

# Comparative iPhone App Review: Documents to Go Versus Quickoffice Mobile Office Suite

Jeff Richardson

August 4, 2009

## Documents to Go 1.1

[www.dataviz.com](http://www.dataviz.com)

## Quickoffice Mobile Office Suite 1.3

[www.quickoffice.com](http://www.quickoffice.com)

### TechnoScore: 4.5

1 = Lowest Possible Score;  
5 = Highest Possible Score

**T**he iPhone can view Microsoft Word and Excel documents out of the box, but DataViz's Documents to Go and Quickoffice's Quickoffice Mobile Office Suite enable you to store, manage, edit, search, and email Office documents. Every iPhone-owning lawyer who works with Word documents should consider purchasing one of these apps. But which one? We asked Jeff Richardson, the lawyer behind the iPhone J.D. blog to compare the two apps and report his findings in this comparative review.

## INTRODUCTION

Apple's iPhone is a powerful device that enables you to do so much — browse the Internet, read email, take and view pictures and video, listen to music, find themselves on a map and get directions, etc. — it's incredibly tempting to leave your laptop at the office and just rely on the iPhone to do everything. But while the iPhone does a fine job of viewing Microsoft Word documents and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, it lacks the ability to edit these files.

DataViz and Quickoffice have added these capabilities to other smartphones for years. Soon after Apple

announced in early 2008 that third-party companies could sell apps for the iPhone, DataViz and Quickoffice got to work preparing iPhone apps. Indeed, [DataViz announced its plans way back in March 2008](#).

Quickoffice was the first to release a product, providing an app that could edit spreadsheet documents in February 2009, followed by an app that could edit Word documents in April 2009. The current version of Quickoffice's app is called [Quickoffice Mobile Office Suite](#) and it currently sells for \$12.99.

DataViz finally released its app, Documents to Go, in June 2009. The DataViz app can edit Word files today, and Excel features have been announced but are not yet available. [Documents to Go](#) currently sells for \$9.99, although a \$4.99 version is also available if you don't need the ability to download and edit documents attached to email messages in Exchange.

## WHY EDIT ON THE IPHONE?

You can argue that attorneys do not need either app. The iPhone already has a nice document viewer that enables you to view a variety of file types in either portrait or landscape mode, plus you can pinch to zoom the documents. Thus, if someone emails you a Word document or an Excel spreadsheet, you can effortlessly view the attachment.

The marquee feature of both apps is the ability to edit documents. I wouldn't buy either app without this feature, but many lawyers will agree with me that this is really the

least important feature of these apps. Editing a document on a screen the size of a playing card is tedious no matter how good the app or the smartphone. If you have to do any real editing, you will want to use a laptop or desktop computer with a full-size keyboard.

**Both of these apps excel at getting documents to and from your iPhone and organizing and managing the files.**

I owned a Treo 650 with a copy of Documents to Go for many years, and I can count on one hand the number of times I edited a document on my mobile phone. But you never know when that need will arise, and having the ability to edit documents can be a lifesaver if you are away from your office and your computer.

A more compelling reason to use one of these apps is the ability to take your files with you. As a litigator, when I think of key documents in a case, I think of complaints, answers, briefs, memoranda, and court orders. I imagine that when many transactional attorneys think of the key documents in a case file they think of contracts or correspondence.

Whatever the file type, the iPhone lacks any built-in ability to save and manage documents. You can view a document attached to an email, but as the email gets older and drops off your screen or is de-

leted, there goes the document. Both of these apps excel at getting documents to and from your iPhone and organizing and managing the files — even if you will primarily just view the documents, not edit them.

The apps also give you powerful ways to use your documents. For example, both apps can conduct a full text search within a document. Even when it just comes to viewing documents, both of these apps do a better job because of the sophisticated way that they enable you to zoom in and out of a document (discussed in more detail below).

---

### Both apps enable you to cut, copy and paste, find text, and undo or redo edits.

---

#### EDITING AND VIEWING WORD FILES

Quickoffice already enables you to edit Excel documents. DataViz promises this feature in a free update to Documents to Go (albeit with no current release date). This feature can prove very helpful (for example, I have a useful spreadsheet that I keep with me to calculate judicial interest), but handling Microsoft Word documents is far more important for most attorneys so that is my focus in this section. Neither app includes the ability to handle WordPerfect documents, but you can view many other file types with these apps including PDF, iWork, HTML, and common image file formats such as JPEG, TIFF, and BMP.

Both apps work by displaying the document on the main part of the screen and displaying icons at the bottom, which you can tap for more functions.

Quickoffice has six icons at the bottom of the screen. You can format the font and color of text and use bold or italics or highlight text. You can also change the alignment or indentation of text and add a bulleted list. These are great features, but there are some notable omissions. You cannot underline text, nor can you even see any underlines previously added to the document. You also cannot see footnotes.

Documents to Go displays only five icons at a time, but you can swipe the icon bar to show even more icons, so the program could hold many dozens of icons. Currently, there are twelve. Using these icons, Documents to Go can do all of the text editing that Quickoffice can do, except that it lacks the ability to change the font. But it adds several features missing from Quickoffice, such as the ability to add (and view) underlines, view (but not edit) footnotes, and use not only a bulleted list but also a numbered list.

