I am a family lawyer. It is a respectable profession, riddled with bad publicity and the best clients acting their absolute worst. People want to hire the “pit bull” to represent them in a divorce. Often-times that “pit bull” approach simply costs more money with no more return. My clients often expect Law & Order. My daily life varies. As a family lawyer, I get to be in court, in mediation, in negotiation, travel from county to county, visit my children clients at their homes, school plays, and soccer games, attend educational seminars, go to conferences, or sit behind my very own desk (or if traveling, behind someone else’s desk). There are weeks when I am out of the office more than I am in it. I talk to other lawyers, parents, children, doctors, therapists, teachers, counselors, detectives—and many others too numerous to name—sometimes all in the same day. Being a family lawyer means feeling as if I’ve acquired attention deficit disorder. It means multitasking with the best of them. My calendar is permeated with work priorities, such as court appearances, deadlines to file papers with the court or produce documents to opposing counsel; and personal priorities, such as my dog’s veterinarian appointments, bar association meetings, and grocery shopping. At times it is difficult to return home and leave the office as it is. My life is utterly exhausting.

I have elected to embark on a true journey—to de-clutter my life (not exactly my desk, because I admit, I keep a fairly neat workspace). But how? Family lawyers practice in state and local courts, which are not as well-funded or as wired as federal courthouses in the United States. While some local and state courts now mandate paperless court filings, family courts tend to hold out, citing the
need for privacy in very delicate family matters. Besides the courthouse, a family lawyer's office tends to be a repository for paper, paper, and more paper. This book details my adventure in trying to solve my inefficiency problems by using technology in what is oftentimes a technologically devoid profession. I once received a discovery document production CD only to spend the rest of the day printing page after page before reviewing the discovery.

I have no intention of going “paperless”; the thought frightens me. I have had nightmares of standing in court with a laptop—containing all my questions, exhibits, and pleadings—and feeling pure humiliation as it freezes before my eyes. I admit that I will tiptoe into using technology. I still like to print each document I draft to mark with red pen before finalizing it.

Some lawyers are fortunate to have a paralegal they can call at a moment’s notice to implore for help; however, most family lawyers are solo practitioners or work in very small law firms with small to non-existent support staff. This book will lay out the problems I have faced in my daily family law practice, and solutions I have learned to incorporate to make my practice more efficient and less worrisome. Choose one, two, or more of the ideas in this book, and watch your practice become more efficient over time.

I sought out to answer the question: does technology really make you more efficient? The simple answer is that the right technology can absolutely make you more efficient. Unfortunately, not all computer programs, management software, e-mail programs, or other tech gadgets are geared toward the technology neophyte. If you have to attend training to learn how to use the technology, it may not be for you. It may simply add additional stress to your life. Technology in today’s society tends to be more intuitive and natural to use. However, much of the technology specifically designed for lawyers does not exhibit this innate ease of use. Therefore, this book will explore the use of technology from a somewhat different perspective. Instead of regurgitating a host of computer gadgets and tech tools, the authors will first
look at a family lawyer’s daily environment and routine and then assess what tech gadgets will fit into the family lawyer’s existing practice. The tech tools in this book are not necessarily created with lawyers in mind, but they nonetheless have become mainstays in some lawyers’ daily lives, including mine. These tools are more mobile, more accessible, and typically have a more user-friendly interface. We hope you can use the technology in this book in your practice like I have used it in mine.

Melissa A. Kucinski