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Improve Attorney Productivity by Turning Your Computer Into a Second Brain With New Technology in Document Analysis

Modern note-taking applications can give you a second brain— a digital extension of your human brain that can store, retrieve, and organize notes and source documents, allowing you to analyze, compare and distinguish document text to quickly draw necessary conclusions.

By Dr. Craig S. Tashman, Ph.D., LiquidText | February 22, 2023 at 09:23 AM

You got this. The jury just came in against your client, and you raise a motion for judgment notwithstanding the verdict as a matter of law or that the judgment is against the weight of the evidence. You have your trial notes linked to the evidence and state your supported conclusions in open court. You knock it out of the park.

You're meeting with the firm's practice group leader, and she asks you for a litigation strategy for a case recently approved by the management team to go forward. You haven't looked at that case for months, but you inform the lead that you'll have the strategy on her desk in the morning.

You have a second brain. A digital extension of your human brain that can store, retrieve, and organize notes and source documents, allowing you to analyze, compare and distinguish document text to quickly draw necessary conclusions.

A Second Brain

A second brain emerges from modern note-taking applications with the ability to link or connect content and ideas. By contrast, traditional digital note tools such as Microsoft OneNote offer a hierarchical arrangement of notebooks, tabs, pages, and notes. They lack the ability to link notes to other pages in tabs and notebooks. These tools mimic how lawyers use paper and bring forward analog processes into digital formats without considering the benefits of digital transformation and the ability to make connections between source documents and notes.

A second brain note-taking application that can interconnect notes and source documents helps lawyers make present use of previously acquired knowledge, return to a project much later, share knowledge with a colleague or partner, and quickly retrieve information in courtroom proceedings.

With a second brain, you can research cases and statutory materials, store the content away, and apply it to new matters. As you do that, you not only get things done faster, but your value rises sharply because your current work adds value to future work. When a note-taking tool connects source material and notes, you can discover novel new ideas. For example, you can bring up two or more depositions, compare the out-of-court testimony and find new evidence or challenge the credibility of witnesses.

If you've returned to a project, case, or litigation after a break, you know the challenges. It takes time to change context, and resurrecting your previous chain of thought is fraught with difficulty from the inaccurate or incomplete recall of facts and law. But with a tool that links source documents, notes, and ideas, your second brain would have the facts straight and each piece of evidence available. You can retrace your steps and better share your work with associates and partners.

Brain Share

When a senior partner or practice lead asks you about a matter or litigation, a second brain makes it easy to share your thoughts. With your connections between source documents and notes, you can lay out a train of thought and logical arguments with justifications in minutes.

Without a second brain, you would have to re-research the task by returning to a stack of books or computer folders. This could leave you with potentially inscrutable sticky notes and OneNote pages. You could only hope not to forget an important fact, source, or idea, causing gaps in logic and arguments.

In court, a second brain acts like a second chair to a litigation team. It contains the structure of your arguments and litigation strategy, connecting key points and supporting material on a computing device. Still, the device should not constrain your ability to recall the facts and law immediately.

A digital note-taking tool connecting case facts, law, and evidence can replace banker's boxes of material you may need in court. With a second brain, you can capture the flow of arguments and testimony back to evidentiary sources, such as depositions and discovery materials. You can examine witnesses, make objections, proffer motions, and answer judicial inquiries, instantly connected to source materials.

Making the Right Connections

For the legal mind, a second brain must make the right connections. A note-taking tool needs to document how you get from the facts to primary and secondary sources to legal conclusions. The tool must help you associate new knowledge with existing knowledge by connecting notes and references. Finally, it should bring critical information together to gain new insights.

Single-purpose reading and writing tools, such as word processors and PDF readers, treat documents like static objects that proliferate in banker's boxes or computer desktop folders as your research progresses. The tools are good at capturing information but do not address or record your thought processes from source documents to legal conclusions. They don't make second brains and miss recording the active element that biological brains bring to legal analysis: a connection processor.

When you read documents and research cases, you compare and analyze text, make connections, and draw conclusions. Then connect your findings to determine a strategy to litigate or resolve a matter. It would help if you had a note-taking tool that records the active process of getting from source documents to conclusions.

Modern note-taking tools like [Roam](#) and [Obsidian](#) make storing, recalling, cross-referencing, and connecting your notes and ideas accessible. [LiquidText](#) gathers source documents into projects where you can find facts, analyze the law, record connections, and bring the links together to gain new insights and quickly share them with partners and judges. Over time, these modern note-taking tools make permanent notes that you can return to and connect to other cases and long-term projects.

Your ability to build a practice and reputation in the legal marketplace is intimately connected to a second brain, which should make the right connections, increasing productivity and adding value to future work.

Craig S. Tashman, Ph.D., Founder & CEO of LiquidText, received his doctorate in Computer Science from Georgia Tech. His research focused on developing technologies and novel user interfaces to enable computers to go beyond the limits of paper and enhance the reading and document analysis process. This research led to the development of LiquidText, a reading, note-taking, and document analysis platform that has won the coveted Editor's Choice from both Apple and Microsoft's app stores. He holds patents in 3D imaging, data compression, and interaction design. Mr. Tashman has published peer reviewed papers on project visualization, information security, active reading, and interactive systems design.