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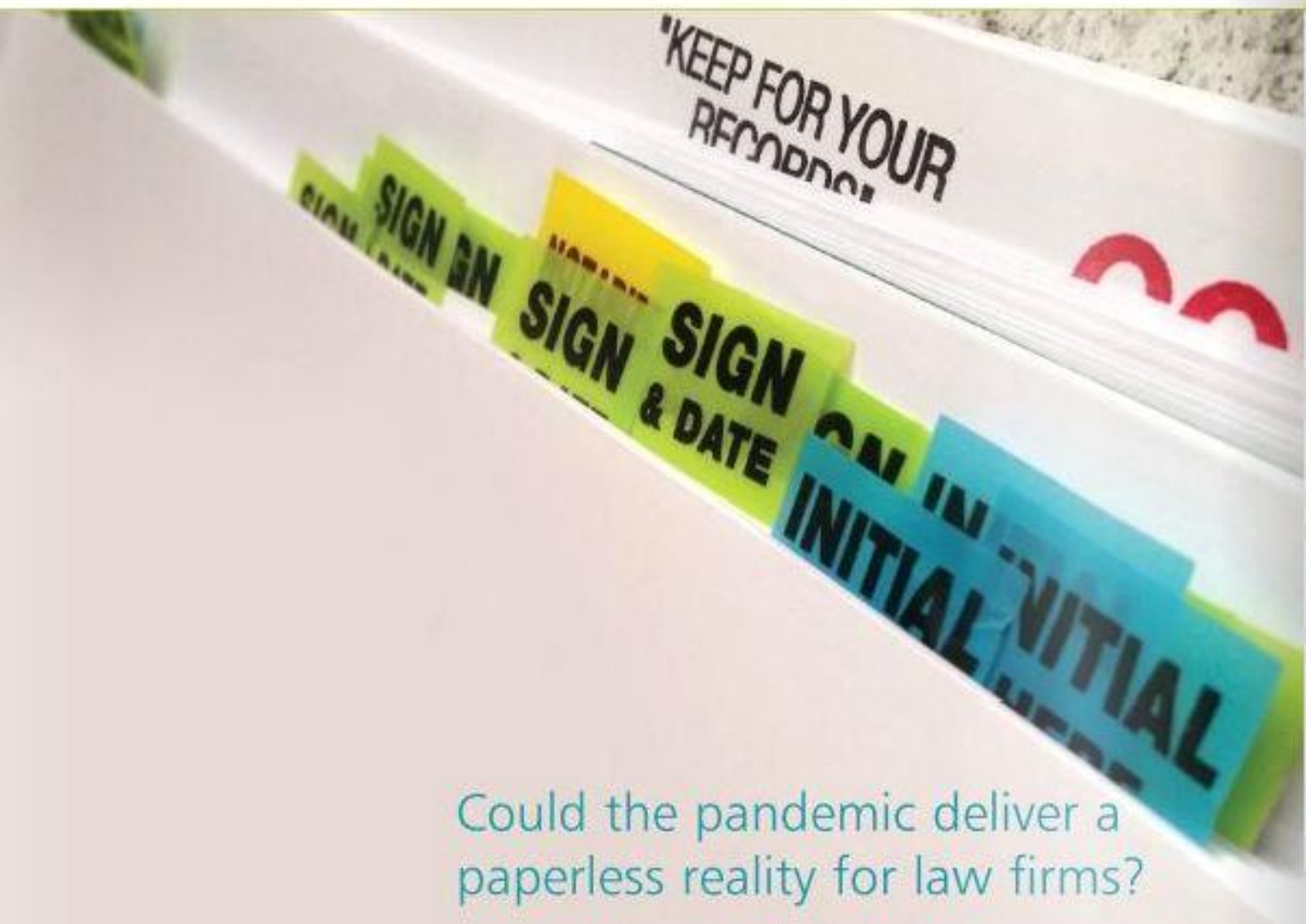
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Could the pandemic deliver a paperless reality for law firms?

