

# Frost Brown Todd's Perspective on TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRM'S TRANSITION FROM AN ON-PREMISES DMS TO THE CLOUD



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Paul Bromwell, CIO at Frost Brown Todd, recently shared the firm's insight and strategy around the evaluation and decision to switch from their existing on-premises document and email management system (DMS) to NetDocuments' modern cloud-based DMS platform.

## In this article, you'll learn:

1. About the firm's technology landscape
2. How the firm approaches technology decisions and deployment
3. Areas that factored into the cost comparison when looking at staying vs. moving to the cloud
4. Why the firm chose to move forward with NetDocuments

## Paul Bromwell, CIO at Frost Brown Todd | 1,000 People | 12 Offices

Our firm operates on the notion that the days of custom, roll your own general IT services at law firms is coming to a close. It may take some firms 20 years to get there, but it is clearly the future for IT in law firms. My views are the result of 30 years of working in law firms creating and servicing custom networks, server configurations, document management systems, custom applications databases, responding to client security audits, and so on.

Let's begin with the fact that law firms are here to provide legal services to our clients and make an acceptable profit for the owners. IT services are purchased and provided as a necessary support mechanism.

In many firms, decisions on how technology is implemented and configured are based on internal knowledge and opinions or are based on outside consultants who bring to the table their particular knowledge and opinions. From this, items are purchased and configured and if the firm is fortunate to have people who are good at this, the technology can work well. Then you begin to factor in employee turnover, constant rounds of technology refreshes, change management (or lack thereof), delayed software upgrades, self-inflicted wounds, mystery issues, years like 2009 and the value picture begins to get very muddy.

Meanwhile, while we have different practices and clients, the core requirements of most firms are very similar. Good performance, quality mechanisms for authentication and access control, higher quality of service for video and telephone, reliable internet access, email, document management, office, private and public wifi access, appropriate security controls and auditing and so on. For the items that we all need (let's guess 95% of the total), do we really need to come up with our own ways of providing these services? Do we all really need to re-invent these wheels? Why can't we buy these services based on standards? Are we really that different in that our way of doing things requires everything to be "our way"? Standards and simplicity in one area can result in standards, simplicity and less cost in another. This is especially true when looking at the interdependence of server/san/network/security technology configurations.

Our firm has been working to implement technology that gets the firm out of the business of creating and maintaining complex technology initiatives. Here are six services we buy that are on the right track.

Office 365 with Exchange Online  
NetDocuments Document Management  
QDiscovery Litigation Services

Intellitech Help Desk Services  
DTI Facilities Management Services  
CyberDNA Security Monitoring



Implementing these services has required our firm to change how we operate but all are doing a good job of providing the necessary services.

When you talk about how much NetDocuments is worth to a particular firm, the muddying factors listed above, the tenure and skills of their staff, overall outlook, point in the upgrade continuum and so on are all significant. I try to look at value over the long run. Factor in cost avoidance (future upgrades and refreshes, staff savings, redundancy and disaster recovery savings, ongoing maintenance costs) and then look at the value of additional benefits provided by the new solution.

## Cost of NetDocuments

- NetDocuments Subscription Fee
- NetDocuments optional local document server fee
- Cost of single local document server and storage
- Consulting time to assist with document import and site setup
- Cost of ongoing NetDocuments system administration (that does not require admin or infrastructure)
- Cost of savings by no longer needing to run an MPLS network

## Cost Continuum of Remaining on the On-Premises DMS

- Cost of database, communications, web and index servers/storage plus redundant pairs (We had 25 servers)
- Cost of time spent on administration of the system infrastructure
- Ongoing Windows server license cost
- Ongoing Windows client access license cost
- Ongoing SQL license cost
- Cost of the backup system, backup admin and storage
- Cost of time spent on admin of indexers
- Periodic cost of the time spent refreshing the old system infrastructure
- Cost of consulting days for the implementation and periodic upgrades
- Cost of problem resolution when implementing new versions
- Annual maintenance and associated fees
- Annual cost of third-party extranet solution
- Annual cost of a file sharing solution
- Cost of building and maintaining encrypted storage and communication infrastructure (nd includes encrypted storage and encrypted communications)
- Cost of resolving system issues (#2 issue by total call count at our firm)
- Cost of Outlook/DMS instability issues (#1 issue by total call count at our firm)
- Value of a more effective email management client
- Value of SharePoint integration
- Cost of a Third-Party Workspace Manager tool
- Cost of building out and testing a disaster recovery system and process

## After the extensive due diligence, we selected NetDocuments because of these factors:

1. It fit the model and modern approach to technology described above
2. We had a substantial on-premises DMS consolidation and upgrade in front of us (8 million documents and 25 servers)
3. We had 20% penetration in the use of matter workspaces and we wanted 100%
4. On-premises DMS was very unreliable and a big cause of firm Outlook issues
5. On-premises DMS was difficult to maintain

While the cost and complexity analysis of staying on our current system vs. the cloud was an important part of the firm's due diligence process, the NetDocuments platform represented so many compelling reasons and value propositions that we couldn't ignore.

## Key benefits of the NetDocuments platform include:

- **Security & Compliance** – Built-in ISO 27001, SOC 2 Type 2, SEC, FIPS 140-2 Level 3, HIPAA
- **Centralization** – All documents imported and hosted in a central document management library. A single library for everyone in the firm
- **Universal Matter Workspaces** – The system provides a central matter workspace for every matter without third-party tools
- **Enterprise Search** – All documents are full text searchable. NetDocuments search is far superior to the incumbent system
- **System Configuration** – Simple and straightforward
- **Secure Web Interface**. No need to use VPN to access. Accessibility to content from any browser, any device, anytime
- **Microsoft Office** – Seamless integration within MS Office applications with ndOffice
- **Highly Secure** – Technology infrastructure far beyond most law firms can achieve themselves
- **D/R & Business Continuity** – Built-in across redundant world-class datacenters
- **Integration** – Third-party application integrations and open APIs
- **Email Management** – Next generation predictive and mobile email solutions
- **Mobile Client** – Access documents via a native IOS iPhone and iPad app or Android devices via WebDAV
- **Encryption** – All content is encrypted in transit and at rest
- **HIPAA Compliant** – Meets HIPAA requirements for privacy and security
- **File Sharing** – Secure collaboration and extranet functionality is built-in
- **Company**– NetDocuments is an organization with dedicated owners and staff who are passionate about providing a quality service
- **Reduced IT Footprint**– Elimination of the document management infrastructure
- **High Availability**– Guaranteed High Uptime (99.9 SLA)

## About Frost Brown Todd

Frost Brown Todd, a law firm with more than 500 lawyers across its eight-state footprint, offers a deep, talented roster of legal professionals. Committed to their clients, the firm leverages technical, industry and legal knowledge and hands-on experience to serve a diverse client base, from global multinationals to small, entrepreneurial companies. The firm's client teams integrate that powerful network of legal talent and business experience to provide innovative and comprehensive services across their regional platform.

## Video Interviews with Paul Bromwell



Frost Brown Todd discusses their partnership with NetDocuments



Frost Brown Todd talking about their move to the cloud