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Arnstein & Lehr Automates

Secures Document Exchange, Protects Billable Time and Improves Client Collaboration

By Joel Rothman

Transferring files has always been a challenge for law firms. Law firms employ various methods — from snail mail to e-mail — but all these methods lack efficiency. How many times have you heard, "no, sorry, I did not get that e-mail" only to discover that because the attachment was one megabyte over the secret limit on the recipient's mail server it never arrived and instead vanished into the ether. And how many times did you send an e-mail you knew would have no problem getting through but the person on the other end swears they never got it?

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When Arnstein & Lehr LLP, founded in 1893, was faced with the persistent challenge all law firms face when it comes to transferring files, we began to research different solutions to help streamline the process.

Overkill vs. Underkill

We used to share files in two ways, and both can be easily characterized as either underkill or overkill.

The underkill method meant burning files onto a CD-ROM or copying to a USB drive, paying FedEx to overnight it to the recipient, and then praying it does not get lost on the way or the receptionist has not missed the pick-up. It was a time-consuming and inefficient process at best. And while the underkill method physically got the information where it needed to be, it cost money, materials broke, it wasn't immediate and you couldn't monitor security through every step of the process.

On the other hand, the overkill method deployed significant effort to create complex solutions that solve what is really a simple file transfer process. Ironically, overkill presented some of the same problems as underkill when it came to productivity and security. Extranets are a good example. Why deploy Microsoft SharePoint when all you are trying to do is transfer 100 megabytes of data one time? Meanwhile, FTP sounded like a good solution, but where's the security? Where's the authentication? And where's the ease of use?

e-Mail: The Collaboration Killer?

"Did you get the e-mail? Is it there yet? What do you mean there were only three attachments?"

How many times have I heard this? When it comes to sharing files, nothing can snuff out the collaboration process faster than e-mail. Spam filters, message size limitations, incorrect e-mail addresses — all of these constraints jeopardize the successful and secure delivery and receipt of important documents and files.

e-Mail only works up to a certain point and it does so inconsistently. It's a frustratingly annoying process where you break up information into smaller files, send multiple e-mails and resend e-mails as needed due to a failed receipt. This process not only steals away valuable billing time, it diminishes the collaborative efforts with clients and understates the law firm's robust technical expertise.

Trial and Error

Our firm hosted FTP services to transfer files to external parties. These services were charging us big fees for the data residing on their server and it placed the burden of transfer almost completely on the paralegals because they were the only ones with experience using FTP. So we began to research possibilities to help streamline and secure file transfers.

With the help of a consultant, we researched and eventually subscribed to a hosted file transfer service as an option to replace FTP. We soon discovered that although we had a storage limit of 10 GB, the limit on sending a single package was 2 GB. This limited our ability to transfer files and, in many ways, would force us to mimic the e-mail scenario by breaking the delivery into multiple parts and sending each separately. In fact, when it came time to upload our time-sensitive file for delivery, it was difficult to upload the files and the system failed to deliver the package. Another challenge we encountered with this provider was the fact that delivery information was not kept separate from the actual delivery. This meant that when you deleted a package, you deleted the delivery history. For a law firm, this was not an acceptable option.

Then we discovered Biscom.

Use It Once, Use It a Million Times

Biscom is simple to use and works in any browser. You select the file to deliver. You enter the e-mail addresses of the recipients and type a message. Biscom encrypts the transfer and logs the delivery transaction. Recipients are notified with an e-mail message that contains an embedded URL link. They sign on to the Biscom Server and download the files. Then, coming full circle, the sender gets an e-mail notification that the files were delivered. Simple as that.

Other features of Biscom include:

- Receive secure deliveries from clients, co-counsel and business partners as a reply to the original delivery. This means that our clients enjoy the same security and ease of transferring a file — providing them a quality delivery option at no additional expense to our firm.
- Create, edit and manage a delivery in advance of the time it is actually sent, facilitating collaborative efforts within the law firm.
- Provide a full sender license for a client, allowing them to initiate their own deliveries and take advantage of Biscom's comprehensive verification of receipt, auditing and reporting features but limiting transfer only to our firm.
- When Biscom recognizes a new recipient it will automatically create a user account, eliminating the IT time and cost associated with administering FTP user accounts and permissions.
- Manage data that has been transferred and the ability to delete it automatically after a period of time. This minimizes risk while reducing workload.
- The interface is quite intuitive, which immediately minimizes the learning curve.

Arnstein & Lehr chose Biscom Delivery Server to dissolve its file transfer challenges. The result has been a remarkably smooth process for all our attorneys — no matter how technology challenged — and fast adoption to the simple interface. And as more lawyers within the law firm use it, the benefits are multiplying.