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What can you do with Google?

Think you know it all? It's not your grandmother's Google



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Introduction

Lawyers use the Google [http://www.google.com/] search engine on a regular basis. However, most people do not know about the other things you can do with Google. There are a number of fabulous features that can greatly benefit lawyers in various ways. The purpose of this article is to introduce you to some of these features and show you how to incorporate them into your practice.

Google Scholar

Google Scholar [http://scholar.google.com/schhp?tab=ns] is a goldmine for anyone who handles medical malpractice matters, pharmaceutical litigation or products liability cases. Google Scholar allows you to search peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts and other scholarly literature from broad areas of research. You can search works from a wide variety of academic publishers and professional societies, as well as scholarly articles that are available over the Internet.

Searching Google Scholar is simple. You can search for articles containing particular words or a specific phrase or by article title, author, date range, publication date or subject area. What is terrific about Google Scholar is that the subject areas you can search are not just limited to scientific and technical topics, but also include business, finance, economics, social sciences and humanities.

Once you get the results of your Google Scholar search, you will find that the results are already categorized in order of importance. This is because Google Scholar lists search results based on the content of the article, the author, the publication in which the article appears, and how often the piece has been cited in other scholarly literature.

Using Google Scholar will save you a great deal of time and money since you can quickly locate the key papers in the subject area that you are researching. Once you find what you are looking for, you can get the complete paper from a local library or from an Internet link.

Google Patent Search

Google Patent Search [http://www.google.com/patents?hl=en] is another feature that most lawyers do not know about. From this link, you can actually search the text of over 7,000 patents. If you do an advanced search, you can search by patent number, patent title, inventor, assignee, U.S. classification, international classification, filing date or issue date.

Google U.S. Government Search

Google U.S. Government Search [http://www.google.com/ig/usgov] provides a single site to search for government information and news. You can focus your search to locate only information contained on federal, state, or local government Web sites or you can expand your search to the entire Web. The government-specific news content that is provided government agencies and the media can also be helpful.

Google Alerts

Janabeth Fleming Taylor, R.N., R.N.C., [a litigation paralegal and American Association for Justice Paralegal of the Year for 2002] of Corpus Christi, Texas finds Google Alerts [http://www.google.com/alerts] to be quite useful. Google Alerts are search updates that Google automatically e-mails you based on the subject area or topic that you choose. Lawyers frequently use this feature to monitor news stories, to be kept updated on a specific product, industry, or manufacturer or to

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get the latest information on a particular case being litigated.

Google Notebook

Google Notebook [http://www.google.com/googlenotebook/tour1.html] is another valuable tool for attorneys. Google Notebook allows you to "clip" and collect information as you search the Internet. You can add your Web site "clippings" of text, images, or links from various Web pages to the file folders in your Google Notebook, and all without ever leaving the browser window. By organizing your "clippings," you can create multiple notebooks, divide them into sections, and copy them to other locations. Sharing the information contained in your Google Notebook is easy to do, making this feature very popular in law firms.

If you want to learn about using Google Notebook in more detail, go to "Getting Things Done with Google Notebook" at http://lifehacker.com/software/geek-to-live/getting-things-done-with-google-notebook-256844.php. This concise article will walk you through the process of setting up your personal notebook and file folders in an easy to understand way.

Google Gmail

Gmail is Google's free Web-based e-mail service, originally released in 2004 by invitation only and opened to the public in 2007. Gmail gives each user more than 2,500 megabytes of free storage, so you do not ever have to delete your e-mail messages. Since Gmail is powered by Google's search engine, you do not need to set up folders or try to remember where you put a particular e-mail. All you have to do is search your messages using the relevant term. When the search results are displayed, you will have all of the messages that are part of that "conversation" arranged in chronological order. The search feature is very useful for attorneys because you will be able to quickly find e-mails related to a particular case or client.

Use Google to search for numbers

You can use Google to search for the numbers of particular items, such as vehicle identification numbers (VIN), UPC codes, patent numbers or parcel tracking numbers (UPS, FedEx, USPS, etc.) For example, if you type the FedEx tracking number of your package into the search box, Google will display the latest information on the delivery status of your FedEx package.

Use Google to define words

You can use Google to efficiently search the Web and find the definition of a particular word. To do this, go to the Google search box, type the word "define" followed by a space and the word you want to define. When you hit enter, Google provides a list of definitions. For example, if you type "define consumer" and press enter, Google will give you a list of definitions with hyperlinks.

Using Google as a calculator

Most people do not know that you can use Google to calculate numbers. To do this, just type the calculation that you want done into the search box. When you hit enter, the answer will appear. For example, if you type "2+2" in the search box, the equation and answer will appear as the search result.

Use Google to convert currency

Another feature unfamiliar to many attorneys is Google's currency converter. To use this feature, simply enter the conversion you want to have done into the Google search box and hit enter. For example, if I want to convert $10 into British pounds, I would enter "10 USD in GBP" in the search box and hit enter. The result is "10 U.S. dollars = 4.84707479 British pounds."

Conclusion

The numerous features and tools that are available for free on Google make this a valuable resource for attorneys and paralegals. By incorporating some of these things into your practice, you will increase productivity while minimizing costs.

A. T. Kippes is a graduate of the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley and Golden Gate University School of Law. She focuses her practice on competitive employment litigation, non-compete issues, and animal law. Ms. Kippes assists businesses, corporations, partnerships, and individuals with successfully resolving business and employment-related conflicts.

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