Executive Guide: Simplifying the Evolving Role of Legal Practitioners

The role of legal practitioners has changed significantly in recent years. A more competitive market landscape, the quest for a "paperless office", and issues such as client data confidentiality all play a part in the evolving role of the legal practitioner. This executive guide identifies the key challenges today's attorneys face, and outlines a proactive approach to operations starting with the organization's IT infrastructure.

Challenge # 1: Cost of Business

The cost of practicing law has substantially increased in recent years – most notably in purchasing new equipment that was not required years ago. While the trend to digitize documents has promised to streamline processes and avoid excess paperwork, many are overwhelmed by the plethora of newly available options.

How IT Compounds Costs: Legal firms are now incurring the responsibility of purchasing and managing their own computer systems. Computer problems and their related costs have some questioning the cost benefits of their pursuit of a paperless office.

Challenge # 2: Client Demand

Keeping up with client demand is a major concern. Large clients expect lawyers to keep pace with their demands, and still work within very strict budgets. Increasing marketplace competition has compelled lawyers to oblige to unfeasible demands. Recession-induced layoffs has decrease in lawyer-to-secretary ratio, effecting productivity.

How IT Compounds Client Demand: More clients are utilizing new technology to meet certain demands and expect their legal council to keep up with the speed and efficiency that technology has created for their business. In order to accommodate client expectation, most lawyers end up overinvesting to keep up with demand.

Challenge # 3: Client Data Security

To avoid excess paperwork and create more office space, more firms are digitizing and storing documents. This has made it increasingly difficult to track and protect confidential client data.

How IT Compounds Client Security: Past methods of protecting client data with a lock and key was exponentially simpler. Firms must now contend with security breaches such as viruses, hackers and rogue employees. Loss of critical data due to inefficient computer systems leads to loss of client trust.

Challenge # 4: Changing Market Conditions

In efforts to create or build revenue, firms are constantly merging or disbanding, requiring legal partners must take the proper action to make sure that the integration or relocation process is done quickly and without disruption. Law firms' long-term commitments to fixed costs make it difficult to scale back quickly or easily – specifically with regard to layoffs.

How IT Compounds Changing Market Conditions: Integrating new computer users and applications with existing members of a law firm can be a lengthy and costly task. Legal practitioners run the risk of data loss or computer failure – greatly delaying the integration or relocation process.

Challenge # 5: Managing Risks and Liabilities

Legal practitioners are under constant pressure to evaluate the level of risk and return on any investment. During times of recession, lawyers must reduce costs to protect the bottom line. However, in today's competitive market, they must do so without harming growth potential, or putting the organization at risk.

How IT Compounds Risks and Liabilities: The more IT equipment, the greater the risk. The conventional process of purchasing, installing, managing, protecting and supporting an onsite IT system has become a vicious cycle and runs contrary to the need to reduce recurrent expenditures.

5 Key Elements to Simplify the Evolving Role of Legal Practitioners

IsUtility® allows legal practitioners to do what they do best: practice law and maintain the relationships with their clients.

1 Eliminate Virtually All Capital IT Costs

More firms are moving toward a "paperless office," which requires them to invest substantial capital outlays in computer equipment like servers and computers. IsUtility® invests in all the major components of a computer system, including backups and support personnel so legal firms never have to worry about recurrent technology purchases and upgrades. Virtually all IT needs are delivered in one predictable monthly fee.

2 Keep Up With Client Demand

IsUtility® allows lawyers to do what they do best: practice law and maintain the relationships with their client. Clients want their lawyers to bill them for practicing law, not playing or experimenting with technology and do not look kindly at attorney bills which contain unnecessary IT related matters. IsUtility® reduces the strain of adapting to evolving client needs by enabling your legal staff to deploy technology resources on an on-demand basis.

3 Safeguard Confidential Client Data

IsUtility®'s strict adherence to data security regulations helps ensure client expectations for privacy and security are met and makes IsUtility® the solution of choice for the legal industry. With IsUtility®, client data is safeguarded in a disaster-proof SAS 70 Type II datacenter, monitored 24/7 by the latest security tools and procedures and backed by IsUtility®'s 30-man team. For peace of mind, IsUtility® also meets the legislative standards of third-party auditors, such as PricewaterhouseCoopers™, Security and Exchange Commission, and the Federal Trade Commission to ensure the highest level of data protection.

4 Adapt Instantly to Evolving Needs of the Firm

For law firms disbanding or merging, the ability to adapt to new business environments is simple and immediate with virtually no need for added overhead. IsUtility® reduces the strain of adapting to evolving client needs by enabling legal firms to deploy technology resources on an "on-demand" basis. Legal clients have secure access to their critical legal data whether they work at the office, the courtroom or a remote "war-room."

5 Reduce the Risk of IT Ownership

IsUtility® virtually eliminates the dependency on onsite technology by assuming the costs and risks of the entire IT lifecycle. Legal firms are no longer required to commit to purchases and upgrades or added overhead. All risks are incurred by IsUtility®.