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## LegalTech NY 2011, rise of cloud computing

Last week, along with thousands of others, I attended LegalTech New York in Manhattan. This annual conference is sponsored by American Lawyer Media with the goal of helping lawyers, law firms and their staff learn about the latest advances in legal-related technology.

EDiscovery and related issues are always a big focus at this conference. However, in recent years, seminars addressing both social media and cloud computing issues have become increasingly prevalent. Last year there seemed to be equal numbers of presentations devoted to cloud computing and social media, whereas this year cloud computing seemed to be the more popular topic. Only two seminars focused on social media, while seven addressed cloud computing issues.

I'm not sure if this is because the conference planners felt that social media was "so last year" or whether there was simply a feeling that there was only so much to say about a topic that had already been covered extensively in the past. Regardless of the rationale, cloud computing ruled the roost at this year's conference, both during seminar sessions and in the Exhibit Hall, where there were increasing numbers of cloud computing products and product lines featured at the various exhibit booths.

Most notable were two new law practice management cloud computing platforms. First, LexisNexis debuted "LexisNexis Firm Manager" ([www.myfirmmanager.com](http://www.myfirmmanager.com)), its cloud-based platform that is being beta tested and will be released in public beta sometime in March. Another newcomer to law practice management in the cloud that had booth in the Exhibit Hall was MyCase ([www.mycaseinc.com](http://www.mycaseinc.com)), which bills itself as providing "social practice management" in the cloud.

As a further reminder that practice management in the cloud is the wave of the future, representatives from two of the more familiar and leading cloud-based platforms, Clio ([www.goclio.com](http://www.goclio.com)) and Rocket Matter ([www.rocketmatter.com](http://www.rocketmatter.com)), were also on hand at the conference. And NetDocuments ([www.netdocuments.com](http://www.netdocuments.com)), a company that offers web-based document management, was also present in the Exhibit Hall.

One topic explored at a number of LegalTech sessions was the increasing overlap between eDiscovery and cloud computing. This conceptual overlap was likewise apparent when perusing the product offerings on display in the Exhibit Hall.

For example, Digital Reef ([www.digitalreef.com](http://www.digitalreef.com)) now offers hosted eDiscovery in the cloud. And, as explained to me by their CTO, Steve Akers, eDiscovery in the cloud is the wave of the future and will give law firms increasingly flexibility when deciding how their data will be filtered, stored and managed.

For example, in the future, law firms will have the ability to filter the types of data automatically sent to the cloud and will similarly be able to set parameters that control how their data is treated once it is in the cloud. Certain types of highly confidential data, such as credit cards or social security numbers, will eventually be automatically encrypted as soon as it is stored in the cloud, whereas other less sensitive data will remain in its original, unencrypted form.

The inevitable overlap of cloud computing and eDiscovery, is a strong sign that cloud computing, once a foreign concept, is quickly becoming a familiar one — and for good reason. It is, in my opinion, the next wave of computing.

The legal field would be wise to learn about it, understand it, and use it to their advantage. And, if the prevalence of cloud computing sessions and products at LegalTech 2011 is any indication, that is exactly what is happening, and this will be the year that cloud computing begins to seep into the consciousness of lawyers across the country.

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