Many lawyers work long hours and still feel that they don’t have enough time to complete their work, let alone accomplish important tasks like marketing and business development, training, mentoring, or strategic planning. In some ways, they feel trapped, unable to dig out from what seems like a never-ending pile of paper. But then they look around and see other lawyers seemingly handling the same workload and still going home for dinner and having time on the weekend for leisure activities. How do those lawyers do it?

Everyone gets exactly the same twenty-four hours in every day. If you’re struggling, the problem often isn’t that you don’t have enough time; the problem is that you either aren’t managing your activities effectively enough to fit within the time you have available or that you aren’t using the tools you have as efficiently as possible.

This book helps tackle both sides of the problem.

Managing your activities well means eliminating or minimizing obstacles to productivity. These obstacles may include allowing others’ priorities to control your day, failing to accurately estimate how long tasks will take, allowing constant interruptions, using to-do lists inappropriately, planning poorly, or simply not knowing the most efficient way to accomplish what you need to accomplish.

In a recent article in the Harvard Business Review, the authors note:

Some forward-thinking companies have taken a different approach entirely. They expect their leaders to treat time as a scarce resource and to invest it prudently. They bring as much discipline to their time
Budgets as to their capital budgets. These organizations have not only lowered their overhead expenses; they have liberated countless hours of previously unproductive time for executives and employees, fueling innovation and accelerating profitable growth.¹

But despite thinking that time is an important resource, people waste a great deal of it every day in workplaces. Salary.com conducts a “Wasting Time at Work” survey every year. According to the 2014 study, 89 percent of respondents said they waste at least some time at work, compared with 69 percent in 2013.² The vast majority (78 percent) waste between thirty minutes and two hours at work daily, and 4 percent waste four or more hours every day.

The Salary.com study, along with other surveys, reveals that going online is the biggest time waster.³ Other significant time wasters include the following:

- **meetings or conference calls** (especially those in which more time is spent discussing work than actually executing it)
- **coworker distractions**
- **e-mail** (One study by Jive Software revealed that 79 percent of U.S. workers waste time checking e-mail during the day rather than engaging in more productive activities, with 20 percent saying that e-mail was their biggest distraction. It also showed that the average American worker spends 16 percent of a workday checking irrelevant e-mail.⁴)

An article from “Inside Tech” at Monster.com identified the top ten worst time wasters at work⁵:

1. Instant messaging
2. Overreliance on e-mail
3. Meandering meetings
4. Short gaps between meetings

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5. Reacting to interruptions
6. Ineffective multi-tasking
7. Disorganized workspace
8. Personal communications
9. Web surfing
10. Cigarette/coffee breaks

But do general workplace studies apply to lawyers and other knowledge workers? A 2011 survey conducted by Webtorials for Fonality showed that knowledge workers at small and midsize businesses spent 50 percent of their workday on necessary yet unproductive tasks, including routine communications and filtering incoming information and correspondence. According to the survey, these knowledge workers spent an estimated 36 percent of their time trying to contact customers, partners, or colleagues, find information, or schedule a meeting. And approximately 14 percent of their time was spent duplicating information (e.g., forwarding e-mails or phone calls to confirm if fax/e-mail/text message was received) and managing unwanted communications (e.g., spam e-mails or unsolicited time-wasting phone calls).

Just imagine if you could turn even a portion of that unproductive time into productive time.

Although technology is supposed to make our lives easier, in some ways it has only added to our “time management” problems. The Jive Software study noted that 19 percent of employed Americans are more overwhelmed by technology today than they were five years ago.

A 2012 article on Entrepreneur magazine’s website identified five top technology time wasters:
1. E-mail
2. To-do list apps
3. Social media
4. Instant messages
5. Talking on the phone

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WHAT THIS BOOK WILL COVER

This book addresses many of the time wasters discussed above: interruptions, e-mails, long to-do lists, meetings, and more. At their core, all of these are the result of a combination of two things:

• an inability to identify the right activities (reluctance to say no, lack of direction, allowing interruptions—both human and electronic)
• an inability to perform those activities efficiently (procrastination, ineffective delegation, lack of organization, inefficient use of technology)

Productivity is about first knowing what to do (ensuring you are focusing on the right things) and then getting those things done in the most efficient way possible.

You can be efficient at organizing the supply closet, but if that task isn’t the highest use of your time and energy, your efficiency isn’t going to improve your overall productivity. You’re being efficient but not effective, because you’re not focusing your energy on the right things. There’s not much benefit to doing the wrong things efficiently.

In Part I of this book, you’ll learn strategies for conquering your feelings of being overwhelmed and taking back control of your day. You’ll find out how to determine what you should be spending your time on and how to eliminate or delegate the tasks that you shouldn’t be doing. You’ll discover why deadlines are important and how to use them effectively and why your calendar is one of your most important defenses in the battle to be productive. In short, you’ll learn to identify—and focus on—the right things.

Once you’ve determined which tasks are appropriate for you to undertake, you want to ensure that you’re working as efficiently as possible to get them done. Toward the end of Part I, you’ll learn how to conduct meetings effectively and create systems for increased efficiency. Then in Part II, we’ll show you some time-saving technology tips. These sections of the book will show you how to do things the right way. Think of them as your guide to efficiency.

The technology time-saving tips focus on many of the programs that lawyers use on a daily basis. As of the writing of this book, most lawyers are using Windows-based programs, even if they’re working in a Mac environment. In our

8. TechnoLawyer Demographics 2014, a research report from the TechnoLawyer website, shows that over 78 percent of its members are still using Windows (http://www.technolawyer.com/tll/demographics.asp).
experience, most lawyers are continuing to use Word, Outlook, and the other programs in the Microsoft Office suite, as well as Adobe Acrobat. As such, our technology tips focus on these programs.

If you can save six minutes per day with these tips (and that is a highly conservative estimate), you will save thirty minutes per week (more than twenty-five hours per year) doing routine, repetitive activities. At $150 per hour, this means that you can recoup more than $3,750 per year in billable time, which can be devoted instead to client service—or, perhaps, to family and other personal priorities.

Let’s get started.