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LPM

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A good MSP will make available skilled technicians that the average law firm cannot justify employing, ready to assist with all stages of your infrastructure development and maintenance



Parting the clouds

NICK HAYNE, THE DATA MASTER

In February 2019, The Law Society published its Lawtech adoption research report, which showed a rise in the number of lawtech businesses supporting the work of law firms in the UK.

There is growing acceptance of how lawtech, like automation and AI, can help lawyers to access, interrogate, and use large amounts of data, with greater efficiency offering the opportunity for increased profitability.

The ability to exploit this innovation relies not only on law firms having robust, reliable and secure IT systems, but on the ease with which IT is available, accessible and kept current, and the expertise to integrate new technologies.

Given the need for mid-tier and smaller firms to compete on an equal footing with bigger names, outsourcing IT management is one route to success – but there are pitfalls. Consider the following when looking at different managed service providers (MSPs).

Does the MSP understand your sector and the unique challenges you face? Does it have relatable experience deploying solutions and services in a law firm? Has it worked with law firms of all sizes, from small, single-office firms to large, well-established firms with multiple offices, including international locations?

Also consider whether you are dealing with a viable business. Look carefully at its financial and company position, not just the figures on the balance sheet or credit rating, but also whether the business and pricing model feels like it will survive the contract term.

Which of your shortlist has the strongest vendor relationships, not just with top-tier tech partners like Microsoft, but specialist providers to the legal sector? Strong relationships allow an MSP to leverage the benefits of best-in-class third-party providers on your behalf.

Understand who will actually work with you. Is the business led by an experienced, reputable management team? What relevant technical certifications are held? A good MSP will make available skilled technicians that the average law firm cannot justify employing, ready to assist with all stages of your infrastructure development and maintenance.

Consider sector knowledge. Does the MSP offer all the solutions and services you need to help your firm operate effectively, efficiently and securely? Does it offer cloud solutions, backup and recovery services, business continuity planning, disaster recovery, unified telecom services, application hosting, third-party vendor management, consultancy and project management?

Will the MSP offer a tailored service? Cloud is the prominent trend in investment technology, but is it right for your business? Will your MSP understand your challenge and offer the right solution based on your specific needs, rather than what they prefer to sell? Does the MSP have skilled technicians able to cope quickly with on-premise solutions, regardless of geography?

Reflective of most law firms, it's better to deal with an MSP still owned by individuals who care about the long-term future of the business. Investment in quality systems and people will deliver benefits to all clients, rather than achieving an appropriate earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) to trigger a profitable sale for owners who have little contact with the clients.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it raises some points to consider based on our years of experience in the sector and the topics raised most frequently in the 'any questions' portion of our pitches. **LPM**

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