

Press Release

Infrastructure: Demands and expectations – *Abstract*

According to a Legal IT survey, when it comes to infrastructure, network resilience and security are the highest priorities. But, writes Jody Raynsford, delivering value for money alongside a high level of service is the main challenge law firm IT directors are having to grapple with

It is not the sexiest subject in the business or technology world, but for the majority of legal IT directors, IT infrastructure is the backbone of their work. Tussling with day-to-day operational issues, managing strategic change and rolling out new services — it is a dynamic area that, when handled successfully, no lawyer should know exists.

But how are law firms faring with the obstacles of mergers, upgrades, roll-outs and office moves? To find out more about the increasingly changing attitudes towards the firm's core infrastructure, *Legal IT* undertook a survey of IT directors.

In the recent survey two factors, network resilience and security, were by far the highest priorities with regard to their infrastructure. When asked to rate what they believed to be their highest priorities, more than 80% of respondents stated resilience as a 'high' or 'very high' priority. This was closely followed by security, with more than 65% of IT directors claiming it was a 'high' or 'very high' priority.

When IT directors were asked how satisfied they were with the resilience of their network, 74% said they were 'satisfied' or better. Just as high were the levels of satisfaction with security in their infrastructure, with 66% of IT directors saying they were 'satisfied' or better with their arrangements.

Physical and practical issues, such as staff skills shortages or space being at a premium, have also driven the push to making systems more standardised and therefore more manageable. When looking to upgrade or replace infrastructure hardware, these issues must be considered. Vendors of network monitoring solutions, sniffers and blade servers are just examples of those pitching to fulfil those requirements.

"Blades are an evolution of the industry standard server," explains Phil McLean, ISS product marketing manager for Hewlett Packard. "People are demanding more density, while wanting a better way to manage power and heating."

A blade server is a thin card with one or more processors, with an operating system and the application program to which it is dedicated already on the board. McLean claims blades produce about 10% less heat and are much denser in capacity — one offering allows up to 280 blades to be installed on a 48U rack.

"Blade servers can be deployed quickly and easily," McLean says. "Physical management is much simpler, with less cabling and the benefit of being able to plug-and-play, as the software can already be deployed. The task of deploying a server in 20 minutes is a reality."

Jason Lambert, system & infrastructure architect for **imus**, says: "Like most clustering applications, blade servers can also be managed to include load balancing and failover capabilities. In many cases a fully specified traditional server would probably be of more benefit, although the uptime and clustering capabilities of the new blade servers are of benefit to critical applications or file stores."

“With the trend to move to hosted environments where corporate software and data is hosted in data centres, the blade server will become a very important element in delivering this.”

Wireless LAN technology is another possibility for law firms to consider. Without cables, restrictions on where lines need to be fed and without the need for the time-consuming task of manually connecting hardware, this technology may be tempting, particularly for firms that enjoy regular office moves.

“With speeds of up to 54Mbps now available, wireless networking has become fast enough for serious consideration in planning an infrastructure upgrade,” Lambert says. “You do not have the associated cabling costs, but you do have the flexibility to expand or move easily.”

Lambert also points to simplicity and speed of installation, installation flexibility and a reduced cost of ownership as the advantages of wireless networking over the traditional wired network.

Concerns regarding the security of these networks can be adequately dealt with by taking sensible measures. Lambert says: “With the current encryption available, as long as it is implemented correctly it is a very secure way of communicating. Many of the problems have occurred with mis-configured access points and routers, many still having a default password and no encryption enabled.”

The complete article can be found at <http://www.legalweek.net/ViewItem.asp?id=14504>

About imus

imus is an independent London based management consultancy and technology organization, specializing in Intellectual Asset Management. The comprehensive management of knowledge within an organisation is our core business. With a clear grasp of the challenges faced by organisations today, imus is able to provide all the services required to help our customers manage and retain their intellectual capital by delivering and deploying a Knowledge Based Solution successfully.

Author: [Jody Raynsford](#)
Source: LegalWeek

