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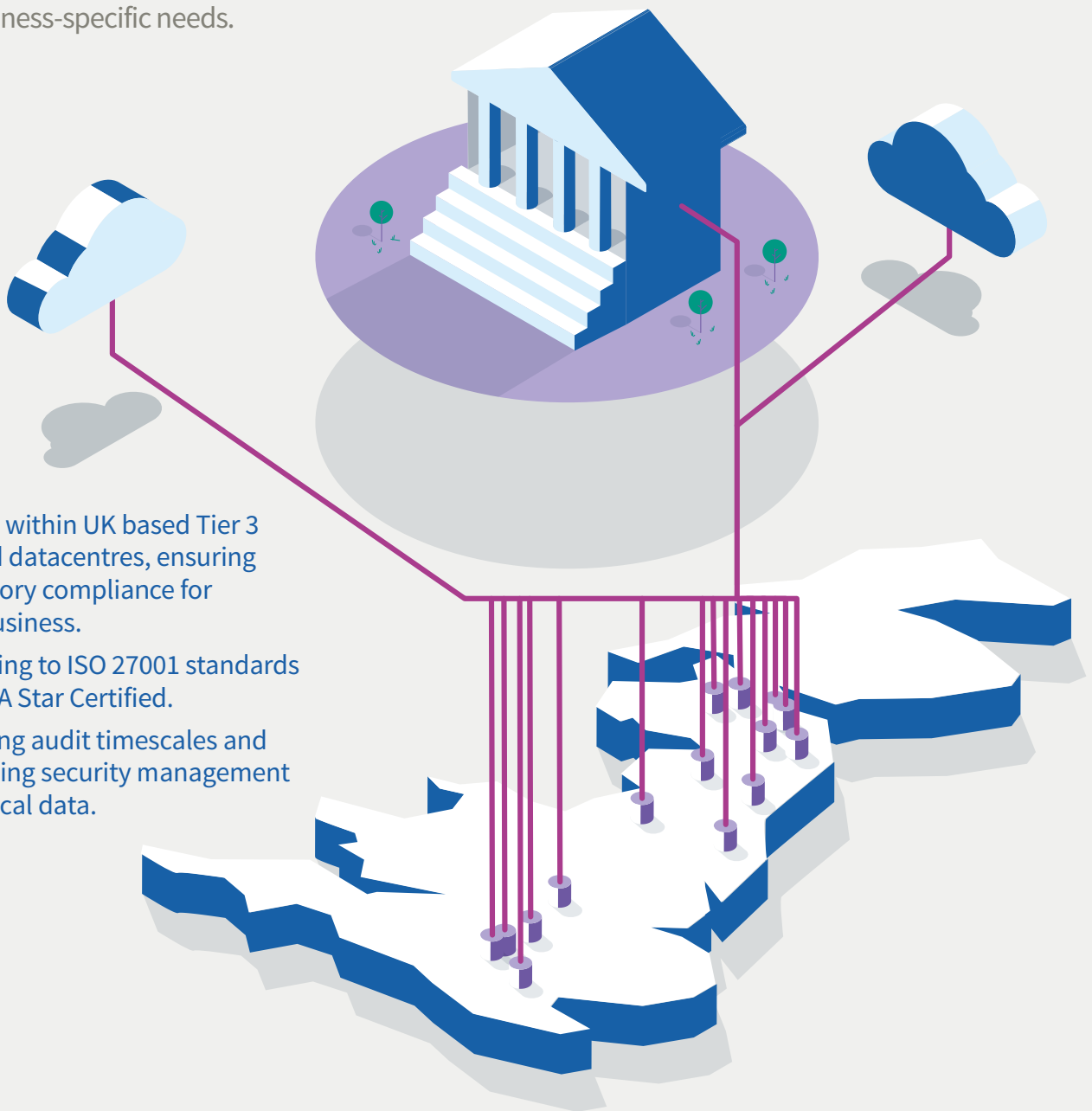
Legal watch

*What should SME law firms be on the lookout for when
the clocks strike midnight?*

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WELCOME

This year was stuffed to the gills with regulation and compliance

We've finally made it to the end of the year. It feels surreal and, boy, was it stuffed to the gills. It seems the theme for these last few months has been regulation and compliance – and this month's issue of LPM covers just that, and more.

