

What does it mean to have the best technology available?



Law Firm Technology Choices

A recent [article](#) on the “Above the Law” website included this statement:

“There is a good argument that lawyers are ethically obligated to use the best technology available. Smart technology use provides efficiencies that allow lawyers to do the best job possible in a short time. That means more timely service for clients at generally lower fees.”

Attorneys might ask the question, ‘What does it mean to have the best technology available?’

When implementing new technology, law firms have a range of choices, from DIY or the partner’s nephew, all the way up to bringing in a Tier 1 IT consultant. Cost becomes a limiting factor at some point.

The Simple, Affordable Option

An email recently sent to law firms contained the subject line, “Simple, Affordable IT Services.” The text-only email advertised basic IT services and low monthly fees.

Competing on price is territory that few attorneys want to venture into. Few would expect them to contract for the lowest cost IT services.

The Best Value

The practice of law is about delivering value. The stakes are often high, so clients are willing to pay to get the best outcome. The service is not low-priced but the value received makes it worth the cost.

Similarly, deciding what constitutes the best technology available should be a matter of identifying the best value from the options available.

Firms can get basic service, like that advertised in the email, but does that represent the best value? They pay a lower price, and in return get basic network monitoring, server maintenance and cloud backups.

To determine value, data security must also be factored in. Making sure that critical, sensitive information is secure (data security was not mentioned in the email) is reason enough to get more than basic technology services.

In fact, due to underinvesting in security technology, law firms with boatloads of high value data, are attractive targets for hackers and online threats like ransomware. One security breach could cost millions in damages or worse, an undesired verdict in a hard fought case.

The Role of Technology in the Firm

In addition, how the firm views the role of technology affects the value equation dramatically. If technology is viewed as a key element the firm's business strategy, rather than a commodity, the value can be much, much greater.

For example:

Companies that see marketing as a commodity hire a marketing coordinator and think that marketing is covered. However, they have overlooked the most important element in marketing, the strategy.

By not investing in the higher-level resources needed to research the market and develop focus, differentiation and a brand that resonates with customers, they have set sail without a rudder. A flurry of marketing activities take place, but without a meaningful direction, the time and effort are largely wasted.

Likewise, when law firms see technology as a commodity and seek out the lowest price, they have decided by default to operate their technology without direction, goals or a plan.

They get basic IT services, and it seems like things are running smoothly. The problem is that there is no strategy.



In today's digital world, not having a technology strategy or including technology in the firm's business strategy is at best a commitment to a slow death, and at worst a sudden fatal disaster waiting to happen.

Falling Behind

The industry is changing rapidly. Those firms that don't adopt advances in technology as part of a comprehensive technology strategy will fall behind in these critical areas:

- Efficiency – Modern productivity and collaboration tools impact the bottom line directly by increasing billable time.
- Security – Current and constantly evolving online threats, as well as some internal threats, put the entire firm at risk. Being lax about data security in today's mobile-enabled environment is an invitation for disaster.
- Customer Service – Not having needed information accessible in client meetings, billing errors, or poor communication tools will slow the stream of new clients. Negative online reviews won't help.
- Performance/effectiveness – Secure access to files on the road, employing apps and tools to enhance collaboration and the latest legal software can improve outcomes in addition to efficiency.

Getting the Best Technology Available



Developing a technology strategy requires expertise that most law firms don't possess. Outsourcing that capability should make a lot of sense to attorneys who trade on the value of their expertise.

Hiring a technology consultant can help a firm identify the opportunities to increase efficiency, security, service and effectiveness. Implementing the right technology will provide the greatest value.

The right technology partner will deliver ongoing value by recommending improvements to keep the strategy current and the technology up to date with rapid innovation.

So, what does it mean to have the best technology available? It means incorporating technology into the firm's overall business strategy and investing in the tools that will increase efficiency, security, service and effectiveness. It also means longevity and profitability.