

TechnoFeature™

Practice management and technology articles written by experts.

Top Five Tips for Discovering Your RomanTech Side

By Adriana Linares

INTRODUCTION

Relationship problems? You're not the only one. It seems that everyone occasionally suffers from relationship issues. If only I had a diamond for every conversation I've had that started with, "I just don't know what to do anymore. I'm a basket case," or, "I hate to bother you with my problems again, but I know you'll understand."

Most of the time I find the issue is a simple misunderstanding exacerbated by a communication standoff. Neither side can understand the other, and often it takes the intervention of a therapist to help them understand.

Yes, technology can be very difficult to deal with. What we need here is a therapist – a technology therapist.

My official job is helping lawyers to use technology better. My unofficial job seems to be giving relationship advice to friends. Long ago, I started to notice a parallel between the advice I was giving to my clients and the advice I was giving to friends. Now, I might not be able to help you with your wife or your boyfriend, but I can certainly help you improve your tech relationship.

Below you'll find five tips to help you start improving your tech-love life.

1. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT AND NEED

What do you want out of your relationship? Well, I want someone who will laugh with me, hold me tenderly, tolerate my mother ... uh, sorry, I got side tracked. The real question is: What need are you looking to fill with technology? Here's a personal example:

Recently, with several out-of-town trips planned, I was looking for a travel-itinerary manager for my Smartphone (a [Treo 650](#)). I wanted a simple way of

keeping track of the details of each trip. So I made a list of what I wanted out of my dream program:

- Store flight and hotel info.
- Synchronize with my email program (Outlook).
- Keep track of my expenses.
- Provide airport, airline, and major hotel information.
- And, ideally, it would also give me realtime flight information using my Smartphone's data connection.

Long ago, I started to notice a parallel between the advice I was giving to my clients and the advice I was giving to friends.

I began my investigation by searching Google with the search term "Treo itinerary manager." I looked at some Treo users forums such as [mytreo.net](#) and [everythingtreo.net](#). Just to make sure I covered all my bases I poked around on [download.com](#) and [palm.com](#). In the process I found products with features that I hadn't even thought of (a pre-travel and packing check list, for example).

In less than thirty minutes I found just what I was looking for – a product called [MobiMate](#).

Bottom line – you should have a strategy when you start looking for software or hardware.

2. COMPATIBILITY IS KEY

We all know the importance of compatibility in the relationship equation. However, we often fail to recognize the scope to which compatibility matters.

(Continued on next page)

I've been known to cruise the computer store looking to pick-up; sometimes, I know what I want and sometimes I'm just there browsing. But no matter what, I know that I am looking for technology that will complement my needs as well as get along with my friends and family ... uh, err... I mean, my other technologies.

Just recently I fell into a deep and meaningful gaze with a print server. I had always dreamed big of a print server for my small home network. I have four computers (don't ask) but only one printer. Could this be "the one"? Of course it was, I thought, as I swept it into my cart. I rushed home and quickly read the manual. (Yes, I read manuals – more on that later.) I then began a laborious process of installing software, tinkering with settings, and configuring God knows what. I wound up getting very frustrated. In desperation I called one of my own technology therapists, (hey, I'm human too).

Sadly, nobody could help me, so I took it back to Pedro, my buddy at Office Depot (whom I had not consulted before I made my hasty purchase). Pedro sighed as I handed him the box and told me I wasn't the first person to return this model. Apparently the print server had a host of compatibility problems. He suggested, in hushed tones, that I just

Don't just bring home the first laptop you lay your hands on. And don't fall prey to the overblown promises of some gussied up office gadget.

share my printer through my home network using Microsoft's built-in sharing capabilities. Not surprisingly, it worked great. No compatibility issues, and it was free.