Lucy Trevelyan joins us to investigate what 2019 has in store for the SME legal market (p20). And find out just how much risk is on your plate for next year with our risk supplement (p29), sponsored by LexisNexis.

Take a look at why and how Ashtons Legal moved offices over the summer with CEO Edward O'Rourke's column (p9). And LPM's HR guru Polly Jeanneret (p8) reminisces on top topics that hit HR people in 2018 – from GDPR headaches to sexual harassment, gender paygap and more.

And I just realised, in aiming to make more allusions to food (because I just got back from Thanksgiving, and Christmas dinner is right around the corner), I accidentally used one of the phrases you hate most – find out what else is on that plate with our 'six of the worst' office buzzwords and phrases on page 50.

I hope you all have a nice and relaxing festive season, and we'll be back again for more SME madness in February 2019. And if it's on your New Year's resolutions list to try your hand at something with LPM, give me a shout! We'd love to have you!

Kayli Olson, Editor
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SUPPLEMENT
INSIDE:
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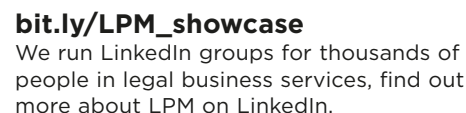
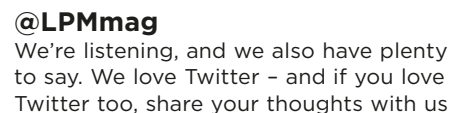
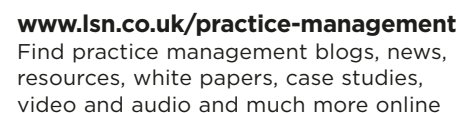
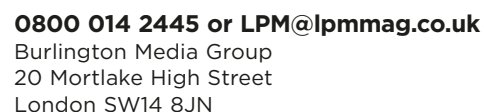
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A portrait of Dr. Michael J. Griffin, a man with grey hair and a beard, wearing glasses and a patterned shirt.



Dr. Sarah E. Hays is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She received her PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Dr. Hays is currently a faculty member in the Department of Psychology and is also a faculty member in the Center for the Study of Women's Health. Her research interests include the role of social support in the development of mental health problems, the role of social support in the development of physical health problems, and the role of social support in the development of substance use problems. She is currently co-authoring a book on the role of social support in the development of mental health problems.

Emily Nash is LPM's client services contact – and resident musician. Want to advertise in LPM magazine or feature in our awesome advertorial section? Then get in touch with her.
emilyn@lpmaag.co.uk



IN PRACTICE

SNAPSHOT RAIN CHECK

lots happening to wrap up the year – it's regulation radar once again. This year has been pretty gung-ho but, it seems, next year won't give firms any more breathing room. **At the beginning of November, the Law Society recommended that all law firms, even those with fewer than 250 employees, should publish their gender pay gap statistics.**

It also suggested that firms should consider investigating pay information for others in the workforce – such as gaps relating to disability, ethnicity and sexuality.

Controversy around law firms failing to post partner information in their data has fuelled a need to review the regulation.

The Law Society suggests that firms provide at least three separate figures: for total workforce (all staff and partners), and separate employee and partner data. It said: "It is best practice to further break down each of these figures by job type – for example, legal and non-legal/business support roles – and then by level to make them more transparent."

The Legal Services Board (LSB) on 6 November officially approved the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) deregulation plans, which will see solicitors free to work for unregulated business, among other allowances.

"We recognise that one aspect of this package – the changes to permit solicitors to provide unreserved legal services from unregulated firms – presents some potential risks," said LSB chair Dr Helen Phillips.

However, not everyone is on the same page. According to Law Society president Christina Blacklaws, the LSB's decision is a "serious error. And the regulators have sacrificed the best interests of the public they exist to protect."

Also, it would be remiss not to mention the crackdown on money laundering in the UK. Law firms are



finding themselves in the hot seat. **Security minister Ben Wallace set out plans for a new multi-agency national economic crime centre in an effort to crack down on firms failing to report suspicious activity.**

The crime centre is backed by a £48m cash injection and a more "intelligence-led approach," said Wallace.

