

# Building the case for cloud technology in the legal sector

---



The decision to implement cloud computing technology is often a polarizing one. Proponents tout the increased efficiency and cost-savings that come with such systems, while detractors argue that cloud-based platforms are uniquely vulnerable to cyberattacks.

Data security is an especially serious concern for organizations in the legal sector, as they are obligated to protect private client information at all costs. Yet, in recent years many firms have adopted cloud services like Microsoft Azure. These early adopters are slowly becoming more comfortable with the cloud, according to recent data from the American Bar Association. Approximately 78 percent of lawyers who use the technology show a willingness to continue onward and possibly build on their current solutions.<sup>1</sup>

**Overall adoption rates are on the rise. By practice area, family law (37 percent), corporate (34 percent), general practice (34 percent) and contracts law (33 percent) lead the pack.**

When considering the myriad benefits that accompany the cloud - especially in an industry dependent on collaboration and document sharing and storage - it is only a matter of time before a majority of firms jump on the bandwagon.

Practices of all sizes can take advantage of the technology and see impactful results in a variety of areas, including:

**Budgeting:** In terms of benefits, cost considerations are always a good starting point. Cloud computing means the elimination of costly expenses of owning and maintaining on-premises data servers and software.

**Disaster recovery and uninterrupted service:** Backup is critical. This is especially true in situations where on-premises servers may be destroyed - an office fire for example. With cloud computing services, servers are remotely located, and vendors are frequently backing-up systems.

**Flexibility:** Cloud computing services also allow for the increased flexibility and agility of operations. Similarly, the ability to scale up or down according to your needs is also inherent with these systems. Specifically, whether there is a desire to expand or trim down networks, hosting services are pliable and can quickly respond to those capacity needs.

**Increased efficiency:** Document management opportunities offered by cloud services translates to fewer hours spent organizing, filing and poring over

countless documents at the expense of time and manpower. With a click of a button, records retrieval and management is made simple.

**Data security:** Finally, to address the elephant in the room - cloud security. Confidentiality, security, data control and ownership and ethics were among the top concerns lawyers had regarding cloud technologies, according to the ABA. However, reputable and experienced hosts are able to implement sophisticated security measures to prevent unauthorized system access. Further, concerns of ethical compliance have been assuaged with conclusions affirming that there is no specific ethical prohibition against cloud computing.

State bar associations in Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin have specifically approved the technology.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, to harness the full power of cloud technology, firms must pinpoint and deploy the right tools. Luckily, Microsoft offers cloud-based tailored to organizations in the legal industry.

# Managing workflows with Office 365 and the Matter Center

More than 60 million enterprises use Office 365 to facilitate streamlined, web-based workflows, according to Microsoft.<sup>3</sup> When considering the host of features that come along with the platform, it's easy to understand why so many have signed up for access.

Office 365 works with Microsoft's proprietary document-sharing solution SharePoint. This allows users to easily share and store internal documents and access cloud-based communication features like instant messaging and Skype, making collaboration a breeze. For law firms, these capabilities are especially useful, as many struggle to maintain streamlined, efficient workflows.

**Practicing attorneys use over 100,000 sheets of copy paper per year, relying on paper-based systems that complicate internal functions and, in some cases, stunt organizational growth.<sup>4</sup>**

## Keeping case materials secure

Despite these powerful capabilities, some practices may balk at the idea of adoption for fear of data security concerns. It is undeniable that cyberattacks are a very real threat in the legal sector. In fact, an estimated 15 percent of U.S. firms have suffered major data breaches.<sup>5</sup>

Office 365 and the Matter Center come equipped with specialized security features to address this issue and keep firms in compliance with ethical standards. Office 365 leverages Microsoft's robust cloud-based security network to keep safe confidential case information. The software maker monitors its

For example, many practices find it difficult to expand internationally due to processes that emphasize the distribution and transfer of physical case files and related documentation.

Office 365 not only addresses this problem with its core components but also offers a custom solution for law professionals called the Matter Center. This robust, open-source add-on allows users to collaborate with clients and colleagues - both internal and external - and view case materials without leaving Outlook. The Matter Center also leverages lynchpin Microsoft platforms like Excel, OneNote and Word to provide a wide array of collaborative possibilities. Additionally, the solution includes an intuitive search function and data visualization tools.

Microsoft developed the Matter Center in 2013 and first deployed it as an internal application for its Legal and Corporate Affairs Group. Last year, the software company offered the first consumer version, free of charge, via the online repository GitHub. Firms looking to take advantage of the platform must have Microsoft Azure and Office 365 subscriptions.





data centers 24 hours per day, offers cutting-edge data encryption services and gives users tools like multi-factor authentication and mobile device management, allowing them to configure custom data security protocols to fit their needs.

The Matter Center includes a robust permissions-based system to limit document access to only authorized firm personnel or clients. This feature

## Looking to the future

Office 365, powered by Microsoft Azure and SharePoint, enables lawyers to collaborate and respond to the unique needs of their clients rapidly and with ease. Plus, the cost benefits that accompany these cloud-based applications are undeniable.

Companies that move their systems from on-premises systems to the cloud save considerably, as they no longer have to bear the costs of managing on-site servers. For example, an organization with two application servers, two database servers and one load balancer can save almost 30 percent on their information technology

- along with the platform's unique collaborative capabilities - gives adopters the opportunity to implement streamlined workflows that facilitate growth while also securing private client data.

Microsoft compliance experts continuously monitor both Office 365 and the Matter Center add-on to ensure compliance.

costs by switching to the cloud.<sup>6</sup> Of course, this is only half of the cost equation. Adopters often add to the budget by opening up new streams of revenue, leveraging the flexibility of the cloud to roll out new service offerings and maintain nimbleness in mercurial market conditions.

Cloud-based technology and unique tools like Office 365 allow law firms to modernize their operations and adopt streamlined yet secure processes that not only facilitate collaboration between clients and colleagues but also create new business opportunities here and abroad.



**techminds**  
group

**2016 WINNER**

A PROGRAM OF NJBIZ

**FAST50**

CELEBRATING THE DYNAMIC GROWTH OF NEW JERSEY COMPANIES

## Get started

Contact us to find out the best place to start in making technology a business advantage for your organization.

---

[info@techmindslc.com](mailto:info@techmindslc.com)

[www.techmindslc.com](http://www.techmindslc.com)

### Sources:

1. The ABA collected this data while compiling its 2015 Legal Technology Survey Report.
2. Though the ABA has yet to issue a ruling on cloud computing, it has offered guidance on how to ethically implement such technology.
3. During its annual developer conference in March, Microsoft announced that an estimated 1.2 billion users work with its products and confirmed that more than 60 million businesses have subscribed to the Office 365 platform. Windows Central reported.
4. In 2008, the international law firm Arnold and Porter collaborated with Conservatree and Purdue University to assess paper use in the legal sector. The Cleveland-Plain Dealer reported.
5. The ABA collected this data while compiling its 2015 Legal Technology Survey Report. Startlingly, 25 percent of respondents said they had no policies in place to address breaches.
6. Dell engineer George Reese dissected the cost savings that come with cloud services in an article for O'Reilly.