



Koehler Fitzgerald LLC Ensures HIPAA-Level Security with Legal Workspace

Koehler Fitzgerald LLC, one of Northeast Ohio's most experienced and respected business and commercial litigation law firms, specializes in business law and litigation, probate and security regulation and litigation. Founded in 2011, the firm is consistently recognized in the U.S. News Best Lawyers – Best Law Firm rankings and has achieved the highest-possible rating from Martindale-Hubbell for legal ability and ethical standards.

However, due to its high volume of growth, the firm faced the challenge of outstripping its processes and technology. The firm acquired an insurance and defense client in June of 2015. While the new client led to 70 more health care cases in a short amount of time (with the number steadily increasing each month), it also highlighted the inefficiencies of the law firm's information storage capabilities.

James Koehler of Koehler Fitzgerald recognized that the new cases would require legal-specific solutions, instead of relying on paper and online storage to handle client information.

As paralegal Jennifer Mussig explains: "For all case-related information, we were operating with a mix of paper and Dropbox. Dropbox stored some of our information for internal use, but we didn't have a set standard for organizing it. Clients would send us a CD or a box of paperwork. We would keep the paper and scan what was needed. It worked well for probate matters and estate planning, but it didn't accommodate the processes and functionality needed for the amount of information and correspondence in a firm that handles insurance defense work."

The insurance cases also required an enhanced level of security around medical information.

"Since we're working with medical bills, we needed to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. HIPAA has specific regulations regarding how to handle, share and store personally identifiable information including encryption and other protection standards," shares Mussig. "Enterprises and law firms that do not comply with HIPAA often face steep fines."

The law firm needed a legal-specific solution to store and organize case information, as well as automate critical case-related processes. After evaluating solutions, the firm selected practice management software with a good fit. However, a complication arose when it came time to decide where the software would reside.

Hosting in the Cloud vs. On-site IT

Koehler Fitzgerald specializes in practicing law, not IT. While they handle rudimentary technical problems on-site, more complicated ventures require the assistance of an IT company. The firm realized quickly that, while it wanted to implement new software to support the practice, there would be multiple challenges to hosting the software on-site.



“We explored the traditional route of installing the practice management software on-site, but quickly discovered that moving in that direction would be expensive and time-consuming for the firm. We would have to make a significant investment in more hardware – including servers – to support it. We’d also have to negotiate for more office space to accommodate the hardware. Plus, after deployment it would be our responsibility to manage and administer the software. This includes handling updates and fixing any technical issues should they arise. We’re a busy firm. We wanted the software, but we needed a more cost-efficient and convenient option than hosting the solution ourselves,” explains Mussig.

They discussed the possibilities with their practice management software provider, LawBase, and LawBase referred Koehler Fitzgerald to its preferred hosting partner Legal Workspace. Legal Workspace provides a legal-specific, cloud-based environment that hosts all software and applications needed to run a law firm. The two companies had successfully worked hand in hand on prior projects to deploy LawBase in a hosted environment provided by Legal Workspace.

“Hosting our practice management software through Legal Workspace would enable us to avoid unnecessary IT hardware costs and offset the administration of LawBase entirely to Legal Workspace. They handled the heavy lifting so we wouldn’t have to,” comments Mussig.

The Importance of Compliance and Data Security

In addition to Legal Workspace’s valuable hosting capabilities, Koehler Fitzgerald would also benefit from HIPAA-level security.

“We’re corresponding with medical bills and health care information that require a higher level of security than normal cases,” says Mussig. “Legal Workspace offered hosting that complied with HIPAA-level regulations. If we had had to provide our own technology to comply with HIPAA, it would have been difficult and costly. But we could basically flip a switch with Legal Workspace to add that level of protection.”

Law firms that access, store or transmit protected health information must meet the special requirements of HIPAA. The Legal Workspace HIPAA Compliant Edition enhances its already highly secure and protected environment by adding the specific security and procedural enhancements needed to meet the rigorous demands of federal law. These enhancements include physical, technical and administrative safeguards.

Results

By using Legal Workspace to host its practice management software, Koehler Fitzgerald finished the implementation and HIPAA compliance with record speed.



“Prior to Legal Workspace, people would come to me with problems since I have some experience with computers. But when it comes down to nuts and bolts, I don’t have extensive IT-specific knowledge for systems other than turning things off and back on. Now, anytime I have a question, I can call Legal Workspace. The help desk and its unlimited support program are pleasant, helpful and reliable. I’d give them a 10 out of 10!”

Sidebar:

About the Law Firm

Name: Jennifer Mussig, Koehler Fitzgerald

Location: Cleveland, Ohio

Launched: 2011

Website: www.koehler.law

Call-out quote:

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