Ethics and Law Firm Technology

BILL RAMSEY, NEAL & HARWELL
PHIL HAMPTON, LOGICFORCE
A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.
“[8] To maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology, engage in continuing study and education and comply with all [CLE] requirements to which the lawyer is subject.”
Technical Competence

37 States have adopted "technical competency" requirement

California ethics opinion re duty of technical competence

Florida & North Caroline now require technology related CLE
Casey Flaherty, a law firm associate-turned-in-house lawyer-turned entrepreneur, knows firsthand how much time lawyers waste. Most bill hundreds of dollars an hour, and the longer they take to do something, the more they can charge for it.

Flaherty set out to change this. He left his job as an attorney at Kia Motors America this month to work full-time developing a test that could pressure attorneys at law firms to work more efficiently when it comes to everyday tasks like making use of Microsoft Word and Excel.
What Is Technical Competence?

• Casey Flaherty, Procertas
• Legal Technology Assessment (LTA)
• Used by corporate legal departments to assess outside counsel
• Measures proficiency in Word, Excel, PDF
• www.procertas.com
Know "Benefits and Risks" of Technology

**Benefits**

- Productivity Software
- Organization and Collaboration Systems
- Case/Client Management
- Cloud Technology
Attorneys Ethical Duty To Exercise Good Time Management

ABA Model Rule 1.3

"A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client"
ABA Rule 1.3

Comment[2]:
"A lawyer's workload must be controlled so that each matter can be handled competently"

Comment[3]: Warns against procrastination
"A client's interest often can be adversely affected by the passage of time..."
Malpractice Warning Signals*

Failure to make and follow a priority task list
Disorganized office
Disorganized files
Failure to keep personal calendar
Sloppy timekeeping

Microsoft Office 365 Business

- Full desktop software applications
- $99/user/year (install on up to 5 PCs/laptops)
- 1TB OneDrive storage/user
- Full mobile app access on up to 5 mobile devices
- 300 user maximum
- vs MS Office 2019
What About The Cloud?

Modern day "cloud computing" concept introduced by Google CEO Eric Schmidt in 2006

Law firms slow to adopt

Ethical considerations
  ◦ Security/privacy of client data
  ◦ Ownership of data
  ◦ Reliability of cloud vendor
A lawyer shall not reveal information relating to the representation of a client unless the client gives informed consent, the disclosure is impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation or the disclosure is permitted by paragraph (b).
A lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to prevent the inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure of, or unauthorized access to, information relating to the representation of a client.
ABA Formal Opinion 477

Paragraph (c) requires a lawyer to act competently to safeguard information relating to the representation of a client against unauthorized access by third parties and against inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure by the lawyer or other persons who are participating in the representation of the client or who are subject to the lawyer’s supervision. … The unauthorized access to, or the inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure of, information relating to the representation of a client does not constitute a violation of paragraph (c) if the lawyer has made reasonable efforts to prevent the access or disclosure.
Comment [18] to Model Rule 1.6(c)

• "Process" to assess risks
• Identify and implement appropriate security measures responsive to risks
• Verify they are effectively implemented
• Ensure they are continually updated in response to new developments

--ABA Cybersecurity Handbook
Factors in Determining Reasonableness of Efforts

- Sensitivity of information
- Likelihood of disclosure if additional safeguards not employed
- Cost of employing additional safeguards
- Difficulty of implementing safeguards
- Extent to which safeguards adversely affect lawyer's ability to represent clients
E-mail Communications

Opinion 99-413 (1999):
- "Lawyers have reasonable expectation of privacy in communications made by all forms of e-mail...despite some risk of interception and disclosure"
- Consistent with "reasonable means" in Rule 1.6

Unencrypted e-mail still acceptable for routine communication with clients

Exceptions possible on case-by-case basis
- Examples: Medical, banking, etc.
Cloud Technology

TN Ethics Opinion 2015-F-159:

- "A lawyer may ethically allow confidential client information to be stored in "the cloud" if the lawyer takes reasonable care to assure that: (1) all such information or materials remain confidential; and (2) reasonable safeguards are employed to ensure that the information is protected from breaches, loss, and other risks. Due to rapidly changing technology, the Board doesn’t attempt to establish a standard of care, but instead offers guidance from other jurisdictions."
Evolution to the Cloud
Evolution to the Cloud
The Serverless Law Firm
Know "Benefits and Risks" of Technology

Risks

- Cybersecurity/Privacy
- Social Media
- Texting
- Mobility
2019 Verizon DBIR Report
Summary

• As business migrates to the cloud, phishing and credential theft have risen as attack mode

• 94% of malware infections delivered via e-mail

• Users are much more susceptible to social attacks when using mobile devices
43% of victims are small business

$25,000
Median direct impact for business email compromise

~80%
Fraudulent transactions in professional service firms involved pretexting
LOGICFORCE 2019 CyberSecurity Scorecard
200
U.S. law firms surveyed

51%
Had data security practices audited in past year

2%
of firm revenue: minimum recommended spend on cybersecurity
THE LEGAL INDUSTRY SCORE INCREASED SLIGHTLY IN 2019

The 2019 legal industry score for cybersecurity health is 60.1%. While we see some improvement in cybersecurity leadership and governance, law firms are behind on more advanced measures such as DLP, multi-factor authentication, and records management.

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<th>CATEGORIES</th>
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2019 INDUSTRY SCORE 60.10%

2018 INDUSTRY SCORE 54.25%
Cybersecurity Standards

1. Information security executive
2. Cybersecurity policies and backup procedure
3. Multi-factor authentication
4. Cyber training
5. Cyber insurance
6. Penetration and vulnerability testing
12 Cybersecurity Standards

7. Password management tool
8. Records management policy
9. Security Operations Center (SOC) monitoring
10. Full Disk Encryption (FDE)
11. Data Loss Prevention (DLP) services
12. Third-party risk assessments

-2019 LOGICFORCE Cybersecurity Scorecard
Risks: Social Media Use

• Social media policy training
• Bad idea to use social media platforms for confidential communications
• Twitter posts can be a headache as they might reveal strategy or biases of the attorney
• Friending represented parties to gain information has been found to be unethical
• Friending under false pretenses has been found to be unethical
• Don't neglect social media in electronic discovery
• Monitoring jurors' social media use

**Risks: Texting**

- Accepted form of business communications today
- Ignoring client texts can be violation of ethics rules
- Texting as a form of advertising
Risks: Mobility

- Cloud technologies allows for virtual law office
- Not every "virtual office" is safe
  - Dangers of open Wi-Fi
  - VPN
- Safeguards
  - Multi-factor authentication
  - Strong password management
  - Remote wipe capability
  - Encryption
THANK YOU!

Any questions?

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