

This month:

- **Security Risk and Resolutions**
- **Efficiency and communications in one box**
- **The other Fundamental that demonstrates so much**

MOD message for Law Firms

On the 9th of September I was reading the Sunday Mirror and saw the headline “MOD ‘Loses’ 60 Laptops” followed by “Security fears on military secrets” and “Losing stuff is serious. We’re in an information war with Russia”. I thought that I had better check if it was real or not and on checking other media the loss of those laptops and USB devices could be much greater.

It instantly reminded me of lawyers getting very serious fines for leaving laptops on trains with client data on them and with all the rules and regulations these days which are getting tighter around data security you cannot afford the publicity let alone the fines.

I was speaking with Steve Pritchard the MD of telephony/communications company (MLS Advantage) <https://www.matrix247.com> and he instantly said that the volume of laptops going missing compared to mobile phones is nothing and he took me back to my article a few months ago when we discussed mobile device management – something that should be on every mobile device for security and the separation of business and personal data.

Would you believe that c48,000 phones were handed in to lost property just in London last year. I am sure none of them were from your teams but imagine the national figure (200,000??). Look at your business and potential client data at risk. MDM, Steve tells me, enables a phone to be located remotely, the data locked and then wiped in about 30 seconds. The other amazing thing that is hard to believe is that when businesses acquire new phones they do not wipe the hard drives on the phone – going back to “factory settings” doesn’t achieve that – so the staff get phones that they can give to their children, which is probably the safest thing dependent on their age and technical know-how, as many are sold via social media and the data is still on them (it is the same with laptops). Hard drives have to be wiped and if done by the right people an indemnity certificate can be provided.

This whole scenario with regards to laptops is surmountable as is the situation with lawyers leaving their PCs on for the cleaners to visit. Control is achieved by the use of thin client technology (Citrix) which should be standard for the hosted IT environment as supplied to law firms by (MLS Advantage) <https://www.nasstar.com> . Because of the secure elements of the world-wide-web there is no need for data to actually be on the laptop or a USB as it resides on the secure server in the database with all the necessary controls.

There obviously has to be compromises when data needs to be on a device and even this is manageable. Nasstar also has multiple law firms that still save information locally to be able to work off line when on trains.

To be successful this has to be done in a controlled manner to avoid the MOD type scenario. In a hosted environment your data is backed up, the operating system is fully managed and the security systems are ever evolving. The same cannot be said for a user's laptop. That is unless the laptop is also fully managed by the provider. This means enrolling into mobile device management software (similar to phones) and using remote management software to keep patches and AV up to date whilst enforcing security policies and encrypting data at rest. Nasstar now provides a fully managed operating system on a local device enabling such secure working to be possible, even when working off line outside of the hosted environment.

Without this protection you may as well be carrying around a heavy printed case file like in the old days, which can be easily read by anyone that comes into contact with it – because without all of that security on your laptop, it is as readable as a piece of paper used to be.

Efficiency and Security in One Box

There probably isn't a law firm in the country that doesn't want to enhance efficiency, speed of communication whilst meeting the demands of security and confidentiality. I see so much frustration with people for example trying to speed up conveyancing transactions and having to wait for communication or needing to get a major document across for a complete file of a commercial transaction (1gb at a time maybe)

Things to consider are;

- Encrypting e-mail and ideally in a straightforward manner with delivery to the clients in box and responses back to your e-mail and even filed in the case management system
- Ideally we would want a registered email system, so your emails return a registered legal proof receipt, providing proof of content, delivery, security and when the email was opened
- We often to speed up proceedings would like our clients to be able to electronically sign any documents that we send them
- It would also be great if we had a large file transfer tool where we could send securely, encrypted and instant very large files without the exposures like drop box.
- We also as business managers seek KPIs and in this case real time management information to the designated account holders would also be useful to see who is and isn't using the major efficiency tools and what sort of individual volume comparisons there are.

Believe it or not the latest member of MLS Advantage <https://www.frama.co.uk> offers all of that from one supplier with its product range Frama R-mail – it's pricing is also sensible and reasonable. The law firm principle contact is Mike.Roberts@frama.co.uk

Another Basic Thing

That Work In Progress thing. A couple of months ago (July if you want to check) I went back to a basic of time recording and how it's measurement is so important and how only parts are reviewed when there are major messages.

The same applies to **Work In Progress** and its reality. Even firms that take their time recording seriously every year are having to write off significant WIP and the variance by fee earners can be massive – just look at the variance of recoverable WIP by individual or department. When compared

it is a measure of efficiency for doing the same kind of work – how long do people spend doing a Will for example. The firm needs processes that people follow and if the necessary Gross Profit % isn't being achieved they need enhancing. There are even people that don't do business development for fear of workload when their financial performance (GP%) is nowhere near standard. How many firms review the average cost of a file by individuals and consequently the processes being followed or the use of systems.

The other thing is the control of fixed price quotes. There needs to be clarity of what and how many of what is included in the price and then a change control methodology included. It is only the few that make a buying decision on price – it is all about confidence, empathy, honesty – so believe it or not this approach will enhance enquiry conversions.

There are some firms writing off about 50% of their WIP and that is a very clear performance measure of efficiency, lack of process and poor price management.

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