



TalkingCloudSeries

netdocuments®

with Corrs Chambers Westgarth



Berys Amor shares the firm's 'cloud as a competitive advantage' strategy

Q: Corrs has been long considered a legal technology innovator, including early adoption of cloud technology. Could you provide some background and context for this innovation?

A: Australia is a very competitive legal market, a fact that has really helped drive innovation. We're an Australian-owned, large independent law firm with 550+ lawyers. Our values are focused on being pioneering and our independence enables us to make decisions quickly. And, most importantly, we have always had the buy-in and support from firm leadership.

Q: Speaking of innovation, Corrs has been live and up and running on NetDocuments' cloud based DMS for the past year. What was important to you when selecting a DMS, and how are you currently benefiting from the cloud-based platform?

A: We started the evaluation project almost three years ago since our existing DMS had been in place for 20+ years and an infrastructure overhaul was in order.

We looked at our overall cloud strategy, and the firm wanted to move to more cloud services. We understood that there was a very rigorous due diligence process around that, but we were looking at a number of core systems to move to the cloud. NetDocuments fit in with that strategy, and their open APIs meet our goal of using technology that easily integrates with other applications and data sources.

We've been on NetDocuments for over 12 months and uptake by the business has been fantastic. Our staff loves the clean interface, certainly the mobility, but from a client's perspective, we have created an external facing document cabinet with secure folders for client sharing and collaboration. This most definitely beats emailing documents back and forth.

The feedback we've had from our clients is they love it. They, like us are drowning in email. We've even had some clients say, "Can we store some of our documents within the cabinet?" If they are a dispersed in-house counsel team, they love the benefit of just being able to access it via their browser.

Q: Do you have any advice for fellow legal IT professionals when they're evaluating cloud-based technologies? Also, how do you interact with cloud skeptics, be they internal or even clients?

A: When we looked at our cloud strategy around three years ago, we put together a cloud security framework, and presented that to the board for approval.

We first looked at the types of information that we stored on our systems. We made the classifications really simple. Is it personal information? Is it client personal information? Is it client confidential, or business confidential? Then we looked at the different layers of security that you can apply to those types of data i.e., encryption key management; service providers running regular penetration tests; ISO certifications, and the review of certain contractual clauses that we required from our service providers.

We then presented this the board in a really non-technical way and compared it to our current on-premise data and security. They absolutely understood it, and they approved the cloud security framework, and they said, "If you want to use a cloud service, and it meets the framework, you don't need to seek our approval. If you want to use a cloud service that doesn't meet the framework, you need to do a full risk analysis, and come back and seek approval for an exception to the cloud security framework." That was quite a milestone in our cloud journey.

Then, the next challenge was finding cloud providers that met the framework. Some of them that couldn't comply, we walked away from. As a technology team, we weren't comfortable with seeking an exception, particularly for client confidential data. In contrast, other service providers worked with us, since they actually saw the benefit of improving their security to meet our framework, thus giving them something proven and useable worth selling to other clients.

As a result, the firm has been able to leverage our cloud strategy and framework as a marketing tool. We now go to our clients and say, "This is how we secure your data through our cloud providers. You should check that your other legal services providers are applying the same level of security."

About Berys Amor

Berys has worked in the legal sector for more than 25 years, starting in finance administration and then moving into information technology. Her current role as Director of Technology at Corrs Chambers Westgarth involves collaborating with key business stakeholders to understand the business objectives and factors of success in the industry, and developing and implementing the IS strategy in line with the overall business strategy. She manages a national team which includes client technology solutions, IT project delivery, IT training, helpdesk and service delivery, and infrastructure and applications support. Berys is also a Knowledge Advisor for the International Legal Technology Association and was selected for CIO Australia's top 50 CIOs for 2016.

About Corrs Chambers Westgarth

Corrs Chambers Westgarth is Australia's leading independent law firm, recognised for its innovation, quality advice and client-driven approach. Corrs was voted as the number one law firm in both Australia and the APAC in the 2016 Legal 500 Client Intelligence Report, with the in-house legal community scoring the firm highly across all three of the key performance indicators, including client relationship skills, technical legal ability, and project management.

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