

SUCCESS STORY



DON'T TAKE A RECESS FROM BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Protect Your Law Firm



With technology on the rise, law firms can be more productive and achieve faster results, but there are also potential pitfalls when client data is digital.

As attorneys, you're committed to providing your clients with the best legal advice and service possible. In order to do so, you recognize that in the world of law, time stops for no one. Court dates are appointed, not chosen. Contracts have deadlines. Client meetings are a must. Any type of power outage, therefore, is a huge threat to law firms. As a lawyer you have a finite amount of time to build your case, gather materials, research, etc. Should an outage strike your firm as a result of a natural (or most likely man made) disaster during your last few days before court, for example, it could be detrimental to the outcome of a case.

As of 2015, more law firms are going paperless, investing in practice management software, and moving to the cloud.¹ Close to 90% of all documents produced in law firms are now 'born digitally' as well.²

With technology on the rise, law firms can be more productive and achieve faster results, but there are also potential pitfalls when client data is digital. Like any other business, law firms are vulnerable to fire, flood, severe weather, power surges or any other calamity including accidental or malicious deletions that could take systems off-line and/or wipe out your valuable client data. In addition to these potential threats, there's the "human factor" where Larry the lawyer accidentally opens that seemingly innocent email attachment inflicting the latest malware.

A False Sense of Security

While backup practices have become common in law firms, not everyone is doing everything they can to protect critical data at their organizations. There is often a misconception that data is safe if backed up once a day, but this outdated practice is no longer sufficient for several reasons:

- If you forget to perform your backup or the backup process fails, you're not protected.
- If you only back up your files once a day, you're still vulnerable to the loss of an entire day's work.
- If you don't properly validate your backup files, you could be in for a very unpleasant surprise when you actually try to use those files to restore your practice's operations.
- If you only back up your files on-site, you could lose them too—leaving you with no way to serve your clients.
- If you only back up your raw data, rather than all your application and server configuration files, it could take you several days to restore your practice to a full operational condition—because you will also have to rebuild your servers, operating systems, applications, etc.

Many law firms are turning to business interruption insurance to cover the costs to rebuild, restore, or regain lost income. However, while your insurance provider may write you a check for the cost of a server that gets damaged because of a broken pipe—it won't be able to compensate you for the sheer aggravation of potentially having to spend days re-building your practice's entire technology environment from scratch. Most importantly, this type of coverage can't shield you from damaged or lost client relationships.

How Vulnerable Are You?

If your law firm identifies as a business that doesn't have the IT resource to effectively recover from a major outage, make sure you're weighing all of the factors around the costs of downtime. Here are the facts:

- US businesses lose \$12 billion annually due to data loss.³
- 93% of companies that lose their datacenter for 10+ days file for bankruptcy within one year.⁴

Best Practices for Legal Practice IT

In an article by Attorney at Law Magazine, the cost of network downtime was calculated for a firm operating on billable hours. For example, if a firm with 25 employees who bill at \$200 per hour each lose one hour of uptime per month, that's \$60,000 a year on lost opportunity⁵. Here are some tips to help your firm avoid costly downtime:

- Outsource your firm's IT needs to an expert who has experience in the legal industry, they'll understand the importance of billable hours.
- Don't sacrifice quality to save money when purchasing hardware. It will benefit you to have strong technology in the long-run.
- Perform timely hardware and software updates, maintenance and backups.
- Establish, review and maintain system security of all practice technology.

Any firm that has not recently re-assessed its backup and disaster recovery procedures should therefore do so in order to conform to these industry-standard best practices.

Here's what one managed service provider has to say about the need for a strong business continuity solution in the legal industry:

"A law firm has an obligation, both legally and ethically, to protect confidential information in their computer systems. While there is a lot of attention to security safeguards, not being able to produce client data or contract information in a timely fashion can have negative effects on the reputation and bottom line of a law firm. A business continuity solution can save a firm from lost data, computer system downtime, embarrassment and lost revenue."

-Dale Shulmistra, Principal & Co-Founder, Invenio IT

The Better Way: Business Continuity

Businesses continuity describes a complete solution for backup and disaster recovery. A true business continuity solution will protect your data across on-premises and cloud-based IT environments. Whether your data is living on servers, or in SaaS applications, it is backed up. Business continuity goes a step further and offers you the ability to restore your data. This part is referred to as disaster recovery.



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Attorney at Law Magazine

Whether it be a natural disaster, or man-made, a strong solution will have you up and running in just minutes or seconds. Solutions that implement hybrid cloud backup can guarantee you quicker restore time as well. Why? Local backups are great to keep data stored on local devices, but if something happens to that device, then what? The hybrid cloud backup model takes an initial backup on a local device, and then replicates those backups to cloud servers. Cloud-only solutions are also not as reliable on their own due to bandwidth issues. A hybrid model works to alleviate the vulnerabilities by implementing both processes to fill in the gaps. That's true business continuity.

A true business continuity solution will protect your data across on-premises and cloud-based IT environments.

Sources: ¹Law Technology Today, ²American Bar Association, ³Beyond technology, ⁴National Archives & Records Administration, ⁵Attorney at Law Magazine

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