

Cloud Computing

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Firms Move To The Cloud To Trim Costs



It's a buzz term that's sweeping the globe, and the legal field is hot on its tail.

Cloud computing, or Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), can be used by virtually everyone with a computer.

One obvious example is the range of services offered by Google. Search engine aside, Google offers free storage space, messaging, live document sharing, and other services – all operating from, and storing data on, common servers that we, the end users, don't have to think about.

In fact, Google is fast becoming a real alternative to Microsoft products. Really, who needs MS Office when Google offers the same word processing and mail services for free?

TES For Business

SaaS makes our lives easier, more affordable – and it's become a launch point for something even more significant: Technology-enabled service (TES).

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The term may sound confusing and scary, but its purpose is anything but – and law firms, in particular, are reaping its rewards.

TES picks up where SaaS leaves off, allowing service providers to leverage the benefits of cloud computing to offer more efficient, cost-effective services. With TES, the software is built to deliver the software and the service.

How Do Law Firms Use TES?

Kevin Chern cites a great example in an article written for the [American Bar Association](#). He writes:

Consider, for example, the traditional model of a law firm answering service as compared with a TES.

With a traditional answering service, the firm typically manually transfers calls to the service, perhaps calling in to let the service know that calls are being transferred. The service takes messages and responds to calls according to the law firm’s instructions. After lunch or the next morning, the law firm employee contacts the service to “pick up” messages and take back the calls.

A technology-enabled answering service, on the other hand, allows for much greater customization, real-time message delivery, and seamless handoff of calls, often at a lower price than traditional services can offer. Such a system may, for instance, update a message-retrieval center and forward messages by email in real time, eliminating the need to call in for messages and allowing for instantaneous notification.

Chern also cites an avid TES user in Dallas, TX – bankruptcy attorney Rustin Polk. Polk uses a technology-enabled bankruptcy case support service, which integrates bankruptcy petition preparation with the assembly of required products such as prebankruptcy credit counseling and client credit reports. Polk says he can log into the system and see everything that is happening in real time.

TES Benefits

TES, by way of SaaS, reduces the risk associated with human error, increases efficiency, and cuts down on staffing/managerial costs.

With TES, Polk says, he has “been able to increase capacity by 50 percent while increasing profit by 25 percent.”

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Identify The Right Provider

If your firm is considering TES, it's important to take a hard look at the company's needs, both long and short term. Once you've identified what services are most critical to the firm – ask the following questions, posed by Chern, to the prospective provider:

- If you are using a SaaS, does it have an open API that will facilitate integration of third-party services?
- Does the provider currently have plans for services to be plugged in to the platform?
- What are the planned services, and in what time frame?
- How will the platform or services help your law firm streamline or improve its processes?
- Is the platform or service (SaaS or TES) provided at a price point that makes sense for your firm?

A carefully selected platform can fulfill the needs of your firm with minimal investment.

As any law firm, business professional, or [attorney coach](#) will tell you - *once you go cloud, you never go back.*

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