



A DIVISION OF BELL CANADA

Q9 Data Centre Services Help Commonwealth Legal Enhance Data Integrity/Security in Its Online Litigation Evidence Management Business.

"Our clients count on us for reliable, defensible evidence-management solutions that are low risk. Q9 brings a level of confidence, security and reputation to our offerings that puts our clients at ease." - President, Commonwealth Legal



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CHALLENGE	SOLUTION	RESULTS
As Commonwealth Legal grew and became involved in more-complex, higher-risk litigation proceedings, document volumes and the risk associated with data integrity increased, resulting in a critical need for secure, reliable and highly available IT infrastructure to host customer databases and serve applications.	Q9 Networks was contracted to provide colocation, bandwidth and infrastructure services based on a multi-site data centre solution, allowing Commonwealth Legal to outsource the hosting of critical IT infrastructure.	By having Q9 host and manage its creative infrastructure, Commonwealth Legal has established a secure, reliable and highly available computing environment to support its business, while taking the risk out of managing electronically stored information for clients and avoiding the complexity and cost of building their own data centre.

Recognized Experts in Litigation Document Management

Canadian owned and operated, Commonwealth Legal is Canada's largest litigation document and evidence management company, serving the needs of Canada's national law firms and litigation boutiques as well as corporate and government clients, including the Federal Department of Justice and Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General. The firm's 85 full-time staff includes a team of legal professionals and consultants who provide advice on electronic discovery projects for clients in Canada, U.S., U.K. and Europe. Commonwealth Legal is the only Canadian e-discovery company that processes and hosts evidence in Canada to have achieved ISO 9001 certification.

Central Repository Supports e-Discovery Process

Commonwealth Legal provides 'evidence management' services to organizations that need to collect, review and analyze large volumes of paper and electronic documentation to support their involvement in complex, high-risk legal proceedings and litigation investigations.

"The challenge in today's legal world is that there is so much data, it is so complicated, it originates from so many different sources and exists in so many different formats, including traditional paper files, database files, e-mail, voice mail, CAD drawings and more," says Karen Brookman, President of Commonwealth Legal.



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Commonwealth Legal collects all this information from a client and then conducts a complex series of automated processes, referred to collectively as “e-discovery”. This includes ‘normalizing’ all the information into a format that allows it to be indexed and stored in a central repository where it can be easily searched, reviewed, analyzed and annotated by lawyers, law clerks, paralegals, document reviewers and other users acting on behalf of the customer.

Although the resulting repository is sometimes hosted by the customer, the most common scenario is for Commonwealth Legal to host the database and provide access through a Webbased customer portal and industry-standard litigation support and evidence management applications such as Ringtail, iConect and Clearwell. Commonwealth Legal makes these thirdparty applications available to customers via the Internet on a paid subscription basis following a software-as-a-service (SaaS) application delivery model.

Business Growth Drives New Business Model

One of the first problems that Commonwealth Legal experienced as it grew arose from the need to archive data for long periods of time, often many years, to meet regulatory requirements. It also became crucial for Commonwealth Legal to provide redundancy for the evidence repository and to backup the data in order to protect its customers’ valuable work product. With lawyers charging sizeable hourly fees to review and annotate documents in the database, there would not only be significant cost implications to the customer if the database was ever lost, but also reputation and possibly even legal liability risks to Commonwealth Legal.

“The evidence in a large lawsuit or investigation can easily involve terabytes of electronic data, along with the scanning of potentially hundreds of ‘banker’s boxes’ of hardcopy documents,” says Brookman. “Traditional backup processes involving tape storage media, for example, became impractical because it could take up to a full month just to backup the data and then it would be time to do it all over again.”

Equally critical, however, is the requirement that Commonwealth Legal keep its IT infrastructure, especially its database system and application-delivery platform, up and running at peak performance 24x7 so that lawyers and other users are guaranteed to have access to the evidence management applications and data repository when they need it. A single case can often involve 100+ users working around the clock in various countries to meet important deadlines, all needing to access the database while feeling confident it will always be up and running.

