



HOW ONE-LAPTOP SOLOS CAN LEVERAGE THE CLOUD

Learn more about today's cloud computing solutions for law firms.



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Solos that bill fewer than 1,000 hours per year might have less complex needs than their larger counterparts, but they can still benefit from cloud technology. The cloud can end tech headaches, increase productivity, and allow for mobility.

Those benefits seem to resonate particularly with solos: The 2013 ABA Legal Technology Survey Report found that 40 percent of solos use the cloud, a higher percentage than any other category of firm.

Here's how a small solo can take advantage of the benefits the cloud provides while effectively running a firm from one laptop.

Start with Email

When a one-laptop solo prepares to hang out a shingle, the first thing to put in place is email. That's also the first way a solo firm can begin to take advantage of cloud technology.

Setting up a professional email account entails registering a domain name through any number of online registrars, then selecting an email hosting company. Many domain name registrars also provide email hosting; that's the case with companies such as GoDaddy and Network Solutions. However, some email hosting companies, such as Google Business Solutions and Office 365, provide a more complex suite of services to their users.

For example, users of Google Business Solutions have access to many cloud-based applications, including email and Hangouts (a live video call service similar to Skype), as well as collaboration applications like Docs, which allows users to work together on documents in real-time. Office 365 provides similar mobile and collaboration applications with its cloud environment.

Document Storage and Back-up

The 2013 ABA Tech Survey found that only 41 percent of attorneys back up their data frequently. That could partially be attributed to cumbersome back-up methods of the past, which required file transfers to physical devices, such as external hard drives.



Not backing up data is hazardous; laptops can get lost or stolen, and hard drives crash. Cloud-based programs make storage and back-up easier, and they allow users to access documents from multiple devices.

Some choices for cloud back-up include Carbonite, MozyPro, and CrashPlan. The latest versions of Office also come with cloud back-up through Microsoft's OneDrive application. Google Drive and Dropbox, the most popular choice, provide similar solutions.

Many of these applications continue to require users to be actively involved in the back-up process by copying files to the cloud. An exception to that is Dropbox for Business, which uses sync technology that automatically backs up files when they're saved locally.

Even when using the cloud as back-up, attorneys should keep local copies of documents and email. It's easy to do and can sometimes be automated. For example, users can configure Outlook to real-time sync with their provider, thereby storing emails locally *and* on the cloud.

Accounting and Billing

Depending on the complexity of their needs, one-laptop solos have many options for handling accounting and billing tasks.

Some attorneys who don't need many features use Excel, but it doesn't have the functionality that comes with a program designed specifically as accounting software. Many people don't recommend its use for accounting and billing purposes because of its lack of central database and because spreadsheet errors are easy to commit.

QuickBooks, the most popular accounting software for small business owners, offers a streamlined, less expensive cloud-based subscription option called QuickBooks Online. However, if users want to integrate QuickBooks with a time and billing or practice management application—such as Clio or Amicus Cloud—they must upgrade to the on-premises version of the software.

Solutions like Amicus and Clio cater specifically to law firms' billing needs, as well as providing cloud-based practice management features, including organizational tools and the ability to work from multiple devices.

Cloud at any level



Solos billing fewer than 1,000 hours per year can run a firm from one laptop and take full advantage of cloud technology. And as their needs change and grow, so too do their options.

Joe Kelly, CEO of Legal Workspace, says he's found that one-laptop solos manage well with a cloud environment such as Office 365 or Google Business Solutions. But, if they expand by adding a paralegal or collaborating with another attorney, they should consider upgrading to an environment such as Legal Workspace, which is specifically designed for law firms, optimized for legal applications and integrations, and offers hosting for the top legal applications.

Legal Workspace is a pioneer in cloud-based work environments and data storage designed specifically for law firms. Learn more or arrange a free demo at legal-workspace.com. [Click here](#) to watch our video.