

Champagne Technology on a Beer Budget: Technology for the Law Office

Prepared For: Legal Education Society of Alberta

Law and Practice Update

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For Presentation In:

Edmonton – November 18 & 19, 2011

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I. HOW TO FIND THE BEST DEALS ON LEGAL TECHNOLOGY:

A. Strategy For Getting the Best Deals:

1. **Identify the Players.** Many times you'll know the product category you want (like a scanner), but not which model is considered the best. Therefore, you first need to find out who the significant manufacturers are. Google makes this fairly easy. For example, if you google "document scanner", you'll to see a list of brands (HP, Visioneer, Fujitsu, NeatDesk, Canon & Xerox) and a few models, photos, and prices. Make a note of the manufacturers you find.
2. **Use Manufacturer Websites As A Starting Point.** Since you typically have an idea of what you're willing to spend, visit the manufacturer web sites in order to determine which of the products is in your price range and has the feature set you're looking for. Note that the prices you see on a manufacturer's web site are usually the worst-case scenario. You don't necessarily want to buy something directly from the manufacturer, but the manufacturer's website usually helps to determine the general price range and they always provide comprehensive information about product functionality.
3. **Read What The Critics Are Saying.** After you've narrowed down your search to a couple of models from different manufacturers, your next task is to find reviews to help you determine which model is the best. There are several magazine websites I recommend visiting for tech reviews. All of the following are free except Consumer Reports: Law Technology News (www.lawtechnews.com), Laptop Magazine (www.laptopmag.com), PC World (pcworld.com), Consumer Reports (consumerreports.org - \$26/year but worth it), Popular Science (popsci.com), Popular Mechanics (popularmechanics.com), and Wired (wired.com). A few other great web sites for reviews include reviews.CNET.com, Engadget.com, PCMag.com, Epinions.com and ConsumerSearch.com. Amazon.com also posts valuable customer reviews for products they sell. Another great resource is Become.com. Just enter the product you are considering, click the Research button and you'll be presented with a list of reviews of that product.
4. **Use a Google Trick for Searching a Particular Site.** Sometimes I search for a product on a site using the site's *own* search function and come up blank even when I know they previously published something about that product. This is when a Google trick comes in handy. Let's say you're trying to find a review of the Fujitsu ScanSnap S1500 (scanner) on PCMag.com. Simply google "scansnap s1500 site:www.pcmag.com" (omit quotation marks), and your first hit is their