IS CLOUD THE RIGHT OPTION FOR YOUR LAW FIRM?

Seven Common Myths and the Facts You Need to Know

by

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FEATURED ARTICLE

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In the past five years, Cloud has become all the rage in IT. In fact, at the MPF Leadership Conference in Atlanta this past May, the most commonly asked questions I heard from managing partners related to their concerns about Cloud, including:

- *Are we too small for Cloud?*
- *Can Cloud achieve the security requirements that our large clients are requiring of us?,* and
- *Will Cloud make us susceptible to ever increasing costs?*

Improvements in technology over the past decade have enabled many IT functions to be accomplished through a Cloud service that previously required servers. Moving to the Cloud, though, requires change, and change can be scary. For nearly 20 years we have helped law firms navigate the IT and Cloud waters. Here I clear up some of the most common Cloud myths.

Myth #1: Cloud is unreliable.

The Facts
The industry has matured tremendously over the past decade when we were in "Cloud 1.0" with products that were slow, unreliable, and very often had bugs. Today, we're in "Cloud 3.0," which has proven itself to be reliable for functions such as email, phones, security, and even time and billing for smaller or start-up firms.

Myth #2: Cloud is too expensive.

The Facts
Cloud offers tremendous cost savings in terms of IT overhead. When a firm moves to the cloud, the firm generally does not have to spend money on hardware, backups, remote access, security systems, and support, as these functions are generally part and parcel of cloud products.

Myth #3: Cloud applications are inferior to client-server applications.

The Facts
It is true that many Cloud applications, especially accounting, time and billing, document management, and practice management, simply do not stack-up to the tried-and-true client server offerings. However,

when a firm moves their entire IT infrastructure to the cloud, it allows you to run all traditional client-server software in the cloud. You can keep all the applications you love without the risks and costs of finding, adopting, and learning new software packages.

Myth #4: Cloud is not secure.

The Facts

Firms can often achieve better security at a lower cost with cloud when it is implemented properly. Most security breaches occur because of a poor setup, weak passwords, and 'do it yourself' implementations. The right cloud products and the right IT professionals will result in a highly secure environment.

Myth #5: We cannot access Cloud if our internet goes down.

The Facts

If your internet goes down regularly, then you should fix that problem by installing proper circuits and network redundancies so that outages do not continue regularly. Even if your firm uses on-premise applications, when your internet is down users will not be able to send email, do research, send or process billing, or remotely access systems. Having reliable, diverse internet connections with automatic failover and redundancy is a low-cost option in just about every city in the US today, and no firm should be without it. One of the greatest benefits of cloud is that if your internet is down at your office, like during a natural disaster, users can still remotely access their applications, files, and data from home or anywhere with a working internet line.

Myth #6: Cloud is only for small firms.

The Facts

Cloud comes in many shapes and sizes, and we have never once encountered a business (law firm or otherwise) where going cloud did not make sense for at least a few of their critical IT functions. Unfortunately, some IT professionals, including service providers and IT employees, will try and convince their clients/employers to avoid cloud at all costs simply to protect their jobs (or revenue streams). The reality is that cloud makes a lot of sense. It is most often just a question of which providers and services are the right fit for each firm.

Myth #7: Cloud will be too costly over time as providers raise their fees.

The Facts

While it is normal for businesses to raise rates over time (doesn't your firm do the same?), the actual cost of on-premise IT is also rapidly increasing. IT hardware, backup, remote access systems, and software license costs continue to rise, as does the cost of hiring good IT talent (either full-time or

outsourced), especially in today's strong employment market. A firm should have a good multi-year agreement with cloud providers that includes cost control over time (we suggest a fixed fee for the term of the agreement and a capped percentage increase for any term renewal). As competition increases, many cloud vendors are willing to lock in rates for extended terms to prevent customer attrition.

Conclusion

Despite maturing cloud technology and more rampant usage, there are still quite a few myths surrounding it. But, cloud is the future and the decision to move to the cloud should no longer be a yes or no question, rather what, how, and when. When implemented properly, cloud enables firms to take advantage of many of its inherent benefits, including security, reliability, and accessibility

For More Information

- http://www.tabush.com/blog/software-and-cloud-getting-the-best-of-both-worlds
- http://www.tabush.com/blog/6-considerations-when-moving-desktops-to-the-cloud
- http://www.tabush.com/blog/we-dont-need-no-stinkin-server-or-do-we

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About the Author

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