Estate agents, solicitors and accountants facilitate about £100bn of money laundering in the UK – and legal professions submitted less than 1% of total suspicious activity reports (SAR) to the National Crime Agency in 2017. Comparatively, the banks make up 83% of SARs. The government is pushing for others in professional services to up their game.

In its latest risk update, the SRA noted a 67% rise in money laundering reports by law firms since 2016 – 60% in the first quarter of 2018 compared to 36% at the end of 2016. [LPM](#)

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A storm's approaching, and it may not be the one you think

IN NUMBERS

Whitewashed

There are more directors called Dave or Steve in the FTSE100 than there are women or ethnic minorities. A new study looks into the UK's BAME workforce

55%

of ethnic minority Brits have been advised to 'be more realistic' about their career aspirations

Only
2%

make it to board level, despite 59% of ethnic minority workers aspiring to do so

1/2

of the UK's ethnic minority workforce do not have a leadership role model to look up to

Source: Ethnic Group 2018 study of UK BAME talent

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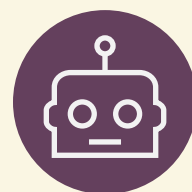
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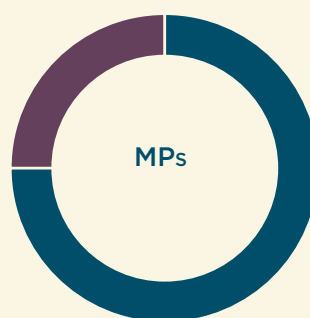
Over 10% of Brits would prefer to take legal advice from robots, according to a survey conducted by Mindshare of over 6,000 people across the UK



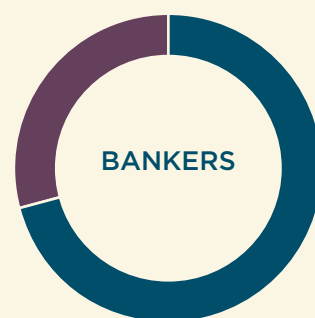
89% | 11%



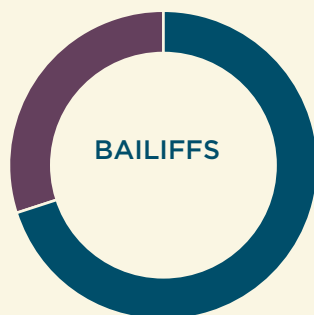
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71% | 29%



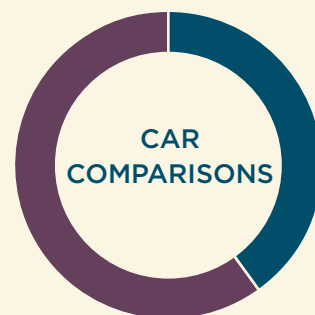
70% | 30%



55% | 45%



51% | 49%



40% | 60%

Confidence and trust in artificial intelligence capabilities has been on the rise over the last few years, and it only continues to do so. PwC estimated in a 2017 report that more than 10 million UK workers will be at high risk of being displaced by AI in the next 15 years. And earlier in 2018, thinktank Centre for Cities found that one in five jobs in Britain will fall victim to automation by 2030. Though legal may be low on this particular list, the industry shouldn't take that as reason to stay on course – those that ignore the trend may be biting the dust in the future. Source: Reboot Digital Marketing

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XMAS HIGHLIGHTS ON

LPM's people guru, Polly Jeanneret, drives us home for the festive season with her selection box of the top HR topics of 2018

As the final weeks of 2018 are engulfed in tinsel, it strikes me that 2018 has been dominated by one single, terrifying force: a force that is so powerful in the world, it has the potential to wreak havoc for years to come. Yes, you've guessed it: it's the GDPR. The new data protection regime (even its legislative name is too unwieldy to actually use, so we just say 'regime') created new obligations, new reporting duties, even new jobs. For HR, it was a headache-to-the-point-of-a-migraine mulling over what constitutes 'consent' and this oxymoronic thing called a 'privacy notice'.

