

# Essential smartphone apps for lawyers

It seems like only yesterday that lawyers who frequently travelled outside their offices were beginning to appreciate how much of an essential tool a cellphone could be. And now, smartphones allow lawyers to do just about everything they already do on their laptop or desktop computers.

The BlackBerry is currently the most popular smartphone for lawyers, although it is facing stiff competition from the iPhone. However, the Android and PalmPre are also viable options and offer apps that are not available on their more popular brethren.

Out of the box, most smartphones include powerful email, contact and calendaring functionality. But there are thousands of other available smartphone apps, including a broad selection of lawyer-specific apps that can help with productivity and just about everything else lawyers might want to do while away from their desk.

Some of the apps are available in versions that will run on different types of smartphones; others are only available for a single type. The following is a list of my favourite smartphone apps available as noted for the BlackBerry (BB), iPhone (iP), Android (And) and/or Palm Pre (Pre):

## E-mail apps

- **Gmail** (BB, iP, And, Pre): The Gmail smartphone app is simple to use and gives you full access to your Gmail account, including all your contacts and attachments. (Free: [mail.google.com](mailto:mail.google.com))
- **Xobni** (BB): Xobni is a popular MS Outlook plugin that is now available for the BB. It gives you a completely different view of your contacts list by ranking them by the frequency that e-mail, SMS or call them. For an additional subscription fee, you can also synchronize the mobile app with your Outlook Xobni contacts. (\$9.99 for non-synchronization version or \$6.99

one time plus \$3.99 per month for synchronization: [www.xobni.com](http://www.xobni.com))

## Lawyer tools

- **Documents To Go** (BB, iP, And, Pre): On top of letting you view PDF files, this app makes your BlackBerry a mini computer by allowing you to view, edit and create Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint files. While possible, it is just not practical to create long documents on tiny screens and keyboards, but it can be a lifesaver if you need to make minor edits. The newest Blackberry version has a file synchronization feature that lets you move documents from your computer onto and off of your Blackberry. (\$49.99 [www.dataviz.com](http://www.dataviz.com))
- **Scan2PDF** (iP, And): Take a picture of a document or photo and have it converted to a PDF file via the web. Not for confidential documents, but a great way to grab a copy of something you find. (\$14.99 [www.burrotech.com](http://www.burrotech.com))
- **RememberTheMilk** (BB, iP, And): Never forget anything again with this amazing free online to-do list that can be updated and accessed from the web or your smartphone. Get reminders by email, SMS or umpteen other ways and share your to-do lists with others (Free: [www.rememberthemilk.com](http://www.rememberthemilk.com))
- **Timr** (BB, iP, And): Nice little online time tracking and driving log application. The app connects to your online account where you can set up multiple users, multiple clients with multiple "projects" or files and multiple tasks. When you "start" an event on your phone, the system starts tracking your time and mileage until you stop it. You can edit the information afterwards. (Free to \$215 for enterprise version: [www.timr.com](http://www.timr.com))

## Maps and mobile apps

- **Google Maps and Google Latitude** (BB, iP, And): Google Maps is better than the BlackBerry Maps app and helps you find your locations, get directions, see traffic and use your smartphone like a GPS. And if you install and enable Latitude, you can track a smartphone user online. Where is that darn associate? (Free: [www.google.com/mobile/maps/](http://www.google.com/mobile/maps/))
- **Opera Browsers** (BB, iP, And, Pre): The BB browser is slow, clunky and often doesn't render sites properly. Opera is one of the more popular alternatives. (Free: [www.opera.com](http://www.opera.com))
- **Dial2Do** (BB, iP, And, Pre): Not really a phone app per se, but you do use your phone! Set up an account and then call Dial2Do. The service allows you to dictate a short message which is transcribed and sent to email contacts, Twitter, rememberthemilk and Google calendar. (Free Dial2Do reminders only, or \$39.00/year or \$3.99/month for the full service: [www.dial2do.com](http://www.dial2do.com))
- **Skype** (iP): Make free or very cheap calls on your iPhone using VOIP (voice over Internet protocol). It is particularly useful when you are traveling internationally and have Wi-Fi access as you can talk to any user on Skype for free to landlines for pennies per minute. This is also currently available on Blackberries on the U.S. Verizon network – hopefully it will come to Canada soon. (Free: [iTunes](http://iTunes))
- **FedEx Mobile** (BB, iP, And, Pre): Do you need to create a shipping label while you are away from your desk or out of the office? How about find the nearest FedEx Office? With FedEx Mobile, it's all just a click away! The FedEx Mobile website can be accessed at [mobile.fedex.com](http://mobile.fedex.com) on your mobile browser. There is a FedEx app for iPhone users only. (Free: [iTunes](http://iTunes))

