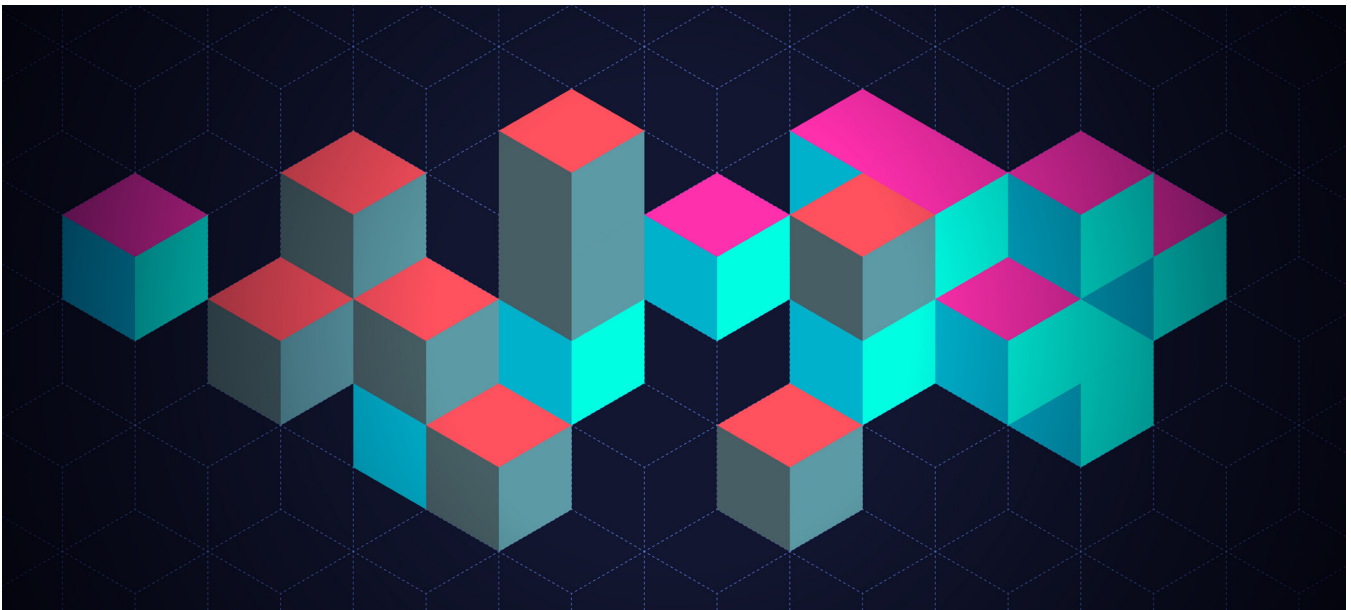


The Revolution Will Be Containerized

BY JOE DAVIS



The legal world has had a love/hate relationship with cloud-based systems. It is hard to argue against the notion that almost all the innovation happening in technology is cloud-based. Law firms and corporate legal departments are quick to fly the innovation flag, though many have avoided the cloud for a variety of reasons, preferring instead to maintain their data in their own data center. More progressive firms that have adopted a private cloud model have effectively virtualized the servers in their data center and moved them to the Microsoft Azure or Amazon Web Services platform. This approach outsources management of the physical elements of the data center but fails to take advantage of many of the other benefits the cloud has to offer.

Application containerization is one such benefit that legal IT is only beginning

to leverage. Containerized server-based applications have the potential to revolutionize the way applications are managed and integrated, and Reynen Court is ready to combine those features with other technology – including its own app store – to lead the revolution.

Reynen Court was founded in 2018 by Andrew Klein, a Harvard Law School graduate and former associate at Cravath, Swaine and Moore. Klein is a serial entrepreneur, having founded an investment bank, two asset management firms and a media company. Klein describes the company as “app store for legal” but is quick to point out that there is more to it than that. “There is definitely a part of Reynen Court that is about a catalog of applications that you can find and get information about and ultimately buy and use,” he says. “But the app store on

your phone is much more than just a catalog of things you can buy. It is actually a complete operating system that makes it easy – almost magical – for the software to come out of the catalog of the app store owner.” Reynen Court has built a similar type of system that allows users to find, purchase and securely deploy legal software.

The future of IT

Making sense of Reynen Court’s strategy requires understanding several underlying assumptions. First, the data center as we know it has outlived its usefulness. “The single most profound observation that we can share with the vendors and with the law firms is that we have a strong conviction that the data centers are going away,” Klein says. “And if you imagine as either a vendor or an IT head that the [law firm] partnerships will not

vote to rebuild the current data centers when they run their useful lives out, then what happens? If you are running the data center today, and your team, and your experience, and your expertise, is around maintaining servers and VMWare, then you have to really stop and think what is going to happen in 2023 or 2024, when Microsoft pulls the plug on Office and Exchange running in the data center, and requires everybody to move to cloud - which is clearly going to happen. Who is going to want to rebuild the data center when half the reason for having the data center just got yanked out?" Klein cites the 19 top AmLaw 100 firms in Reynen Court's consortium and says, "none of the CIOs believe that they will run data centers of any size five years from now."

