Adam Smith, Esq."
New York

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