“This became a real risk to us and we realized that if we continued on the same path, we would not be able to ensure that this was always possible,” says Brookman, by way of explaining why they decided to engage the services of a data centre services provider.

Due Diligence Leads to Q9 Selection

After researching the marketplace with the help of an IT consultant to find the best data centre services provider for their business, the management team at Commonwealth Legal chose Q9 Networks for a combination of colocation and managed services.

“A lot of factors went into our decision to partner with Q9, not the least of which is that being a leader in our market space is an important aspect of our positioning and how we benchmark ourselves, so when we looked for a hosting partner, we sought out leadership in that space as well,” explains Brookman.

According to Brookman, they wanted a partner based in Toronto that also had a western presence. With data centres in downtown Toronto, Brampton and Calgary, Q9’s multi-site solution was a perfect fit for Commonwealth Legal’s redundancy, backup and disaster recovery needs.

In addition to having all the ‘top-tier’ data centre infrastructure capabilities around power, security, HVAC, fire suppression, Internet bandwidth, 24x7 monitoring and more, it was important to Commonwealth Legal that hosted data moving in and out of Q9 would never cross the Canada-U.S. border. There are privacy considerations when Commonwealth Legal deals with Canadian and even international lawsuits, so there can be a real risk if data crosses any borders.

“We already knew that Q9 was premier in the market; and a review of their client base, especially their strong relationships with the banks, confirmed this,” adds Brookman, further supporting their choice of Q9.



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Hybrid Service Contract Fits the Bill

Commonwealth Legal's hybrid contract with Q9 combines infrastructure services, bandwidth and colocation.

Q9's infrastructure services – hardware, 24x7 monitoring, onsite sparring and technical maintenance and support – cover various elements of Commonwealth Legal's network fabric.

Commonwealth Legal's bandwidth services from Q9 include Internet access, VPN links between Commonwealth Legal's office and their infrastructure at Q9's data centres, and Q9's Remote Link Service – the high-capacity, fibre-optic link connecting Commonwealth Legal infrastructure in two of Q9's data centres for data replication and backup.

The colocation service covers Commonwealth Legal's core IT infrastructure related to customers, including customer data repositories and the Web portals through which customer users access the SaaS-delivered applications. Commonwealth Legal installs its own computing equipment at Q9, while Q9 provides the environment (e.g. space, power, HVAC, security, etc.).

"At one point, we actually thought we might build-out our own datacentre and networking infrastructure, but thank goodness we didn't go that direction," says Brookman, adding that, "We wouldn't have had the skills for such a complex undertaking, to say nothing of the exorbitant cost and the fact that with Q9 we also got the multi-site solution we were looking for, as required by a growing number of RFPs we respond to for new business."

Reducing the Risk of Online Business

With the volume of electronic evidence increasing dramatically over the past few years, especially with e-mail now playing a bigger role as accepted evidence, the need to capture, store, protect and reliably serve up all that electronic data has become critically important. For Commonwealth Legal, this means that IT infrastructure security, accessibility, bandwidth, redundancy and uptime are a given when hosting customer data and serving applications.

"The very risk associated with this type of business is why we engaged Q9 to provide a secure, reliable, 24x7 computing environment," stresses Brookman, who, citing one example, describes how Commonwealth Legal occasionally had difficulty passing security audits when they first started getting involved in supporting larger law suits with banks and insurance companies.

"Financial institutions have very strict security policies when it comes to data integrity and protecting against data loss," says Brookman. "If we didn't meet their requirements when they conducted a security audit, we would miss out on a number of RFP opportunities."

With Q9, however, Commonwealth Legal's IT infrastructure problems have gone away, and with them the risks associated with handling larger, more complex cases or in being able to scale-up quickly and easily as their business continues to expand.

"The reason clients come to Commonwealth Legal is because of the way we do business, the tools we use and the people we have here to help them," says Brookman. "An added selling feature for us now is that by partnering with Q9, customers can rest assured that their data is secure and always accessible. Since all the top-tier legal organizations know about Q9, its presence adds value to our overall offering."



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