Law firms have been talking about going paperless and transitioning to a more efficient way of working for years, says Storetec's Amy Wright - but it would seem the pandemic might deliver the final push in making this digital goal a reality

We have seen numerous attempts over the last decade by law firms and courts of law to transition processes into a digital format. In 2013, the government launched an online claims portal to manage claims efficiently and quickly. Created to deal with claims of up to £25,000, the portal applies to organisations on the receiving end of employer liability (EL) and public liability (PL) claims. In 2016 the government also invested £7 million pounds in its

Autumn statement for modernising courts and justice systems. Virtual hearings conducted over telephone and video links are becoming more common practice, which is extremely useful in sensitive court cases.

OPPORTUNITY TO DIGITISE

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a window of opportunity for private law firms to review company structures and identify inefficiencies which have existed for years. The need for an

THE NEED FOR AN EFFICIENT METHOD OF WORKING WAS HIGHLIGHTED FURTHER DURING THE LOCKDOWN WHEN EMPLOYEES WITHOUT ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO DOCUMENTATION STRUGGLED TO WORK FROM HOME. IMAGINE A TYPICAL LAW FIRM: FILING CABINETS ACROSS THE OFFICE FULL OF CLIENT DOCUMENTS AND DESKS STACKED WITH CORRESPONDENCE WITH POST-IT NOTES OF HELPFUL NUMBERS. DURING THE LOCKDOWN IT WASN'T QUITE AS EASY AS TAKING ALL THOSE FILING CABINETS HOME WITH YOU!

efficient method of working was highlighted further during the lockdown when employees without electronic access to documentation struggled to work from home. Imagine a typical law firm: filing cabinets across the office full of client documents and desks stacked with correspondence with post-it notes of helpful numbers.

During the lockdown it wasn't quite as easy as taking all those filing cabinets home with you! With documentation being incredibly confidential in nature, accessing such records in a secure and compliant environment was another obstacle law firms faced.

We don't need to sit and tell you about the benefits of a paperless office: the reality of unrestricted remote access, reduced administrative costs and enhanced workflow are obvious wins. But what about the practical reality of sticking to a paperless way of work in the future?

A main source of paper within many law firms is incoming correspondence and contracts. To ensure the paper problem doesn't build up again, businesses can outsource a digital mailroom service whereby all post is scanned and stored in a central system for the law firm to access. Solicitors can then allocate the scanned mail to each client matter enabling employees to access the information they need online.

HOW SECURE IS REMOTE WORKING?

As leading document scanning & cloud-based document management providers, we have been busy helping

law firms facilitate remote working over the last 6 months. With the rush for businesses to set up remote working infrastructure and follow critical government orders, the reality is that currently, many businesses security systems are compromised.

Data gathered from independent surveys distributed to a range of businesses identified that some employees are accessing critical documents via email, USB and other non-secure networks. We would like to think that there aren't cyber criminals waiting to take advantage of the situation... but in reality, that's exactly what's happening. If the Coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it's that the unexpected can happen, and businesses should be prepared to face any eventuality.

A solution to the security problem, you may ask? An encrypted cloud-based document management solution. Products such as our award-winning system FreeDocs will enable you to:

- 1) Access confidential documents in a secure, cloud-based database.
- 2) Set multi-user restrictions to determine levels of access.
- 3) Review audit trails of which records employees have accessed remotely.
- 4) Have the peace of mind knowing documents are secure, protected behind data encryption and 2-factor authentication.

You may already have a system like this in place, which means you're absolutely on the right track. But if you are one of the employees accessing records via USB or email

transfer, we urge you to contact us today for some free advice over your cloud-based solution.

REVISED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

In addition to reviewing paper processes, law firms have also taken the time to make changes to their organisational structure. An article by [Law.com](#) questions the current ratio of attorneys to legal administrative assistants in light of the pandemic. One law firm leader - speaking on the condition of anonymity - says their firm's support structure will be permanently changed by the pandemic: "Our attorneys have really been more autonomous when it comes to their day-to-day practice. We are going to benefit from that autonomy and the way they've embraced technology will increase efficiency."

A PAPERLESS FUTURE FOR LAW FIRMS

With the Coronavirus pandemic expected to impact our lives over the coming years, we're expecting the number of law firms looking to switch to a paperless way of working to continue for the foreseeable future. The Storetec team remains available and on-hand to assist such firms with their digital transformation goals.

If you would like any advice or information regarding Storetec's secure document scanning and cloud-based document management services, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone on 0800 612 4065 or sales@storetec.net.
More info: www.storetec.net