

“Data Retention for Law Firms: Avoiding Risk”

Don't rely on yesterday's backup technology.

I. Online Backup Security for Law Firms

With a large number of corporate accounting scandals that have rocked the markets in recent years, the need of backing up your files and other documents has been felt like never before. If you thought that only big corporations are in the risk zone, think again, especially if you own or are associated with a law firm.

Law firms deal with a wide range of legal documents and also need to maintain libraries of legal statutes, forms, rules, case laws and reference books. Since most law firms keep copies of both existing matters and closed cases, they would need a secure backup for the safekeeping of all their documents.

Another common occurrence with most law firms is that their lawyers continue to receive transcripts of trials that are presently on appeal, videotapes of police interrogations, faxes, emails and letters from various people. Since you never know when you will need some of it as reference material, keeping them organized with a proper backup plan is very important.

II. Data Retention for Different Industries

Even from the point of view of data retention policies and legal penalizations for non-compliance of the same, it becomes important to have a proper online backup system in place. A quick glance at the typical retention period of various industries will make the Herculean task even clearer:

Type of Industry	Records	Typical Period of Data Retention
Healthcare	Medical records	Life of patient and then “n” years more
Financial Services	Mortgage loan files	Tenure of loan and then 6-10 years more
Pharmaceutical	Records for new drug application	Date of submission plus 5 years
Securities broker/dealers	New account records	Life of account plus 6 years
Life Insurance	Policy information	Life of policy and then 6-10 years more
	Copyright records	Tenure of copyright or as per business terms
	Records of employees	6-10 years after termination

	Government records	A longer period (permanent or could be between 20 and 50 years)
	Employee medical records	Termination and then 30 years more
	General contract records	Tenure of contract and then 6-10 years more
Utility (non-nuclear)	FERC; plant records	Until plant retirement and then 10 more years

III. Impact of Non-Compliance

To add to the woes of legal firms, there are strict penalties laid down by various rules and regulations for non-compliance of the above mentioned document retention policies. If your client is a financial institution, a health care provider or brokerage house, you would do well to note the document retention policies as promulgated by the Sarbanes Oxley (SOX) Act, SEC regulations, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPPA) Act as follows:

Sarbanes Oxley Act (SOX): This act is binding on corporate officers and board members who should produce financial records if the same is required by an investigating government body. Penalties and fines for non-compliance can cost as high as \$15 million or 20 years in prison.

HIPPA or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Enforces standards for electronic storing of health information. Failure to comply will attract penalties to the tune of \$25,000 in fines or 10 years in prison.

Whether your client is a large, federally regulated corporation or a small business owner, it would be bound by the SEC (Securities and Exchange Council) records retention guidelines. Compliance to state laws governing record retention that tend to vary significantly from state to state is another aspect that legal firms have to take note of.

IV. Solution to Your Data Retention & Retrieval Needs

Given the huge task of error-free data retention and quick retrieval of the same should the need arise, it pays to look for automated, online solutions like that offered by Sentinel Online Backup & BDR. Whether you need to save unlimited versions of files, or wish to take a backup of recently edited and added files to the cloud, you can do all that seamlessly with the services of Sentinel Online Backup & BDR. Just imagine what precious manpower could be saved and utilized for other profit generating business

ventures than making them do the routine work of data retention and retrieval where the danger of human error looms large.

Whether you need to make a copy of all the folders on your computer or want some specific files having sensitive information to be safeguarded, sending them to Sentinel's servers can be your ideal answer. It has a three-tier security system in place that encrypts the data for the first time on your PC, next while it is in transit through the Web, and lastly when it reaches the storage destination. Thanks to the storage of information in an encrypted form, you can rest assured that no one but you will be able to access it.

With more and more people doing their business online these days, legal firms also need to stay prepared with backup options for their physical documents and files as well as the ones that are uploaded to the cloud. So, it would help to have a solution like Sentinel that supports an unlimited number of PCs and offers you unlimited backup facilities. What's more, you can even schedule backups to the cloud and your local storage device, and automatically backup your data. So, bid adieu to accidental deletion of files and data or the worry of your sensitive data being hacked and getting into the wrong hands.

When it comes to easy retrieval of your files and sharing them quickly with your team or client, you would need to rely on an efficient tool. It is here that Sentinel Online Backup and BDR can come in handy. After you have selected one of the recovery options offered by Sentinel, you will see a calendar, which can be used to choose a particular day (file name can also be used for the search). Once you have located and selected the file, you will simply need to choose a drive location where you can keep the file after recovery. If you are plagued by large attachments getting bounced quite often, you can now share your files easily with Sentinel Online Backup. So, you can send your huge legal files and documents to colleagues and clients without any worry.

V. Summary

Though the needs of one legal firm are likely to vary from the other, none can deny the importance of using a secure online backup service to make data safe offsite and retrieve it without any problem and from anywhere in the world. It is here that the affordable and yet effective services of Sentinel can offer the ideal solution to your data retention and backup requirements. You can visit www.sentinelonlinebackup.com to know more about how your law firm can benefit from using Sentinel Online Backup and BDR.



If you would like to hear more about how Sentinel satisfies legal or other compliance requirements, please contact one of our representatives today.

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