3. Advantages and Challenges of Collaboration Software

Advantages of Collaboration Software

Improved Internal and External Communication

Using collaboration software within the firm, along with proper guidance and management, will improve internal and external communication, save money on document storage and management, improve file organization, allow for more efficient in-office and remote work, and improve productivity and efficiency. What follows are some of the advantages of using collaboration software in the firm.

Proper use of collaboration applications will improve staff's communication in a number of ways:

1. **Real-Time Communication**

   Collaboration applications like Google Chat and Teams allow for instantaneous (as well as delayed) communication among staff when a phone call or virtual meeting is not desirable or possible.

2. **Centralized Communication**

   By using one system to communicate (for example, Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace), staff can work more efficiently by not having to switch through multiple applications. Having one system also allows for easy retrieval of past conversations.

3. **Document Sharing and Collaboration**

   Staff will work more efficiently together and save storage space by working on the same document or file instead of emailing back and forth different versions.

4. **Notifications and Reminders**

   Docketing and calendar control are essential in a law firm; one missed date could lead to disastrous consequences for a client and a malpractice case for the firm. Collaboration software allows for teams to work together on tasks and set deadlines for themselves and each other, with the ability to control how and when notifications are received and reminders of outstanding tasks to be completed.

5. **Better Organization**

   Effective use of the many features of collaboration software can allow the firm to improve operations and procedures and ensure that files and communications are optimally organized. Better organization does require some thought before implementing (or re-implementing) a system and careful consideration should be brought to where and how files will be saved.

6. **Flexibility**

   Cloud-based collaboration software facilitates remote work and more flexible work arrangements. Staff can access information needed for work (files, case management details, communications, etc.) from nearly anywhere, regardless of their physical location. This flexibility allows firms to accommodate different work preferences and needs, especially for employees requiring accommodations based on disability or family situation.

7. **Greater Productivity**

   Collaboration software can significantly increase productivity within the firm. By allowing for several different communication modalities from which to choose,

staff can communicate in ways that best fit the needs of any situation. These tools allow for centralized access to information, improving efficiency and ease of locating information when needed. The integrations between task management and communication tools allow staff to assign and review tasks, set and monitor deadlines, and track progress throughout the course of a project or representation of a client. Finally, collaboration software, when used properly, can allow for greater knowledge sharing and learning within the organization, which in turn can improve client services.

Challenges of Collaboration Software

While collaboration applications are required for a technologically competent and efficient law firm, staff must be aware of some of the challenges of using collaboration software:

1. **Security Risks**

   As with using any application, there is a persistent risk that sensitive or confidential information could be compromised by an internal or external party. When choosing collaboration software, the firm must do its due diligence by reviewing terms of service (TOS), end user licensing agreements (EUA or EULA), etc. Firms should only use software for which the firm remains the owner of any data input into the system. Firms should be contractually authorized to remove and destroy any data stored within the system. The firm must enforce a data destruction policy and ensure that any data stored within the collaboration applications are also destroyed per that policy.

2. **Permissions Issues**

   Firms must carefully plan and control who can access sensitive and confidential information in a collaborative system. Make sure that systems are set up

according to the principle of least privilege, or the principle that "a security architecture should be designed so that each entity is granted the minimum system resources and authorizations that the entity needs to perform its function."**46** Planning permissions takes careful consideration and must be completed before implementing applications and systems, and requires regular review thereafter.

3. **Change Management and Training**

   In our experience, the number one reason that an IT system or process fails to work within a firm is that not enough attention is paid to change management and training. Technological change requires that staff be supported to implement and use the new technology successfully. This requires training before and during implementation and regular ongoing training thereafter. Organizational change cannot be successful if staff are not included in understanding why things are changing, how they are changing, and how staff will be expected to change their work tasks and operations.

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46. *National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).* "Least Privilege." *NIST Computer Security Resource Center Glossary* . https://csrc.nist.gov/glossary/term/least_privilege .

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