

Embracing Changing Technologies In Your Law Firm

An implementation roadmap to guide your firm's adaption to new technology

White Paper



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Introduction

Technology continues to change at a rapid pace. Is your firm up to date? From advances in working in the field to encryption and other safety measures, law firms are notoriously behind the times. Having a roadmap for implementation will help your firm adapt to changes that will make your clients' and firm's information safer and the work more efficient.

This white paper provides the basics for a plan to improve law firm technology:

- Areas to consider.
- Cultural changes and accountability measures.
- Tips for working through a tech overhaul.

Included are tips and best practices, providing an outline for staff training.

Where to Begin

“If it ain't broke...” Sure. Your firm may not notice any problems with its current technology, but that doesn't mean that there is not an issue. Law firms, responsible for private client information, are some of the most unsafe when it comes to technological practices and that is because people are unaware of the risks. Figure out your risk level by surveying your firm:

- Are files shared over secured and/or encrypted channels?
- Are personal devices used by staff authenticated and registered?
- Do you have password complexity requirements in place? How often are staff required to change their passwords?
- Have you considered data leaks? Do you monitor compliance with rules about handling sensitive data on personal devices?
- Is there a policy for staff who lose a device that has been used to access client information, whether it is a personal device or one that works for your firm?

Begin with the development of policy and procedure. Always start with safety. Once you have developed a proper policy and procedure, move on to the actual tech.

Storage

Is data stored on site or in the cloud? Is it a hybrid system? Who can access this information and how? Storage is one of the first areas to consider. Work with a trusted consultant to determine your storage needs when it comes to size and security. Troubleshoot potential risk and develop storage solutions that address them.

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IT

Many law firms do not have an IT department and instead rely on user knowledge or administrative staff to serve in this role. While seemingly cost efficient, neither of these is a good model. Instead consider managed IT solutions. Experts, not employed to your firm, are assigned to you who can handle everything from installing software to recovering lost passwords and setting up email signatures. This results with your firm saving money while gaining expertise and security.

Recover the Data

Using the information from your analysis of the system scans, build a recovery plan. Then, choose an ideal restore point and recover the data from an external backup. Do not be tempted to roll back to a restore point on the same servers since they might be infected, too.

Shore Up Your Remote Systems

Attorneys don't work at their desks. It's time to bring your tech to the cloud. Adopting a system of remote access allows risky thumb drives and unsecured emails to be a thing of the past. Instead, staff can access their desktop with all of the security features you've put into place. This is a seamless, efficient model that allows for the same level of work to be done in the office and on site with clients, while doing research remotely, even at home.



The People Problem

The biggest challenge to changing technology is people. It can be difficult to change a system and you may find push back. Handling this is a two-pronged effort. From the top, there must be anticipation of push back and understanding. Here's how to handle it on the front lines

Education and Communication

Staff must understand why there are changes (i.e. implementation of a BYOD policy). Educate staff in written communication or through a series of short meetings as to why your firm is advancing its technology. Answer questions, listen to concerns and note areas where people will need help. When staff understands the potential risks and feel as though they are in the loop, change is easier.

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Accountability

There should be a clear timeline for every change, and it must be enforced. When dealing with security issues and confidential information there isn't room for defiance. Be firm, fair and consistent in your expectations for implementation of each change.

Tips for Change

One way to ease the transition is to not simply change everything. Continue to use the same fonts, jargon and even color scheme as you implement new tech. Most software can be customized. This keeps a sense of familiarity among staff and doesn't feel like a complete reboot.

How to Implement Change

After determining what changes will be made, work with trusted professionals to develop a clear plan and timeline for implementation. Be transparent with staff about this and keep the following best practices for tech implementation at the forefront.

Have a Feedback System in Place

Make sure there is one way to communicate any glitches so that nothing gets lost in the shuffle. Attorneys and other staff must have access to their files and programs so there should be an expedited process for handling any access problems that may come up. Have a "red phone" with a clear list of when that mode should be used. Corrupted or lost files and login issues are examples of red phone emergencies.

Staggered Roll Out

Don't plan on doing everything behind the scenes and then hitting a button to enact the changes. Work with your IT department or consultant to roll out new tech in phases. This allows for people to get used to it in stages and not have to learn several different systems at once. It also enables you to spot any problems with new software and systems and work out those kinks before moving onto something new.

CRA: Your Partner In Technology Advancement

Don't approach the assessment and revamp of your law firm's technological systems alone. Partner with the experts at Computer Resources of America. CRA has the skills and savvy to help your law firm navigate figuring out where to begin, building a plan, helping staff assimilate, and creating the proper policy, procedure and process for before, during and after implementing new technologies. Contact us today at www.consultcra.com for a free evaluation.



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