

Originally published by

LAW.COM

ALM

March 14, 2018

**CULHANE**  
**MEADOWS**<sup>PLLC</sup>  
*Big Law for the New Economy®*

## Is the Cloud the Solution to True Work-Life Balance for Lawyers?

Many law firms are still not taking full advantage of the cloud, but there are examples of leaders demonstrating the full benefit of the cloud, which includes more freedom for attorneys.

*By Erin Hichman*

There is an increasing drive for companies to provide more convenient, quick, and personalized services to the customer, while simultaneously simplifying the operating model and keeping costs at a minimum. To achieve this, there is an growing focus on capturing additional data, performing predictive analytics, and taking quick action, which necessitates companies to be agile and flexible in how they run their business. Moving to the cloud enables companies to be more adaptable to both the demands of the customer and the needs of the employee. The cloud enables a new way of operating, providing a realistic chance at attaining work-life balance, particularly in the legal industry.



### **The Cloud Can Mean Freedom**

Moving to the cloud has several key benefits – chief among them are a reduced footprint (e.g. data centers, hardware), decreased need for maintenance and operations costs, and the ability to better align and easily adjust capacity needs, and flexibility. Culhane Meadows (see [ABC News article](#)) is a great example of a law firm that is leading with a cloud-first mentality, and consequently, their attorneys are working remotely without an actual office. This enables Culhane Meadows' attorneys to access everything necessary without a centralized, common physical location. This, in turn, results in bottom-line benefits – no occupancy expenses, artwork, furniture, or related overhead, which correlates directly to increased profitability. Additionally, the reduced cost structure offers increased flexibility in fee arrangements, and can be more

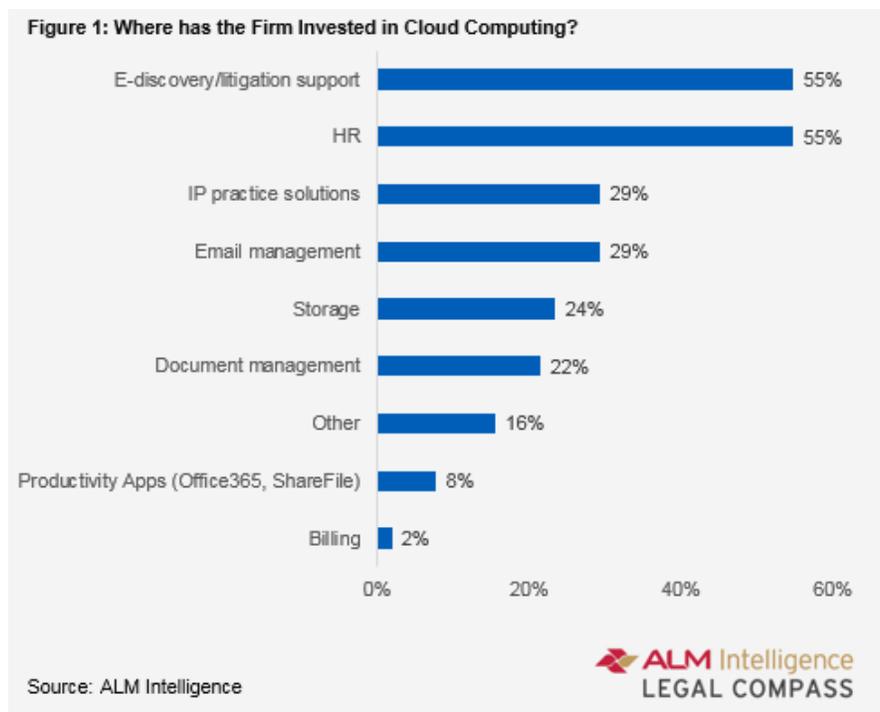
appealing to the younger and emerging attorney population (or the uncommonly hip boomer attorney).

### Unsurprisingly, Law Firms Are Behind

However, many law firms are still far from realizing the full potential of the cloud.

