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4 Reasons Why Law Firms Need Cloud-Based Legal Practice Management Software

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The [cloud](#) has become a standard part of our lives. From streaming video platforms to smartphones and smart home devices, we rely on cloud computing to make our days exponentially more convenient. But individuals are not the only benefactors of cloud computing. Over the last 10 years, business leaders around the world have incorporated cloud-based technologies, recognizing their greater efficiency and cost savings potential. Though it has taken a little longer, the legal industry has also started [embracing the cloud](#).

As reported by the American Bar Association's 2018 Legal Technology Survey [Report](#), less than 55% of all surveyed law firms utilized some aspect of cloud computing. The hesitation among law firms typically stems from three main reasons: worries about security, limited understanding about how the cloud operates, and ties to traditional methods of practice management. Many of these law firms still rely on filing cabinets and in-office servers, but the disruption of service that took place over the last couple of years made the drawbacks of this decision painfully clear.

Legal Practice Management Meets the Cloud

[Legal practice management software](#) helps law firms keep all aspects of their practice organized and running efficiently. Firms have been using them for years to handle such needs as document storage, contact management, [calendaring](#), and [task management](#). They become the backbone of a practice, and when they are not available – whether due to a server crash or office inaccessibility - firms can experience debilitating process failures. After all, practice management software is only beneficial if a law firm can actually use it.

With in-office options, the practice management software is installed on a local computer or server located within the physical office space. Those servers are usually only accessible from computers also located within the same space, which limits the capabilities of the practice management software.

Cloud-based legal practice management software is not installed locally on your office server. Instead, it is web-based, using a remote server maintained by the software provider. Access occurs through the internet, which makes the software convenient and virtually 100% available for use.

If you are a law firm leader or administrator who is frustrated with the inconvenience of premise-based software, this post is for you. It will explore 4 reasons why your law firm needs cloud-based

legal practice management.

1. Consistent Availability

With cloud-based legal practice management software, law firms can access all of their data at any time and on any device. This includes everything from documents and emails to time tracking tools and invoices. It eliminates the need to be located within the physical office because all data is stored in the cloud, which can be accessed remotely with the right credentials.

Even when a firm member makes changes to a client file or administrative document, other firm members maintain access to the most recent version. Working with a cloud-based legal practice management software gives attorneys and legal support staff the ability to retrieve case data and work on matters in a secure environment without the need for those antiquated network connections that confine them to the four walls of the office. Remote work becomes easier, with greater efficiency, productivity, and accountability.

2. Decreased Downtime and IT Issues

Law firms need an IT infrastructure that they can consistently rely on to meet their practice management needs. Recurring problems and excessive downtime limit productivity. They can also threaten a firm's ability to maintain confidential client data in an adequately secure environment.

In-office servers are notorious for their unreliability. They break down often, especially without regular maintenance and updates. They are also known to be extremely glitchy which frustrates firm members as they try to complete time-sensitive tasks.

Firm administrators that choose an on-premise legal practice management software must prepare for continuous maintenance needs and repairs. Many firms find these tasks so challenging that they either keep an IT expert on staff to address server problems, or they contract with an outside IT consultant. Yet, even with the most proactive measures in place, servers can still go down, leaving firm members unable to use them.

Cloud-based practice management platforms obviate all of these headaches. There is no requirement to manage expensive servers because the software provider automatically performs all necessary updates, regular maintenance, and backups. They also quickly address any repair needs, often before firm members even recognize that a problem occurred. Every technical task related to cloud-based practice management software is supported by one centralized team solely dedicated to its performance.

3. The Right Tools for Internal Changes

Changes within a law firm require a practice management system that is flexible and quick to adapt. Whether you are the administrator of a mid-sized firm that is scaling up or you are downsizing your firm's physical office space, cloud-based legal practice management software adjusts with the [changing landscape](#) of your law firm.

Cloud-based practice management software offers a variety of modules and features, and many providers allow administrators to choose which options best meet the needs of the firm. This means that as the firm grows, so can its practice management software. There is no need to start from scratch with a new system when you can easily make adjustments to what already works.

It's no secret that office relocation can be a pain in the neck. But it's even more challenging with an on-premise server. Moving the server from one location to the next will likely require the assistance of an IT technician. It can also result in a period of inaccessibility to important firm and client data.

With a cloud-based system, your firm's practice management software remains intact and ready to access throughout the entire move. Unlimited storage capabilities alleviate the need for heavy file cabinets and multiple servers. With everything stored in the cloud, firm members can settle into their new digs and get right to work without costly interruption.

4. Improved Security

Many lawyers still doubt that cloud technologies can offer the **level of security** that they are ethically obligated to provide their clients. Yet, the real dangers of theft and security breaches are much more prevalent with in-office systems. A single fire or natural disaster can decimate physical documents in a matter of seconds. In addition, the responsibility to protect an on-premise server from cyberattacks falls on the firm, and that can prove very expensive. Cyber experts and server updates cost money, but law firms must take on these costs to keep their physical servers secure.

When using cloud-based legal practice management, data is continuously saved and stored within the cloud, protecting it from physical threats like fire or natural disasters. Law firm leaders also control which members of the firm have access to the software. Some systems even offer security measures that limit the accessibility of individual cases or firm records.

Cloud providers maintain a team of security experts who are on constant guard against cyber threats and attacks. They take on this expensive responsibility so that law firm administrators feel comfortable trusting them with their law firm data.

Law Firms Need the Power of the Cloud

Law firm administrators that understand the power of cloud-based legal project management provide their firms with a valuable resource that streamlines and protects numerous aspects of legal practice. When choosing the right cloud-based option, look for features like:

- Firmwide calendaring
- Unlimited document storage capacity
- Document automation
- Client communication management
- Automated software updates
- Reporting
- Useful integrations
- Top-notch security technologies

As your law firm evolves, cloud-based legal practice management software can provide the continuous support and stability that your firm needs.

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