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# Cloud Computing for Lawyers: Choosing the Right Platform for Your Firm's Data

Any selection of a cloud solution has to incorporate concerns about security risk, time and money, BYOD, and more

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Like most businesses and professions, law firms and attorneys are consistently evaluating the pros and cons of the many IT solutions available to them. Those solutions may solve challenges and in some instances, be required to remain competitive through the enhanced workload and case management efficiencies that they offer.

With the interest in cloud computing ever increasing, the undeniable benefits that hosted solutions offer, and the wide range of software and data sharing options that seem to emerge daily, cloud based options have to be seriously considered. Any thorough evaluation must take a hard look at the validity of the concerns many raise with cloud-based solutions. Is a cloud-based system or solution more or less secure than internally managed IT systems? Unless your firm has unlimited or disproportionate resources to invest in IT, most would argue that companies having an IT solution as their primary product or service will be significantly more invested in ensuring that their system is both secure and stable. Do the contracts with cloud providers deliver the data protection that attorneys are bound to? The answer to that question lies within the agreements of the prospective vendor partner you are considering.

Attorneys need access to their data, right now and at different locations. Whether at a client's office or in the courtroom, having access to all of the legal documents, exhibits, data-related evidence and backup information is essential. We all know about multiple file access and sharing solutions available, so the determining factors lie in finding the solution that best suits the needs for access availability, sharing protocols, security and redundancy. Another consideration is whether the solution is to be temporary for when you are out of the office IT network, or if it is incorporated into your permanent workflow process.

A lot of time and money is invested in the documents that attorneys create. Those documents also need to be retained for durations specified by the record keeping mandates of each state. As a result, the backup, archival and disaster recovery measures need to be considered as part of the selection process for the most appropriate solution to ensure the long-term retention of these valuable documents. Whether choosing one of the myriad cloud based data backup solutions on the market or utilizing internal IT infrastructure, successful data retention and

recovery are a must. Redundancy of that data and having the data backed up in multiple locations is mandatory.

Client-attorney privilege and the protection of a client's interest is a cardinal rule in the legal world. Because of that, the protection of data is paramount. The security measures in place to protect the data during all phases of the data lifecycle, while actively being used, backed up or archived, is a diligent and mandatory consideration when searching for the best solution. What security protocols are in place? How often are firewall, anti-intrusion, anti-virus and patch management updates implemented? Are typical update schedules utilized or is the data protected with zero-day protection? Meaning updates are pushed and implemented as soon as a potential threat is discovered.

Most law firms have a team of attorneys and associates working on behalf of their clients. Having an IT environment that affords a high level of collaboration both at the data and software level significantly enhances productivity and efficiency.

Does Desktop-as-a-Service (DaaS) / hosted desktops have a place in the legal field? Whether internally deployed or delivered by a qualified IT managed services provider, hosted desktop environments are capable of delivering all of these data, software and hardware driven demands and needs when managed by a highly qualified party utilizing the appropriate IT systems architecture. These environments are still highly customizable and even afford law firms the option of employing a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy. There are certainly additional considerations and policies to be thought through with BYOD, however, it can be successfully accomplished and deployed while maintaining a highly secure environment.

In today's computing environment the capabilities and options are staggering. New solutions, applications and hardware hit the market every day. The exposure to new cybersecurity threats arise daily as well. The key is to be thoughtful about the primary objectives that you and your firm desire to accomplish as it relates to the creation, utilization, sharing and protection of your data. Once those objectives are in place, thorough research will unveil what path and end solution is best for your organization.

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