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One Last Thing On My Summer To-Do List

Posted on [June 18, 2015](#) by [Catherine Lemmer](#)

by [Catherine Lemmer](#)

2 Days without mentioning or alluding to the Legal Tech Audit or D. Casey Flaherty and Andrew Perlman.

~[Monica Sandler](#), *Pinhawk Education and Training Daily*

[Monica Sandler](#)'s tongue-in-check postscript in today's edition of PinHawk's *Education and Training Daily* newsletter reminded me of a "to-do" item that has been on my list since the April 2015 [ABA Tech Show](#) in Chicago. The ABA Tech Show was the third time that I've seen [Casey Flaherty](#), former in-house counsel for Kia Motors America, pitch his "legal tech audit." On stage with Mr. Flaherty for this presentation was [Andrew Perlman](#), professor and director of the [Institute of Law Practice Technology and Innovation](#) at Suffolk University Law School. As noted on the Institute's website, Flaherty "pioneered an innovative [legal technology audit](#) to test the efficiency of his outside counsel and has asked Suffolk Law to enhance and automate the audit so that it can be used by law schools and the legal marketplace." During the presentation, Flaherty and Perlman stated that law students could access and complete the audit for free. There was mention of an instructor's manual (though maybe the manual is made available only to firm and other paying-clients that purchase the audit services). They further noted those law students who satisfactorily complete the audit and earn certified operator status are including the certification on their résumés and online professional profiles.

Since I'd already heard previous iterations of this presentation, I spent time watching and listening to the reaction of the audience. (As an aside, I note that Mr. Flaherty comes off less aggressively since his association with Suffolk. His PowerPoint presentations a little more polished, and, perhaps as a tip to the legal academy or his marketing strategy, there is some statistical support and historical context included.) The ABA Tech Show was sponsored by the ABA Law Practice Division, and I met mostly small firm and solo practitioners—those firms most in need of "practice-ready" law students as they are least

Info

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likely to have large training budgets or even time to train law students. The audience reaction was more favorable than I had seen at other events, perhaps because these are the lawyers who by necessity actually engage in and manage document production and office procedures due to the size of the firm. Or perhaps because Mr. Flaherty was not condemning a room full of academics for failing to *train* law students.

Let's be clear: this is not truly a *legal* tech audit, but I don't think that matters.. The audit tests basic professional office skills in Word, Excel, Adobe Acrobat, and Outlook. Are these practice skills? Are these tech skills? At some point, law students need to be prepared for the realities of a law practice, including basic professional office skills such as organizing email or building spreadsheets—none of which the legal academy has shown much inclination to take on despite the repeated and endless calls for “practice ready” students. Flaherty noted in his ABA Tech Show presentation that lawyers in the 2012 National Conference of Bar Examiners Survey, in which recent law graduates ranked “using office technologies (e.g., email and word processing)” as number six among 30 or more skills and abilities. (For even more food for thought, consider that those ranked at 7, 8, and 9, were critical reasoning and comprehension; synthesizing facts and law; and legal reasoning, respectively.)

Those of us who work at the intersection of law student training and technology long ago stepped back from the idea that there is such a creature as a “digital native.” Add in those of us who have extensive practice experience, or understand that “practice ready” means something other than a litigation-based experiential learning opportunity and casebook methodology, and you have a subset of individuals interested in alleviating unnecessary stress in the first years of law practice by giving students an opportunity to pick up a few easily learned skills while still in law school.

I've been mulling various strategies on how to convince our law students to go to the [audit website](#), sign up, watch the instructional materials, and complete the audit. There are the usual obstacles, easily summarized in the following likely responses:

- “I didn't go to law school to learn Excel and Word.”
- “I don't have time to do this now. I'll learn it when I need to.”
- “It's not graded and it doesn't count, so I'm not going to do this.”
- “Why learn it now? The software will change.”

Also, the audit's website indicates that before students can access the audit, a law school professor or administrator has to gather and submit the email information of students. Students are then sent the log-in credentials. Unwieldy and more work, but helpful in that the professor or administrator is kept apprised of the students' efforts. Despite the added work of yet another project to manage, I hope to launch an effort to get our students to garner these skills before leaving law school.

One idea is a summer “résumé booster” program with prizes (recall your middle school summer reading programs). I've already reached out to the legal audit team with all my questions regarding how to participate in the audit. My back-up plan, or perhaps I should say the more likely option, is that I'll create a LibGuide that links the various software training modules and encryption modules to [Lynda.com](#) (Indiana University offers free access to students and

Build a website with WordPress.com

Multimedia Learning, Part I

- beausteenken on Experiences, Simulations, and Games in the Classroom
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faculty) and remind students periodically with dire warnings of the importance of mastering a few professional skills while still in law school. (It might actually be the better option as many of our students use Macs.) Our Lynda.com license comes with various levels of certifications and such as well. My colleagues, [Ben Keele](#) and [Susan deMaine](#), and I have been toying with digital credentials for some time now (see our [digital badge book chapter](#) and [poster](#)) and it would quite fun to roll out an accompanying badge program as well.

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As usual, so much summer fun and so little time! I'll keep the blog posted on my/our efforts, whether successful or not!

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About Catherine Lemmer

A life long learner interested in most aspects of the creation, use, management, and control of information.

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