

The Legal Aid Society of New York Overcomes Effects of Hurricane Sandy with Cloud Services Strategy



An upgrade to eFax Corporate® hosted service model provides security and redundancy for transmitting court documents



MAKING THE CASE FOR HUMANITY

The Legal Aid Society
New York City, New York
www.legal-aid.org

The Legal Aid Society is a private, not-for-profit legal service, the oldest and largest in the nation, dedicated since 1876 to providing quality legal representation to low-income New Yorkers. It is dedicated to one simple but powerful belief: that no New Yorker should be denied access to justice because of poverty.

Through a network of borough, neighbourhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private legal representation.

The Society handles 300,000 individual cases and matters annually and provides a comprehensive range of legal services in three areas: the Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights Practices. Unlike the Society's Criminal and Juvenile Rights Practices, which are constitutionally mandated and supported by government, the Civil Practice relies heavily on private contributions. Its law reform work benefits some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a Statewide and national impact. The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organisation.

With over 2,000 employees, the Society has a constant need to fax court-related documents. Until recently, that need was met through dual systems for outbound and inbound faxing: outbound faxing was serviced via an in-house fax server, while inbound faxes were routed to the proper recipients via a unified messaging exchange.

The Society experienced some challenges with their on premise electronic faxing infrastructure, and a variety of issues created a lack of full confidence in the system. This was a minor inconvenience compared to the problems experienced in the Fall of 2012, when Hurricane Sandy wreaked havoc on the Northeast seaboard. While the IS department worked to recover from the hurricane's effects on the Society's offices and infrastructure, they were without fax services for months as the on-site fax infrastructure was affected. This was a turning point that led the Society's IS team to investigate a better solution.



As a non-profit, the Society does not have the same resources as corporate legal entities for costs and maintenance as for-profit entities. Therefore the Society was looking for several important features in their faxing solution:

- **Cost effective:** no support and maintenance costs like the fax server required.
- **Off-site servers and networked redundancy:** to ensure service uptime for both routine maintenance and unforeseen disasters.
- **Ease of use:** employees required minimal training.
- Simple yet powerful administrative controls: while outsourcing the fax services to eFax® freed the team to focus on other technology priorities, the help desk team was able to maintain administrative controls over the eFax accounts, with the ability to easily add new users, fax lines and make service choices.

According to John Wroblewski, Deputy Director of the MIS Department at Legal Aid, “Our ability to provide and support electronic faxing is critical, as it remains an important technology required to perform the day to day services of the Society. Supporting an unreliable, on premise electronic faxing infrastructure created a situation where we were spending a disproportionate amount of IT and help desk resources keeping these systems functional and our users cared for. By going with the eFax cloud model, we’ve greatly mitigated potential outage risks and have been able to restore confidence in the ability of MIS to provide this service. This has additionally benefited us internally by taking significant worry and workload off of our shoulders”.

With eFax Corporate®, Legal Aid employees can access fax services via email, using the Internet as a transport instead of dedicated phone lines. Each employee has their own fax number, enabling tracking and routing of important court documents. Because the service is hosted on eFax data centres in several locations, the service has the ability to automatically route fax traffic in the event of spot outages or geographic weather or network issues.

Hosted fax services are also scalable, meaning there is no need for The Legal Aid Society to adjust hardware or bandwidth resources to accommodate fluctuating document volumes. The eFax service accommodates traffic fluctuations. The Society was able to make the transition from in-house fax servers to the hosted service easily, with a series of brief webinar trainings to accommodate employees’ busy schedules.

As a next step, the Society is starting to incorporate the eFax service with their networked multifunction printers (MFPs) allowing employees to transmit paper-based documents using the same system as documents in electronic formats. This enhancement will enable the Legal aid Society to remove remaining departmental fax machines and dedicated phone lines.

“We feel the eFax® hosted service represents a real upgrade to our document transmission services”, explained John Wroblewski, “and helps us provide uninterrupted services to our constituency”.

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- John Wroblewski



About eFax Corporate

eFax® is the world's leading online fax solution, with more than 11 million customers worldwide. eFax lets users receive, review, edit, sign, send and store faxes by email or through a web interface. eFax offers plans for individual users and provides corporate solutions.

To learn more about outsourcing to a cloud fax model with eFax Corporate, visit us at: efax.co.uk/corporate



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