Still on a data theme, at the beginning of the year, law firms Herbert Smith Freehills, CMS and Shoosmiths were the first

to publish their gender pay gap data following new rules for businesses with more than 250 staff. Firms did pretty well, broadly paying parity in similar roles, but were criticised for sticking to the letter of the law and only publishing 'employee' stats and not publishing partner-level pay gap information. The very public resignation of the BBC's China editor, Carrie Gracie, over alleged pay inequality, demonstrates that this is a live issue. Thank goodness then for some positive role-modelling from the UK Supreme Court, when a case in September 2018 was heard with the court's first female majority.

In the wake of yet another #MeToo scandal in 2018, the Sir Philip Green saga develops some interesting HR lines of

thought, which have been emerging since Harvey Weinstein. From an HR point of view, the focus in organisations has tended to be: how can we prevent liability in sexual harassment cases, rather than how can we change the culture? Sexual harassment training is a necessary but – I feel – insufficient response. What about teaching staff to challenge behaviours? Which also brings us to the issue of bystanders. Powerful figures who harass and bully others often rely on the fact that other people don't stand up to them and don't show support for victims. So, another of my highlights for 2018 is 'bystander training', already used on US campuses and now being considered for businesses. This type of training says sexual

harassment is everyone's problem, with not just a harasser and a victim. It offers real examples of how to intervene, such as saying to a colleague 'Were you aware of the effect your comment had on X?', or disrupting a situation that looks like it might escalate.

Staying with Sir Philip Green for my final highlight: banter. Green famously said that everything he allegedly said (or shouted) was just banter. As every good employment lawyer will tell you, that's not a strong defence. But also let's be honest, it wasn't really banter. One of his staff put it well in an interview in the Guardian: "'Banter' suggests some kind of exchange, or jocular language, but it isn't. It's one-way ... you have to keep your mouth shut." Happy Christmas everyone! **LPM**

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MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

EDWARD O'ROUKE, CEO

Earlier this year, Ashtons Legal relocated some of its staff from an office we had occupied for a number of years to purpose-designed premises. As I reflected on our experience prior to, during and following the relocation, it appeared to me that, like most challenges in business, the office move centred on change management.

As business leaders, we can sometimes forget that we are at the forefront of the change curve. Often we will have been considering (either alone, or as part of management discussions) a change for weeks, months or even years before the light of those ideas are shared with the wider business. At times, it can be frustrating to go back and answer questions you looked at some time ago, and to respond to questions that appear to question your judgement when you are working hard to do your best, or where the answer seems to you to be obvious. However, it's important to remember that questions that now appear to have an obvious answer to you, may not be so obvious to those coming at the change for the first time.

I believe that our move has been a great success, and the staff I speak to – and the social media posts from a large number of them – reinforce this belief, but it was neither a pain-free nor an easy journey.

We did, however, have a clear 'why' the move was needed. We had previously occupied a sprawling Georgian townhouse, with high ceilings, poor lighting, big sash windows, an inefficient heating system, limited parking and a rabbit warren of offices that did not lend themselves to effective team working. We wanted a modern, efficient and clean working environment that catered to the increasing levels of teamwork needed to deliver a quality service to clients.

Pleasing all the people as to our choice of solution was going to fall somewhere between hard and impossible. For some, they liked the old quirky surroundings. Others really wanted to be in the centre of town, not on the edge. And so on ...

The solution was to consult, consult and then consult some more. In the early days, having announced the decision, I found that speaking to and consulting with the staff was a big part of my workload:

explaining the options we had looked at, why we had chosen the one we opted for and – just as important – why we rejected the others. I know this went some way with a number of staff, but others still felt we were making a wrong decision. Frankly, that was when the real hard work began, and the baton was picked up by the facilities and HR teams.

The HR team consulted on a one-on-one basis to discuss what the move meant to individuals (even though we were only going 2.5 miles away, to a modern office, with parking for all ...) and the facilities team ensured all were engaged in deciding office layout, desk designs, chairs and so on. This gave us buy-in from even the most sceptical. Our only challenge was then to deliver on our promise of a modern, efficient, clean working environment that offered better facilities than our previous offices – easy!