Both apps enable you to cut, copy and paste, find text, and undo or redo edits. Both apps also enable you to pinch to zoom, in a way much improved over the normal iPhone function.

If you use the built-in Mail app to view a Word document attached to an email, you can pinch to zoom in and out, but zooming makes text larger at the price of forcing you to scroll back and forth to read an entire line. Both of these apps reformat the line breaks so that if you make text larger, any word previously at the end of the line just reformats to the beginning of the next line. If you ever find it difficult to read small text on an iPhone screen, this single feature may be the most compelling reason for you to use one of these apps instead of using the iPhone's

built-in viewer. You can even hide the icons in both apps, devoting maximum screen space to the text of the document.

Both apps lack more advanced features. For example, people often send me Word documents with revisions indicated by using the track changes feature in Word, but neither of these apps can display this information, meaning I only see the original, unedited file.

Moreover, while documents created by Microsoft Word generally display quite well, I sometimes find that documents created elsewhere don't display correctly, such as some cases downloaded from Westlaw in Word format and some documents exported to Word format from Google Docs.

#### TRANSFERRING FILES TO AND FROM THE APPS

If your iPhone and your computer are on the same WiFi network, you can transfer files back and forth with both apps. In Quickoffice, you can either mount the document folder as an external drive or you can use a Web browser interface to transfer files. Both work well.

Documents to Go includes a desktop client that enables a two-way sync of selected documents so that both your iPhone and your computer can always have the latest version of the file, regardless of which you used to last edit the file.

I like the Quickoffice approach because it is quick and easy to use, but if file syncing is important to you and you don't mind using a separate program on your computer, you'll prefer the Documents to Go approach.

Quickoffice also includes the ability to upload or download using

Apple's MobileMe service, which is useful if you are a subscriber.

Both apps enable you to email a document from your iPhone to someone else. Both apps also enable you to download attachments from an email so that you can edit them or save them to the iPhone. How they do so, however, is quite different.

If your law firm uses Microsoft Exchange for your email, Documents to Go displays email messages with file attachments so that you can access, edit, and save any attached file in a supported file format. Of course you can also email any edited document.

Quickoffice enables you to access attachments no matter which email program you use, but it does so by requiring you to forward your emails with up to 50 MB of attachments to the Quickoffice server. The Quickoffice app can then access and download the files and remove them from the server. If you have concerns about sending confidential, privileged documents to Quickoffice, you may prefer the Documents to Go approach. If you don't use Microsoft Exchange for your email, then Quickoffice is the only way to download email attachments to an iPhone.

Both apps offer folders and subfolders for organizing files. Documents to Go distinguishes between files that are synced with the desktop client (which can be

organized in folders), files local to only the iPhone, and files attached to Exchange emails.

---

**Fortunately, both apps are inexpensive, so for around \$25, you can buy both apps.**

---

#### **MORE PROS AND CONS**

Each app has advantages over the other.

I like that you can add a four digit password to Quickoffice, which means confidential documents cannot be accessed if a thief takes my iPhone, nor can they be changed or deleted by my three-year-old son if he picks up my iPhone. I also really like the file management features of Quickoffice, plus the app seems faster, especially when entering text.

Although both apps can handle photos, Quickoffice does a nicer job with them by including a slideshow feature and the ability to advance through pictures in a folder without having to go back to the folder list to select a new picture. And currently, only Quickoffice includes the ability to edit spreadsheets or access attachments to emails if you don't use Exchange.

But Documents to Go also has its own advantages, which many attorneys will find more compelling. Documents to Go displays under-

lining and footnotes, both of which are common in my legal documents. In addition, if your law firm uses Exchange, you will love the ability to open attachments directly in Documents to Go.

I have used email tech support for both companies, and found both experiences satisfactory with neither one better than the other.

#### **CONCLUSION**

If you have to pick just one application, buy Documents to Go if you use Exchange. If you don't use Exchange, you may prefer Quickoffice to access your email attachments. However, the current lack of underlining and footnotes could prevent you from being completely happy with Quickoffice.

Having said that, it is difficult to pick either one based on features because it seems that every few weeks both companies make improvements. The developers of each app continually copy and leapfrog each other.

Fortunately, both apps are inexpensive, so for around \$25, which is a lot less than I paid for just Documents to Go on my Treo 650 many years ago, you can buy both apps. If you care enough about handling documents on your iPhone to read this review, my recommendation is to get them both so that you can always have the best tool for the job and you can take advantage of new features no matter which company releases them first.

---

*Jeff Richardson is a partner in the New Orleans office of [Adams and Reese](#). His practice areas include class action and complex litigation and appellate litigation, primarily on the defense side. He also publishes the only Web site devoted to the use of iPhones by attorneys, [iPhone J.D.](#)*

Contact Jeff: [jeff@iphonejd.com](mailto:jeff@iphonejd.com)

#### **About TechnoFeature**

*TechnoFeature* is a weekly newsletter that offers in-depth reporting by leading legal technology and practice management experts, many of whom have become "household names" in the legal profession. It's in this newsletter that you'll find TechnoLawyer's oft-quoted formal product reviews and accompanying *TechnoScore* ratings.