Secure Access is Key to Unlock the Brave New World of Digital Conveyancing

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> **"Document Portal now enables law firms to create a document portfolio which includes intuitive, editable forms and has a digital signature facility, provided by the leading eSignature brand DocuSign."**

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2019, stated that at least 80% of UK businesses had experienced sustained and frequent phishing attempts last year.

According to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, in 2016, £9.4m of client money was reported as lost to cybercrime, this rose to £10.7m in 2017. Legal firms are a prime target for fraud due to the high value of transactions, particularly related to property sales. Phishing attacks, where cyber criminals impersonate either another law firm or a client in attempt to intercept funds, are by far the most common way that fraudsters target the conveyancing chain.

Due to the high level of phishing attacks, email is now widely considered an unsafe method of communicating confidential data. Some firms have resorting to 'print and post' in an attempt to keep client's data safe. However, this only slows down the conveyancing chain and has its own associated security risks if intercepted. So how can law firms move forwards safely and modernise processes to speed up communication and protect their clients at the same time?

Here we must look towards the banking industry which has for some time successfully adopted secure 2 Factor Authentication for clients to access accounts online. In this way, multi-factor authentication software has the potential to make secure communication instantaneous for law firms too.

However, lawyers' expertise is, quite rightly, in handling complex legal cases and firms often don't have access to the necessary in-house IT resources to tackle these technical developments. Therefore, to unlock advances in technology that do have the potential to speed up legal business processes safely and securely, law firms need to have the opportunity to work in partnership with technology experts who can make a real difference, focussing on developing applications that are fit for purpose and solve specific challenges.

Following many months of research and development poweredbypie's team of developers have drawn on their years of experience in the prop-tech sector, taking the time needed to understand the requirements of solicitors and the challenges they face in the conveyancing process. The result is an intelligent new solution called: Document Portal which now allows solicitors to streamline communication online by managing client interaction securely. Importantly, it allows client documents to be accessed and shared safely online, negating the need for physical copies.

Documentation is only accessible to those with authorised access. It is both simple to use and set-up and features secure 2 Factor Authentication processes for electronic document exchange, removing the delays associated with paper-based legal forms and mitigating the risks posed by email communications.

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The use of electronic signatures is an area of debate. However, electronic signatures are binding so long as they can be authenticated. One way to ensure the authentication process is to use an electronic signature company such as DocuSign, since courts have already ruled a signature using DocuSign is presumptively valid.

On 4 September 2019 the Law Commission set out a statement to end uncertainty and increase confidence in the use of electronic signatures https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/electronic-execution-of-documents/. It was stated: "Our report aims to provide an accessible statement of the law which makes it clear that an electronic signature can generally be used in place of a handwritten signature as long as the usual rules on signatures are met."

Document Portal now enables law firms to create a document portfolio which includes intuitive, editable forms and has a digital signature facility, provided by the leading eSignature brand DocuSign. Not only does this provide a secure, streamlined environment for client data, it also highlights to the client exactly what information needs to be filled-in, first time, every time helping to avoid delays to the transaction. In this brave new world of digital conveyancing, secure access is the key to unlock the many advantages technology holds for law firms and their clients.

For further information please see: www.poweredbypie.co.uk

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