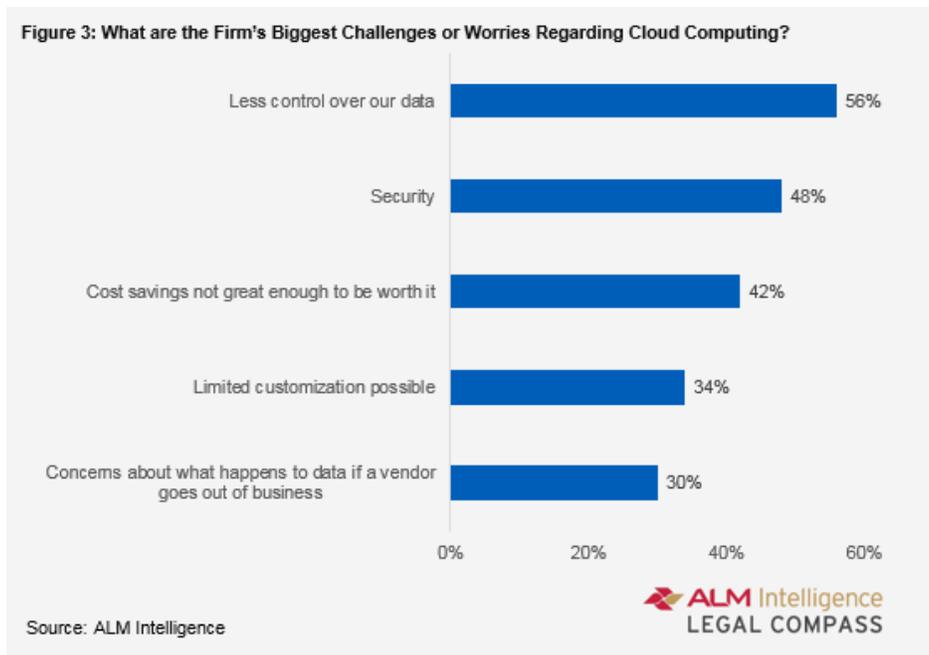
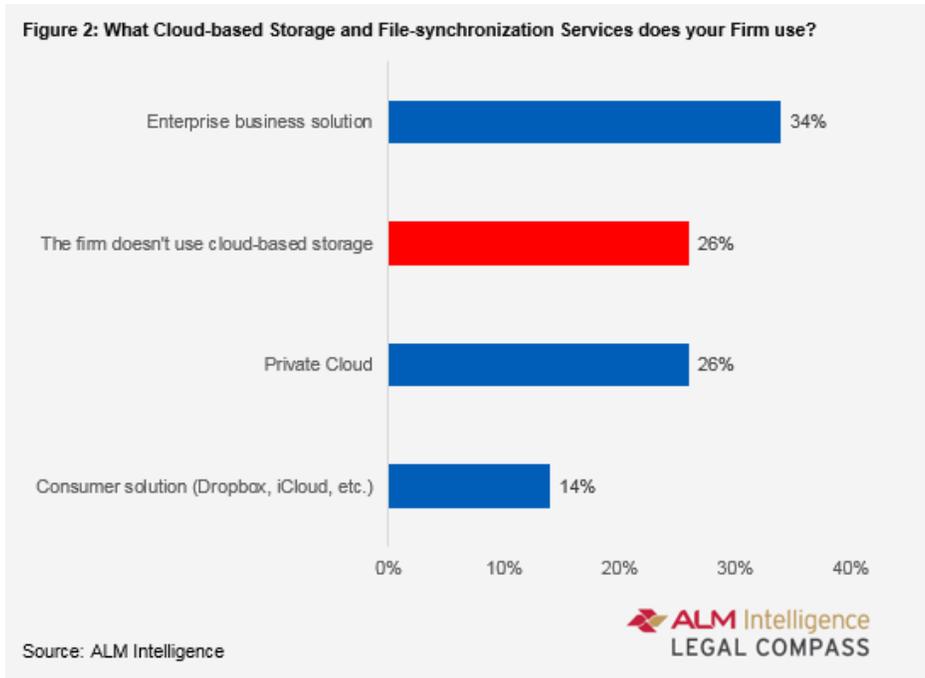
According to [ALM Intelligence’s third annual cybersecurity survey](#) (Legal Compass subscribers can click [here](#) for free access to the data), while 77% of law firms embrace cloud technology, the reality is that cloud adoption is fragmented at best (see Figure 1). While 55% of firms use the cloud for e-discovery related work, only 29% do so for e-mail, 22% for storage and 2% for billing. As a comparison, [88% of IT professionals use cloud-based services or apps, including 52% for e-mail and 38% for storage.](#)

Compounding the point of law firms lagging in cloud usage, [Skyhigh](#) analyzed cloud usage of over 30 million users globally (anonymously) and found that the legal industry uploads less than 4 TB of data each month to the cloud, whereas the leading industry, manufacturing, uploads 24.5 TB.



Further, a shocking 26% of law firms are not using any cloud-based storage services (Figure 2). The reasons for the low, slow and not full utilization of the cloud is

predictable, though not entirely warranted. Top worries and challenges law firms have regarding the cloud are having less control over their data and security (Figure 3).