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- **UPS Mobile** (BB, iP, And, Pre): Track your courier packages even when you are moving around as much as they are. (Free: [www.ups.com/mobile](http://www.ups.com/mobile))
- **Poynt** (BB) A neat little local search app that, based on your location, provides a directory search of local businesses and people, a list of restaurants with links to reviews, and movie listings and reviews. Poynt information is available for Canada, the U.S. (Free: [www.poynt.com](http://www.poynt.com)).
- **Cortado Flight Mode** (BB): Get your BlackBerry ready for take-off with just one click. Turn this app on and it downloads all message texts that have not yet been completely retrieved, and then turns off all your wireless connections. This puts all your e-mails in their full length at your disposal during flight so you can effectively use the time to work. After landing, the deactivated connections are just as easily re-established. ([www.cortado.com](http://www.cortado.com), \$2.99)
- **Viigo** (BB): Bring the world to your BlackBerry. If information is out there on the Web, Viigo will collect and download it to your BlackBerry. The list goes on and on: Weather, sports, business & finance, local interest, shopping, social networks, entertainment, flights & travel, audio & podcasts and so on. (Free: [www.viigo.com](http://www.viigo.com))

### Social networking apps

- **Facebook** (BB, iP, And, Pre): The Facebook mobile website isn't too bad, but the Facebook app is much better and is a must for anyone who needs to keep up with all their Facebook friends. (Free: [www.facebook.com/mobile](http://www.facebook.com/mobile))
- **OpenBeak**, formerly **TwitterBerry** (BB) and **UberTwitter** (BB): For BlackBerry users, both are decent tools for keeping up with tweets and sending a few of your own. UberTwitter has many more features, but will only download a handful of tweets at time. OpenBeak is simpler, but will download all tweets since the last update allowing you to read them on a subway or airplane. (Both are free: <http://orangatame.com/products/openbeak> and [www.ubertwitter.com](http://www.ubertwitter.com))
- **Twitterific** (iP): While there are actually many Twitter apps for the iPhone, Twitterific is the most popular because it has a simple-to-use interface and advanced functions for power users. (\$14.95: [www.iconfactory.com](http://www.iconfactory.com))
- **Twidroid** (And): The best Android app for posting tweets, following your groups and accessing Twitter. (Free and Pro \$4.99: [www.twidroid.com](http://www.twidroid.com)).
- **Vlingo** (BB, iP, And, Pre): Instantly send a text or email message, call a friend, search the Web, update your Facebook or Twitter status, create a "note to self" and more by speaking to your smartphone. Vlingo Everywhere, a new feature of Vlingo 4.0, lets you use your voice to add text anywhere you'd normally type, including instant messaging, calendar entry, adding contacts, getting directions and more. It also recently added a "Safereader" function that reads incoming emails to you. Great if you are waiting for a particular email while you are driving. (Free for basic and \$9.99 for more advanced features: [www.vlingo.com](http://www.vlingo.com))

### Utility and hardware apps

- **AppBoxPro** (iP): An amazing multi-function app that includes a currency converter, date calculator, translator (text), tip calculator, international holiday calendar, unit converter, battery life meter, and 10 more functions. I wish it would run on my BlackBerry. (\$0.99: [iTunes](http://iTunes))
- **Dragon Dictation** (BB, iP). The magic of Dragon comes to your smartphone. Dictate some text and Dragon will transcribe it into an email message, tweet or other text field. Accuracy is surprisingly good and errors are easy to correct. (Free: [www.dragonmobileapps.com](http://www.dragonmobileapps.com))
- **Smrtguard** (BB, And): Ever misplace your phone? Smrtguard tracks the location of your phone and allows you to locate your phone online, send an audio ping that will make your phone ring and lock it remotely – all in the free version. The pay version will additionally allow you to back up and to wipe data from your phone remotely. (Free and \$44.99 a year for pay version: [www.smrtguard.com](http://www.smrtguard.com))
- **Berryweather** (BB): In addition to the standard current conditions and forecasts, it allows you to see weather info from multiple locations, set up custom radar maps and create a "homepage" that will display current weather conditions. (Free and \$6.99 for more features: [www.bellshare.com](http://www.bellshare.com))
- **CarFinder** (BB, iP): Yes, because sometimes you just can't remember where you parked the car. (Free for BB: \$0.99 for the iP at [www.neosistec.com](http://www.neosistec.com))