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A Common Legal Technology Mess to Avoid: DIY Solutions That Fail at Inopportune Times

By Warren Christopher Freiberg
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Ever feel like you're doing legal technology wrong? You're not alone. For this issue of *SmallLaw*, I spoke with Morris Tabush about one of the biggest messes he finds when he gets called in to help a firm — "do-it-yourself" solutions cobbled together quickly by busy lawyers. Tabush is the founder of Tabush Group, a legal technology consultancy and virtual workspace provider in New York City.

Maybe you've set up a wireless network at home, and can use Microsoft Office like a boss. You may have a fine home office, but it doesn't necessarily qualify you to set up a secure business network and practice management system for a dozen lawyers and staff.

"Lawyers with a little bit of a tech background try to do it themselves to save some cash," says Tabush. This mentality can take many forms such as lax security, missing or outdated antivirus software, using consumer grade routers instead of real firewalls, or using insufficient backups.

"Small firms often make decisions based on price, not on value or effectiveness," Tabush says. "Lawyers know the rule 'don't be your own lawyer' but think they can be their own IT professional, and go with inexpensive products that they assume they can manage themselves or which worked at home. We have found they often spend more time tinkering with their homegrown solution instead of focusing on billable client work, and eventually their solution doesn't work in a time of need, and all their 'savings' go out the window."

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Tabush recounted how one small firm he worked with tried to save money on a backup solution by cobbling together its own mix of consumer-grade backup software on each computer and a central network-attached-storage (NAS) device in the office, which then replicated itself off-site to the managing partner's home.

After a few weeks of tinkering, the lawyers at the firm were able to get the office system working properly, but gave up on copying the data offsite, figuring that what they had was good enough.

It wasn't.

"For the week or so after, the backups supposedly worked fine," Tabush says. "But a few months later, when one of the desktop's hard drives crashed and the firm needed some critical files from the computer, the most recent backups from that computer were over a month old. For some reason, the backup software had stopped working and nobody noticed. They then realized that the backups were actually no longer running on four out of the five computers."

That's when the firm called Tabush. "The firm finally realized they were experts in law and negotiations, not IT, and hired us to take over management of their systems, including implementing a managed backup system that our network operations center monitors on a daily basis," he says.

Tabush Group

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