We have a great atmosphere in our new offices, and a large part of that was created before we even set foot in the new premises. Engaging and consulting with staff did not stop the questions or remove all the fear, but the early engagement has now given us a great start in our new surroundings. **LPM**

“It's important to remember that questions that now appear to have an obvious answer to you, may not be so obvious to those coming at the change for the first time.”



ABOUT

Edward O'Rourke
CEO
Ashtons Legal
www.ashtonslegal.co.uk

Ashtons
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Corporate status: Partnership

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Q&A

Search for success

Scott Brown, digital services manager at Accesspoint, answers questions about making your website more visible to clients

Q How does Google work exactly?

A The web is continually evolving, with new content added daily. Every single second of the day, Google is crawling the web to organise all of this information to form and display its extensive search index listings. The index contains billions of webpages and is well over 100,000,000 gigabytes in size. That's great, but when a potential client wants to find something, such as a 'probate solicitor in London', they don't want billions of webpage options. They want to be provided with a list of relevant results that will help them. This is where Google's very clever ranking systems sort through these billions of web pages and provide the most relevant results in a fraction of a second.

Q And what are these ranking systems exactly?

A Google's ranking systems are made of algorithms that analyse what you're searching for and the most relevant information, which should be displayed to you. Every day, 15% of the searches that pass through Google are new searches that have never been seen before, so Google has to adapt its algorithms to deliver the most relevant results. An example of an algorithm is Google's synonym system, which took five years to develop and now boasts improved results in over 30% of searches.

Q Our firm's website has keywords, so is that job done for us?

A Not quite. Google does look for keywords. However, its algorithms are much more extensive, and they consider hundreds of other factors about your website before measuring

where it will be positioned on a results page, as we all want to be positioned in the top three places, right? In order to ascertain where your website will be positioned, when someone searches for, say, a 'conveyancing solicitor', Google doesn't just look for those keywords. It looks for many other things, such as relevant supporting content that will help fulfil the search intent, for example how the conveyancing process works, issues that may occur, testimonials/reviews of your services and whether other high authority websites are linking to you. It will also use your location to deliver relevant content – as you most likely don't want to use a conveyancing solicitor on the other side of the world. Therefore, it's important to ensure all your information is up to date and relevant. There are hundreds of other factors that all count toward making your website rank higher, such as making use of SSL security (the green padlock next to your web address), but we all already do that, right? As of 9 July, Google now also uses the speed of your website on mobile (as well as desktop) as a ranking factor, so something to check is whether your device is slow to load. A top priority is user experience. A user shouldn't have to hunt to find what they need. Your website should be easy to use, accessible and have a good flow to it.

Q Is there anything that we shouldn't do?

A There are lots of simple mistakes that can be made

with websites and associated bad SEO practices. An easy mistake and trap is 'keyword stuffing'. My advice would be to ensure the content on your website is written to be helpful for users, not search engines. If you go over the top with keywords it will qualify as a poor user experience and could be identified as a spam tactic – leading to a ranking penalty. Another nasty is buying low-quality backlinks to pass PageRank – again, expect a penalty. **LPM**

Send Scott your questions:
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MASTERING MATURITY

GRAHAM MOORE, THE DATA GURU



“ *A great first step for many firms is simply understanding what data they have, where it lives and who ‘owns’ it. The GDPR should have started many firms on this road already.* **”**

How mature is your business intelligence? Academics and research organisations like to use maturity models to analyse levels of adoption and exploitation of new technologies. There are many such models for business intelligence, primarily aimed at large enterprise organisations, but the principles are much the same when it comes to looking at BI maturity in SME law.

Based on our experience at Katchr, the current landscape of law firm BI maturity covers a broad spectrum. At the low end of maturity, data tends to be scattered around in multiple systems. There are lots of unconnected Excel spreadsheets used for both data collection and presentation, and different departments – marketing, HR, finance, compliance – all have their own silos of data. Reporting tends to be ad hoc and reliant on technical rather than business management skills.

At the other end, best practice tends to encompass the idea of data governance, which itself is driven by a desire by senior leadership to maximise the value of data, and a culture of performance management. Access to appropriate data is simple for lawyers and managers alike, enabling informed decision-making based on future projections as well as past history.

