

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

CASE STUDY:

UP IN THE CLOUDS

Cloud computing is yet to hit the legal mainstream, but some firms are quickly realising the benefits of saying goodbye to their local servers, writes **Marc Peter**



Marc Peter is the director of technology and business development at LexisNexis

Cloud computing is a contentious area for many law firms. In a field where the stakes concerning data security and confidentiality are considerably high, many law firms simply believe that their own servers are naturally more secure than anything that can be provided offsite.

Even Shane Muller, the managing director of cloud computing host Online Business Technologies (OBT) notes the reluctance of firms. "Many law firms don't have knowledge or confidence in cloud computing," he says. "But the majority of these firms don't have adequate backup systems and testing set-up in the first place [and instead] use ad hoc measures like copying data to drives and storing backup tapes elsewhere."

As well as contributing to risk, those ad hoc measures also hinder a law firm's productivity. For Danny Arraj, the managing partner of Sydney firm Blackstone Waterhouse, the hindrance of technology on productivity provided the catalyst to explore alternatives via cloud computing.

Arraj could see that productivity in his firm could most easily be harnessed from where his current technology was failing – that being a local server system that was prone to IT-related problems, including server crashes: not good for a business that values itself on providing dynamic, responsive service.

All in all, technology was impacting the bottom line, a notion that Arraj could not accept. "Technology should be harnessed to give law firms a tangible business edge, not burden them down," he says.

Arraj looked to rid his firm of such issues by taking its practice management solution to the cloud via LexisNexis Lexis Affinity Library, hosted by OBT.

Since then, Arraj says the firm has benefited from a range of IT-related improvements, including practice management software running faster, the ability to generate documents twice as fast as their previous solution, new found flexibility and the added benefit of being able to access the software anytime from any location – be it in court, from the client's office, or from a home computer.

These are benefits that ultimately bolster the firm's bottom line and also aid client relationships. "Our lawyers can work more productively

and efficiently without worrying about IT problems. They can focus on doing their job and providing better service for clients," says Arraj. "Clients can expect better

upgrades, patches, virus protection and network maintenance – these problems can now be quickly resolved. "If one person has a hardware failure they can



Danny Arraj, managing partner, Blackstone Waterhouse



Shane Muller, managing director, OBT

value for money and importantly, have peace of mind knowing their documents are safe and backed-up."

Meanwhile, Arraj has entered a new world of opportunity and the ability to apply his time beyond the challenges of IT.

And, as for individual computing hiccups that may cause downtime for users – such as self-managed backup, software

simply go to another computer in the office, login to their profile and continue working," says Arraj.

To the cloud computing detractors that exist in many law firms, Arraj says the convenience of offsite servers far outweighs any perceived risks. "We have enjoyed the certainty of knowing our systems work seamlessly all of the time and, most importantly, we now have peace of mind," he says.

