Technology in the Practice Committee
Tuesday, October 20, 2020
2020 Virtual Fall Meeting

NUTS AND BOLTS - Where Should Your Server Sleep at Night?

Why consider the cloud?

ONSITE

Firm location
        Space needs
        Security for server (and peripherals) location
        HVAC needs

Hardware
        Server(s)
        Backup devices on location
        Periodic replacement; timing issues

IT maintenance
        Onsite needs – new equipment; replacement parts
        Mostly remote

CLOUD

Located in cloud

Hardware all provided
        Local computers can be less expensive – at least for staff

Server related maintenance all provided

TERMINOLOGY

Virtual Private Server ("VPS")
        Instances, virtual machines, CPU speeds, uptimes, connection speeds, etc.
        Dedicated Cloud Server ("DCS")
Shared Hosting

Definitions –
        https://www.dreamhost.com/blog/beginners-guide-vps/

CLOUD IT SERVICES

Be careful! Not all IT providers are tuned to Cloud services

A national market
Local providers may not be as skilled as specialists
In house IT staff – experience?

Law Firm specialists

AirDesk Legal (Mike Deege recommends)
https://www.airdesklegal.com/
Legal Workspace
https://legal-workspace.com/

COSTS

https://uptimepractice.com/?__hstc=237731551.17e6750e1f7a63c05f11c36a88b5d06e.1598629600703.1598629600703.1598629600703.1&__hssc=237731551.2.1598629600704&__hsfp=2834216962

USER EXPERIENCE

All users connect in some form of VPN

Personal uses – if a lawyer uses the computer for non-work related activities, consider the specifications and programs needed. For example, if a user needs Word, Excel, etc. when not working via VPN. Or perhaps a photography program. The computer may need more RAM, drive space, etc.

Dedicated Cloud Server ("DCS") presentation to firm members

PROS

- No more hardware worries or costs
- No more server operating systems costs/maintenance
- May reduce IT costs
- Reduced space needs
- No need for special HVAC – server room
- Reduced security issues in firm offices
- Reduced security issues on laptops – client files not needed on them
- Eliminates need for back up storage in firm (network attached storage device)
- May eliminate/reduce need for cloud back up programs
- Office computers can be less powerful/costly
- Keeps firm business and data contained on DCS
- Better firewall and back up options on DCS
- Major vendor quality and support, such as Microsoft Azure or Amazon AW3
      Through DCS vendor

CONS

- Monthly/annual rental costs
- Risk that DCS provider goes out of business without warning
- My have duplications - Office 365 on DCS and on local computer for personal use after hours for example
- Dependent on internet connectivity

INTERNAL INTERIM REPORT

[Based on 4 attorneys and 2 staff members.]

Attached is the spreadsheet regarding the calculation of cloud vs. on premise server. I have used the numbers provided from Linda. The useful life can be changed from 36 to 60. I believe 3 years is the true break point. After 3 years, the cost of on-premise is much cheaper but you are always at risk of double driver failure. For the older partners who may not want to invest in the upfront cost of a new server, the cloud may be more attractive. Plus, the easy access away from the office is attractive to all.

We may be able to reduce our cost some depending on whether the service we purchase includes the price of Microsoft 365 for each person. I noted that Microsoft 365 Business at 12.50 per month allows the user to install on 5 PC. This will allow each partner to have on their Surface computer and on the cloud.

As to who we go with, I am not sure. So far, I have narrowed it down to the following (no particular order unless stated):
1. The Computer Hut – they are local. I would like to see their actual pricing. They said from $650 to $1,000 per month. This may be within our range but may still be too expensive. They are using Azure.
2. Wes Haire with CyberSolutions – the downside he is in Maine so that is a negative. However, he was extremely helpful and informative. He was pitching Citrix which I think would work well for us.
3. Pat Cunningham in Atlanta was second to CyberSolutions. She was also pitching Citrix. She was informative but Wes Haire seemed a better fit for us.

I did not include AirDesk because it was my impression that there services are pretty set and not as flexible. The three listed above seemed to have flexible services which would work better for us as we seem to operate different than other law firms.

Start of a List of Questions:
1. If someone leaves, can reduce our cost by deleting this user? Or does the contract obligate us to keep a User for a certain term?
2. Security – all have provided some information but we probably would want to discuss further.
3. What happens if the company goes out of business? How easy is it to move to another company?