Data governance is essential here. It is a broad term that covers concepts such as data ownership, control over data quality and a clear policy regarding how data is managed. Key challenges that

law firms often face in this area include capturing data in the first place and deciding which is the master copy once data is stored in multiple locations.

In practical terms, many firms struggle with issues such as:

- Partners not sharing client information because the client ‘belongs to them’
- Source of business information not being recorded accurately because ‘it’s not important – it never gets used’
- Risk and compliance data being kept on spreadsheets because ‘only the COLP/COFA need access’
- Reports to clients being manually prepared off-system because ‘you can’t trust the data in the case management system – someone might have entered an

inappropriate comment.’

So how do you improve the maturity of business intelligence, in your firm? The first step, as with any business improvement is to recognise and articulate the goal. This is almost always best done through a series of incremental steps. Throwing technology at a problem without the associated people-related changes almost always fails. I have lost count of the number of failed law firm CRM implementations I have seen for just this reason.

A great first step for many firms is simply understanding what data they have, where it lives and who ‘owns’ it. The GDPR should have started many firms on this road already, but without it it can be difficult to move forward. Once this is in place, quick wins should be identifiable that will enable the value of better BI to be demonstrated throughout the firm to influencers and stakeholders.

My advice here would be to be pragmatic. The scale of the problem of data quality may seem daunting for a firm with 20 years’ worth of varying but generally poor-quality data. However, putting off the problem for another five years will not make that any easier. Alternatively, starting with clean data today means that in five years’ time there will be an abundance of good quality data for the many more automated (or AI) data-based decisions to be taken. **LPM**

ABOUT

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REFLECT ACTIONS

CLAIRE SMITH, THE CLIENT SERVICES CHAMPION

Over the past 12 months, I've been lucky to attend some great events and hear truly inspirational speakers in the professional services sector. I never tire of learning and discovering how we can constantly improve and grow. It's one of the things that drives me the most. I also love talking about what we've learned along the way – and with the year nearing its end, I thought this would be a great opportunity to recap.

1. Embrace our 24/7 world

We live in a world where normal business hours no longer apply. As a result, we're seeing a rise in law firms seeking out-of-hours support for live chat and telephone answering to ensure they can be there 24/7 for clients. According to the Customers 2020 report, it's experience – not just price or products – which is now the key differentiator for consumers, and clients are looking for a consistently exceptional experience every time, whatever channel or time of day they choose. The opportunities this presents to firms are huge. A recent analysis of our data, for instance, found that 41% of live chats answered on behalf of our legal clients resulted in a high-quality new business enquiry, without having an impact on inbound call volumes.

2. Happy staff = happy clients

In May 2018, I spoke to many of you who attended the LPM conference in Birmingham about our workplace culture, and how this translates into exceptional customer service. From day one, our company co-founders, Ed Reeves and Rachel Clacher, have consciously set out to create an amazing place to work. Why? They know a happy workplace equates to happy staff and, in turn, happy clients. We also recruit predominantly on attitude, and find that our beliefs and values attract like-minded people.

3. The importance of first impressions

According to research, we have a seven-second window, in which to win someone over. In business terms, this means we have to be the best possible version of ourselves all of the time. I love talking about the idea of being a GOFI – a God/Goddess of First Impressions. It's the term we use to describe the impression we want to create every time we come into contact with a client or a visitor. A key part of this is being available. In a busy law firm, with lawyers working to capacity and front-of-house staff having to juggle those arriving in person, phone calls and a mountain of additional tasks, it's all too easy for clients not to get the attention they deserve. I often take a moment to put myself in the shoes of our customers and prospects.

4. Cherish your unsung heroes

Most companies have employees who quietly and consistently go above and beyond, but who perhaps haven't had the recognition. But as many of you will know from rewarding your own team, recognition is integral to staff happiness. It doesn't have to be grand or glitzy. Consistent and genuine appreciation is key. One of the most valuable tools we have is our intranet, Workplace by Facebook, where we share wonderful things our team have done. It really is the little things that can make a big difference. **LPM**

“Most companies have employees who quietly and consistently go above and beyond, but who perhaps haven't had the recognition. Recognition is integral to staff happiness.”