3. WHERE DO YOU WANT THIS RELATIONSHIP TO GO?

They say the true test of a good relationship is an out-of-town trip. Being on the road takes everyone

out of their comfortable routines and creates an opportunity for exploration. Maybe you want a comfortable relationship, but at some point you might have to hit the road. Looking to whisk your new love off to a lush tropical island? Prefer to keep this affair confined to the office? Here are some questions to consider when looking for new technologies such as computers, cell phones, and PDA's.

- Will you want to move your computer from your office to your living room?
- Do you travel out of town to visit clients?
- Are you a litigator who spends a lot of time at the courthouse? And does the courthouse (or a nearby coffee shop) have free wireless Internet access that would enable you to check email?
- Do you live in a disaster prone area that might cause you to have to flee at a moments notice? (Think New Orleans here, and remember that most people in New Orleans didn't expect to be away from the city for more than 2 or 3 days).

I'm not saying that you have to opt for a mobile computing set up, but at least consider realistic possibilities. If you have doubts about home versus road, you should remember that if you plan for a trip you can easily stay home. But not vice-versa.

4. BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO ... SO BE PICKY

My brother is in his early thirties; he's smart, funny, good looking, and to top it all off, he's in a band. But he's single, and guess what? That is how he wants it. Getting involved with women is easy for him, but breaking up is hard and he doesn't have time to be installing and uninstalling one woman after another in his life.

If you think about it, you might note that ridding yourself of unwanted software is often even more dramatic. Don't just bring home the first laptop you lay your hands on. And don't fall prey to the overblown promises of some gussied up office gadget.

I am deeply disturbed when I hear someone say that they've been through three PDAs in the past year. There are so many Web resources with

(Continued on next page)

hardware and software reviews, so there's really no excuse for getting into a bad tech relationship. Do your homework: use Google, check user forums, product Web sites, tech magazines and see what others are saying. (I wish some of the men that I've been introduced to had come with Amazon-like peer reviews.)

At least consider the tech-equivalent of a pre-nuptial agreement – the free software trial. But remember, even free software can be hard to get rid of too. So be picky. Always, be picky.

5. DOES THIS THING COME WITH INSTRUCTIONS?

Many people consider it a waste of time (or a sign of weakness) to read a product manual. Fact is, most user-manuals are easy to read and are designed to get you up and running quickly with a minimum of bother and fuss. I've read a lot of manuals, and I can tell you that's where I learned most of what I know about the opposite tech.

My friend Ernie was thrilled to receive his new Leica camera the other day. He tore the box open and rushed to insert the memory card and pushed the power button. But his high hopes were dashed when his camera didn't seem to work "right out of the box."

He looked at it quizzically, unplugged and re-plugged, ejected and reinserted, then pushed and pushed that power button. He was packing the camera up to send it back when I intervened. Noting the tear in his eye, I asked him what the manual said to do.

His response: "Manual? Why would I bother with the manual? I've had ten cameras like this!" Well as it turns out, his new-fangled camera required the removal of a hidden plastic tab.

What's the lesson here? Well, for starters, if you've managed to find the optimal little gadget don't think you can just sit back and let the magic happen. Unlike women, most gadgets come with an instruction manual. So start there. Or as Shakespeare once eloquently put it, "hasten thee to read the friggin' manual!"

CONCLUSION

Technology can stir up emotions reminiscent of romantic relationships. From one minute to another we may love it, loathe it, or decide just to live with it. And like other relationships, the one you have with technology can be productive and fulfilling but not without some understanding, some patience, and some effort.

Copyright 2007 Adriana Linares. All rights reserved.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adriana Linares is a legal technology therapist and trainer [based in Orlando, Florida](#). Using her practical and personal approach to technology, she speaks and writes regularly on legal tech issues, tools, and training.

Contact Adriana:
E: adriana@lawtechpartners.com

About TechnoFeature

Published on Tuesdays, *TechnoFeature* is a weekly newsletter containing in-depth articles written by leading legal technology and practice management experts, many of whom have become "household names" in the legal profession. Most of these articles are TechnoLawyer exclusives, but we also scour regional legal publications for superb articles that you probably missed the first time around.