The second assumption is that applications are moving from a desktop model to a server-side model. Klein notes that currently the legal world considers many desktop-based tools mission critical. "The next generation of many of those same types of applications you will see appear as server-side applications. Their integration can still be tight. By 2023 or 2024 at the latest, I think everyone will be driven off Office and Exchange running in their data centers towards the cloud. And so by then I would imagine most of the ancillary apps that were with Office and Exchange will also be server-based."

The third assumption is that as data centers disappear and applications move away from the desktop, the benefits of private clouds become increasingly clear. Law firms can no longer cite the security required by their financial institution clients as an excuse to maintain a data center. Many banks and federal government agencies have started moving to private clouds hosted by Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services and Google Cloud.

Reynen Court's opportunity

Reynen Court's value proposition is to help the legal ecosystem adapt to the world of private clouds and server-side apps by relying on two open source technologies:

Docker for containerization and Kubernetes for deployment.

Docker is a platform that allows apps and their components to be packaged into lightweight "containers." These standardized virtual containers simplify integrations and deployments. Kubernetes is a system created by Google to manage Docker containers. To use a popular analogy, Docker containers are like the shipping containers stacked up in ports and loaded onto ships, and Kubernetes is like the company that manages all the logistics of getting those containers delivered to their final destinations.

At its core, Reynen court works with legaltech vendors to offer containerized versions of their applications and offers a toolset to purchase, deploy and manage them. "We also do some other things," Klein explains, "like provide a single control panel for managing the full life cycle of software ownership, subscription management, and provisioning - which today, if you had 50 applications, you would do in 50 different administrative platforms, each one provided by a different vendor. We built API connectivity to those vendors so that you can do all of that subscription and provisioning management in one place and just have it all work in a sound, reasonable way."

In addition to a management platform, Reynen Court also provides a telemetry component. Klein explains, "we are building the plumbing so that you can measure all of the costs and usage of the apps - and also the compute power in the storage you consume using those apps - and then attribute it to matters or cases. So as you use more software, you are going to need a more granular way to track the costs. If you start using document review software to do due diligence on a big M&A deal, that can become a very considerable expense. Someone is going to have to pay for that. Either the law firms are going to bill it to their clients or they are going to come up with other billing models where they at least estimate those costs so that they can make a profitable business out of doing that kind of work."

Law firm consortium

Klein leveraged his contacts to pull together a consortium of 19 top AmLaw firms committed to Reynen Court's future as a company and its technical goals. Each of these firms has committed to a three-year period of collaboration with the company in order to facilitate a set of four goals. The first is to help the company better define its mission and deliverables to ensure it is on the right path. The next goal is that the firms collaborate with each other. So far, Kline notes, "we have had a great amount of consensus." The third goal is for each firm to deploy Reynen Court's platform. In exchange for this commitment, the company has agreed to wait on launching the platform to any firms outside the consortium until all 19 are deployed, allowing the firms to have a first-mover advantage. As of late October, 5 of the 19 firms were already running a beta version of Reynen Court's software, with others scheduled to go live within the next few months. The final goal in the collaboration list is for the firms to help Reynen Court work with the legal technology vendors.

Legaltech Vendors

So far, 112 vendors have signed on to offer containerized versions of their applications on Reynen Court's platform. Some of legaltech's biggest vendors remain notably absent at this point, but Klein notes that the company is working on adding those to the roster as well. "The reception has been strong because we genuinely have gone to market in a way where we are solving problems that the vendors and the law firms share, in a sense. It takes too long for both of them to be able to reach agreements and launch proof of concepts and deploy the apps. The vendors see lots of benefits in containers because they can build software once, release the same software they build to support their multi-tenant SaaS offering. They can release it in a container, and the client can run it as a single-tenant instance even though it is the same software. So 'build once, run anywhere' really resonates with the software vendors because it is

very expensive to maintain all these different versions and support traditional on-premise software.”

Some vendors initially expressed concern that this business model would cause them to be cut off from their customers, but Klein has worked hard to reassure them of Reynen Court's intent. “We are just providing a better way for them to offer and support their software to customers that have a high degree of concern about security, data protection and stability. We have some work to do with some vendors that may get it in principle, but really need a commercial opportunity that becomes right, [such as] a law firm saying, ‘hey, we would deploy you if you did this.’ That is what really does the trick for most of them. When a big firm tells them, ‘this is what we really need you to do,’ they pay attention.”

Technology changes

“You are going to see the nature of IT departments change pretty dramatically over the next several years,” Klein says, “as they stop needing to babysit data centers and redeploy those dollars and people.” Containerized applications and private clouds are likely to be important parts of a legal IT department's strategy, and with its strong consortium of firms and growing list of vendor partners, Reynen Court holds an enviable position. “We have a big, broad, bold ambition,” Klein says, and that is the kind of ambition that starts revolutions. **ILTA**



Joe Davis

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