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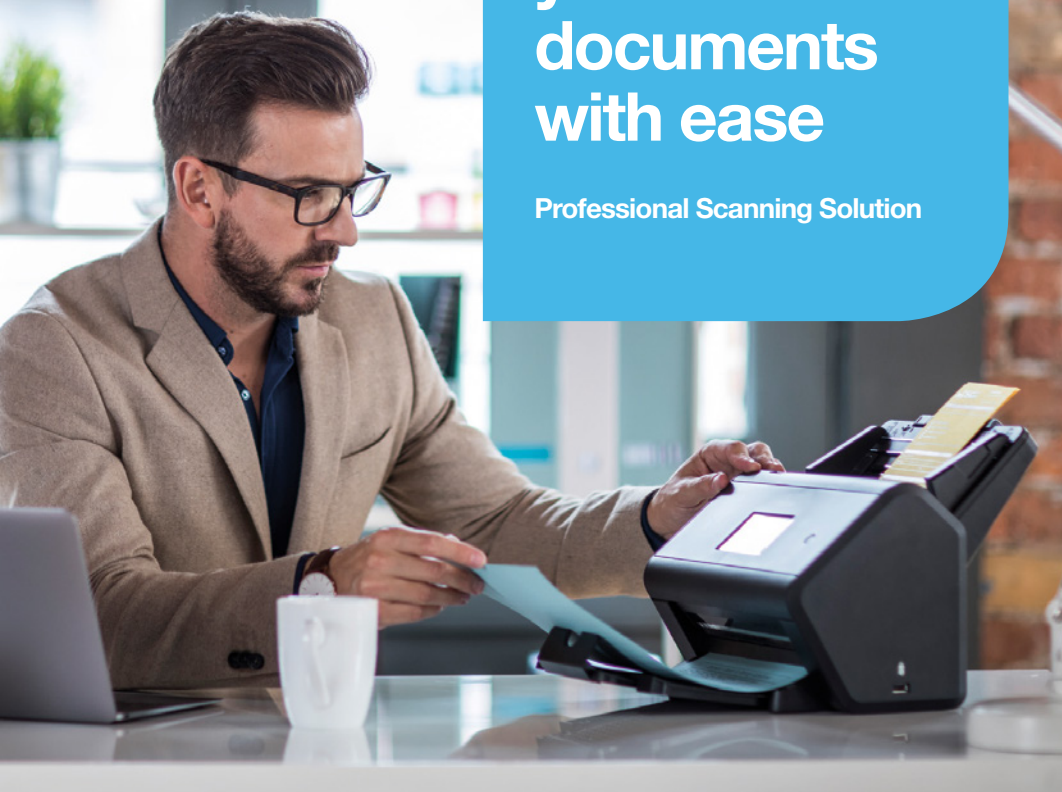


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MOTIVE OFFERING

KATE ARNOTT, THE NUMBER CRUNCHER

The challenges facing professional practices looking to retain talent and inspire the next generation of partners are complex. While some firms are actively growing their partnership base and equity stakes, the reality for many others is that there simply isn't capacity or profit margin to support more partners at the top without a growth strategy. An ageing population also means more partners than ever will stay in the profession long after they would have traditionally retired – which can be a barrier to progression for ambitious professionals looking up the career ladder, especially in smaller and mid-sized practices.

Senior qualified staff are highly valued in a law firm and associates can consider a wide range of career options, so it's important to offer a clear and comprehensive career pathway. For some, that will be a path to partnership, but for others the reality, risk and trappings of it may not appeal.

While remuneration is important, for most employees it represents earnings, not incentives. Understanding motivation is the real key to retaining and developing staff. Motivation comes from a variety of sources, such as having a vested interest in future strategy and success of the practice, or accountability, control and autonomy over work or specialism. Others will be motivated by success and professional recognition, social consciousness of the firm, training and technical development or work-life balance.

Studies indicate companies with increasing levels of employee ownership are more productive, profitable and sustainable. While in a partnership it's the partners who own the business, engaging employees can be achieved in several ways, such as linking bonuses to practice and departmental targets, profit share, and awarding high performers non-voting shares or partnership points, to recognise contribution.