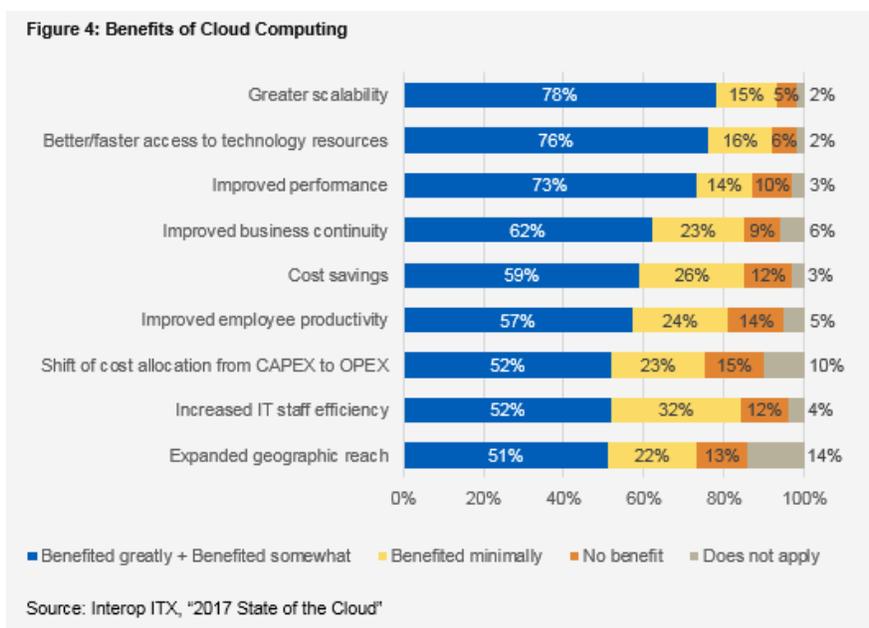


These worries, while shared by many organizations across industries, are not totally justified. While venturing outside the “four walls” of a law firm via the cloud, there certainly are many factors to consider: vendor management, shadow IT, business continuity, information management, cybersecurity and compliance. And, to the credit of law firms, initially navigating through each factor can be overwhelming. But, not

“physically” having the data within the confines of the law firm does not mean loss of data control or a decrease in security measures. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. Just as it makes the most sense to have a law firm and attorneys handle legal issues, cloud storage service companies offer expertise in data compliance, privacy and cybersecurity. Using the cloud also enhances the control and access firms have to data.

### Take Measured Steps to the Cloud

Moving to the cloud and having a cloud first mentality is a drastic shift for most law firms, and certainly without a comprehensive cloud strategy, risk increases through cybersecurity vulnerabilities and compliance gaps. However, investing in a cloud strategy that aligns with the business strategy lays the groundwork for processes and guidelines for securely managing and operating in the cloud, and as a result, can provide the attorneys with more freedom. Even if the law firm keeps its brick and mortar office space, its attorneys will spend less time prepping, gathering, creating, and accessing documents, which will, in the least, offer a closer resemblance to work-life balance. There are, of course, other benefits to cloud adoption, such as greater scalability, better/faster access to technology, improved performance, improved business continuity and cost savings (see Figure 4), which should help build the case for greater investment in cloud among law firms.



### **About the Author: Erin Hichman**

Erin is a senior analyst with ALM Legal Intelligence covering legal technology and trends. Her experience is in researching IT, technology and related services. Prior to joining the Legal Intelligence team, Erin was a senior analyst with ALM Consulting Intelligence, where she led IT Consulting research, covering topics such as cybersecurity, cloud and analytics. In addition, Erin has experience as an analyst with Technology Business Research, covering IT and consulting firms; and with Deloitte as a consultant focusing on IT process improvement and business analysis projects to increase efficiency. Erin holds both a BS in Industrial Engineering and MS in Industrial Engineering with concentration in Integrated Technology Management from Cal Poly, SLO.



---

### **About Culhane Meadows – *Big Law for the New Economy*®**

The largest woman-owned national full-service business law firm in the U.S., [Culhane Meadows](#) fields more than 50 partners in seven offices across the country. Uniquely structured, the firm's Disruptive Law® business model gives attorneys greater work-life flexibility while delivering outstanding, partner-level legal services to major corporations and emerging companies across industry sectors more efficiently and cost-effectively than conventional law firms. Clients enjoy exceptional and highly-efficient legal services provided exclusively by senior attorneys with significant experience and training from large law firms or in-house legal departments of respected corporations. *U.S. News & World Report* has named Culhane Meadows among the country's "Best Law Firms" in its 2014 through 2018 rankings and many of the firm's partners are regularly recognized in *Chambers*, *Super Lawyers*, *Best Lawyers* and *Martindale-Hubbell* Peer Reviews. *Law.com* included Culhane Meadows among the Top 7 Innovators of 2017.