

Is your firm finally ready for the cloud?

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What's all this buzz about the cloud?

Unless you've been hiding under a rock or just too busy managing the daily operations of your law firm, you can't help but hear all this buzz surrounding the cloud. So, what is the cloud? Simply put, the cloud is the delivery of computing as a service rather than a product, whereby shared resources, software, information and support services are provided to computers and other devices as a utility (like electricity or cellular telephone service) over the Internet or a private network connection. The IT industry has been encouraging hosted IT services for many years. In the late 1990's we referred to it as ASP (Application Service Provider); in the mid 2000's we shifted to the term SaaS (Software as a Service); and now, in 2011, we have coined a new industry term which essentially refers to similar but more advanced technology hosting concepts.

Public vs. Private

Before considering a cloud alternative you should have a fundamental understanding of the different types of cloud models available to the legal market. These include public clouds and private clouds. Public clouds are typically accessed via the Internet, support multiple customers using a shared infrastructure, and account for the hosting of a single application or service such as Postini, a popular Internet-based email virus and SPAM scanning service. Private clouds are typically more complex and are usually provided by an enterprise service provider. Services offered under this model are more holistic, more secure, and should be accessed over dedicated private circuits such as T1 lines, MPLS and Metro Ethernet service. An example of a private cloud service would include Adaptive Solutions' legal managed desktop service – ONBOARD.

Introducing Virtual Desktop and Server Technology

Over the past decade some firms have been early adopters of a hosted IT model. These pioneers of 'the cloud' struggled with technical and performance limitations such as lack of sound and video on the hosted desktop and limited flexibility for the delivery of legal-specific practice applications and time and billing systems. With the advent of virtual desktops and servers, this is no longer the case. When selecting a private cloud hosting provider, demand that your partner deliver and host your servers and desktop sessions using virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) technology. VDI permits vendors to stand-up separate and distinct servers for each customer, thereby creating a digital security divide. This design allows the

integration and coexistence of numerous legal-specific applications, including document and case management systems, Windows 2008 Server, Exchange 2010 and higher capacity email boxes. Virtual desktops now deliver a lightning fast user experience. They can include Windows 7, Office 2010 and rich media including sound, video and rapid response when working in high-definition documents, websites and PDFs. Think of it this way, when you login to a VDI desktop session, the operating system, applications and user profile are mashed together and streamed on demand to the end point device, which can be a desktop computer, laptop, iPad or Smartphone. Each time you login is the technical equivalent of being issued a brand new computer, complete with a clean instance of the operating system and exempt of viruses and malware which are well known to impact the productivity of legal professionals. Gartner predicts that VDI platforms will reduce the total cost of ownership of a desktop computer by over 65% over a three year lifespan. Given today's technology and these facts, the market is finally ripe for cloud computing in the legal environment.

Where to go from here?

Should your firm be considering a desktop upgrade to Windows 7, Office 2010, or be at the point of renewing a service level agreement with a legacy hosting provider, please consider the cloud and legal-specific products offered by Adaptive Solutions. It would be our pleasure to provide a live demonstration of our ONBOARD cloud desktop service and to counsel your firm on the features, benefits and budget of in-house networks vs. cloud equivalents. The cloud is here and will permit your firm to stay focused on the practice of law, and out of the laborious business of IT upgrades and support services. Further, the Adaptive Solutions ONBOARD service includes our market leading xTend I.T. 24/7 law firm help desk service, which permits firm administrators to stay focused on their real job – running their law firms.

About the Author

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