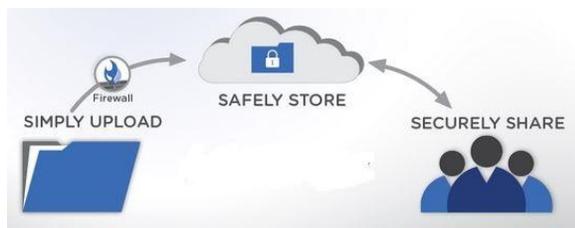




5 Reasons Your Law Firm Should Use a Client Extranet

Much of today's business communications happen outside the firm with clients, courts and other attorneys. Using email or generic file sharing services to distribute and collaborate on sensitive documents without subjecting your firm to possible liability is difficult, as brought to light in recent high-profile security breaches. Therefore, you should consider protecting your firm and client's information by using a client extranet.



Client Extranets
Document Sharing Beyond the Firewall

What is a Client Extranet?

A client extranet, sometimes referred to as a "client portal" or "client login" feature, is a cloud based network that allows controlled document sharing outside an organization's firewall. A client extranet can be viewed as a secure extension of an organization's internal computer network to external users, such as clients, experts, accountants and other attorneys. In essence, using computer security terms, the extranet is a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that adds additional layers of security to an organization's internal network when sharing and collaborating with external parties.

With a client extranet, utilizing virtual data room technology, you are able to set-up workspaces or "rooms" for different client matters. Then, you can provide controlled access to folders and files within that workspace based upon varying permission criteria that dictates the functionality available to each user. For example, you may provide certain users with the ability to only view documents online while restricting their ability to print or save them. Meanwhile, others may have expanded permissions to download, modify and re-upload documents.



Dan R. Bradbary is the Founder and CEO of **V-Rooms Virtual Data Rooms**, a Primerus Affinity Partner. For over seven years **V-Rooms** have provided attorney client extranets and secure document sharing platforms for a variety of industries. Mr. Bradbary is a recognized internet security expert, having appeared recently on Fox National News to comment on the rash of security breaches experienced in the retail and corporate industries.

Why Your Law Firm Needs a Client Extranet

One of the most important goals for attorneys is finding ways to serve clients better and provide the best experience possible. Communication with clients can be a challenging process between dealing with files, agreements, emails and phone calls. Client extranets can simplify these communications. Here are five reasons your law firm needs to consider a client extranet.

1. Reduce Costs

Attorneys often are working in their virtual offices, handling several client matters simultaneously. These attorneys have a high success rate with client extranets because they not only provide a streamlined way for client interaction, but their clients may be benefiting from alternative fee arrangements. So, these clients are willing to shoulder more of the clerical work – like logging in to review recent document changes instead of calling someone in your firm for a status update.

Think of all the time wasted while responding to clients that are requesting an additional copy of the latest contract or court filing. This is not to mention the ineffective time spent searching through your email inbox to find the right version of the document that you previously forwarded to your client for his review and signature. Your client extranet can reduce the effort on your staff and reduce the costs associated with managing clients.

2. Securely Distribute Files

The days of placing a file in a locked filing cabinet are almost over. If the only way you are able to retrieve or send important documents is through email, you are setting your firm up for problems.

In recent years, using a secure document sharing service has become a firm's best defense against security breaches. Choosing the appropriate service provider is essential for meeting the needs of your clients and partners. Be sure to check the service provider's security

procedures and avoid using generic services such as Dropbox or Google Drive which don't offer the document protection and audit trails you need. Files shared through these generic services may also be forwarded, altered or deleted by parties without your authorization.

Client extranets provide secure document sharing features to help you distribute and manage documents and files. Look for useful add-ons such as the ability to search within the full text of all uploaded files and the ability to incorporate Bates numbering and key words into to the files' background data.

3. Enhance Client Communications

Historically, the lack of prompt responses and poor levels of communication are the most often heard complaints from clients. A flurry of activity may take place on a particular day regarding a client matter, but clients do not want to receive a dozen emails keeping them informed of these details. With a client extranet, you have a way to increase transparency on a "pull" rather than a "push" basis where they may keep themselves informed of new or changed information regarding edits and feedback on contracts, filings and motions.

Depending upon the permissions that you set for each user, you may also restrict document editing, printing, downloading and saving – you may even "undo" access to a document after it has been previously downloaded.

4. Confirm Document Delivery

The tracking and auditing reports available to the administrators of a client extranet insure that you will not only know when a party logged in, but also when they accessed each document.

This feature may serve several purposes. For example, if you are working with an outside attorney on an agreement, you will see that the attorney has downloaded the agreement for editing. However, if you have not received an automatic email notification that the attorney has uploaded the revised agreement back into the

client extranet within a reasonable amount of time, you are able to inquire about the revision status.

These audit reports also provide documentation that meet a full range of regulatory compliance requirements for legal, financial and corporate professionals. Numerous regulatory agencies have stringent requirements to confirm exactly who received what information and when. Using a client extranet removes the worry of misplaced information or wrongful access.

5. Work Anywhere – and With Anyone

The rise of globalization means firm members are traveling more often. A firm no longer has the entire team within the same four walls. With more attorneys on the go, using mobile devices such as tablets and laptops, they are accessing information in a variety of ways, and this potentially can be a problem.

A client extranet, with embedded encryption technology, can decrease the chance of important information falling into the wrong hands. While accessing sensitive information on tablets or iPads, client extranets reduce the risk of information exposure when using public Wi-Fi networks at airports, hotels and coffee shops. Additionally, with the use of digital rights management technology, documents may be essentially "wiped" from the mobile devices in the event that they are lost or stolen

In Conclusion

Use your client extranet to convert your static website into an interactive tool for capturing new clients and serving existing clients more effectively. An online client extranet removes the worry of collaborating across different geographies and time zones. Using a secure cloud based solution outside of the firm's firewall makes it easy to involve external parties to securely connect and share important information. In doing so, you will have cost effective ways to find information quickly, simplify communications, foster better client relationships and increase productivity. Use a client extranet to help your firm work smarter, faster and better.