Overall, a positive working environment, with engaged staff, is arguably the most important factor in retaining staff. Offering an environment where employees don't feel stifled or frustrated in their current role, where they feel valued and have access to partners, managers and colleagues who support their professional development, should be a priority. Introduce regular staff updates, communicating successes and obstacles, and regularly ask for opinions on practice matters, strategic direction or potential efficiencies.

In a corporate structure, roles at the top are filled by people experienced in their fields, be it finance, HR, business development or IT. Professional practices should consider this when looking at candidates for partner, as the skills that make someone good at their profession don't always translate into the skills required to run a business.

Ask yourself whether you are looking to make good solicitors equity partners, or whether you want to develop people who have the capacity to run a successful business. Consider the existing partnership, looking for gaps in knowledge or expertise, by undertaking a skills audit. Are you looking for equity partners who can bring in new business, or someone who would drive future strategic change or even manage cashflow, finances and lock-up?

Once you know what you're looking for, developing the strategic thinking, business acumen and financial awareness of potential partners can be addressed in a considered manner through mentoring, training and delegation.

MHA MacIntyre Hudson has developed a comprehensive guide, *The Roadmap to your Financial Future*, available at: www.macintyreHUDSON.co.uk/publications/articles/the-roadmap-to-your-financial-future. **LPM**



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ENTRANCES AND EXITS

DAVID GREEN, THE STRATEGIST



Owners of law firms must address what happens if one of them wishes to retire, or is forced to leave. In this, and subsequent columns, I will explore some of the challenges surrounding this area of management planning.

First, firms should discuss and be honest about their personal exit plans. It may be uncomfortable to discuss retirement plans with your co-owners, but the reality is that if you don't, you deny both them and the business the chance to plan, and you may end up being trapped in or exiting a hostile environment. Discussing plans will enable all the owners of the firm to understand the intentions of the others and plan for their eventual retirement.

It is often the case that each owner of the firm has a particular skillset, whether that's an expertise in a particular area of law, strong client relationships or general business acumen. If those skills are not replaced on an owner's exit, the firm loses those skills and puts itself at risk.

The solutions come in a number of guises. The first is new entrants and training. A firm should have a very clear path to equity. What will it take for a member of the team to become an owner of the firm?

What are the firm's requirements for an external appointment to the ownership? Building a path to equity sets out the core skills and requirements needed to become an owner, provides an incentive to staff within the firm and demonstrates what is required to elevate themselves. Retention of good staff is critical for the success of a firm. A plan that sets out the path to ownership should include:

- The steps to follow in the firm (for example, trainee, associate, senior, partner, equity partner)
- Whether there are minimum periods expected in each step. What are they?
- What technical skills are required?
- What business skills are required?
- What qualification and training is needed?
- Whether that training will be provided by the firm, and how and when it will be provided
- Whether there are financial considerations, and what they are
- When, why and how the firm will consider a new entrant to the ownership
- The financial consideration in becoming an owner. What is involved, and how can the firm help?

When looking for owners externally, again a set of principles should be established to ensure any hire is right for the firm, as unwinding from an equity appointment is a tumultuous journey if the exit is implemented by the firm – for example, due to non-performance. Making it clear what's required as an entering owner and the rules on entry will ensure firm and entrant are clear on expectations.

- What is the period of time to be spent in the firm before ownership is provided? If immediate, what are the conditions and expectations?
- If they're bringing clients or other employees, what is the timeframe within which they are expected to arrive?
- If financial targets are to be met, what are they and when must they be achieved?
- If there is a requirement to purchase equity, how much and on what terms is that?
- How does the partnership agreement provide for a new entrant, and will the new entrant be provided with advanced sight of the requirements and document?
- In what circumstances would the firm not proceed with providing equity, and what happens then?
- What are the expectations and attributes of each owner, from how they conduct themselves and represent the firm through to their decision-making powers and corporate responsibility?

There are many questions to answer, and more will follow in my next column. **LPM**

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IMPROVE IT

NATASHA RAWLEY, THE FILE QUEEN

Well, hello there LPM readers! Is that the distant sound of Christmas carols, hopes and dreams for 2019 we hear in the distance? Why yes – yes it is. Can you believe we are already

approaching the end of 2018? Where has the year gone?


It's at this time of year at FQ HQ at ADDS that we meet to discuss the achievements of the year gone by. What have we achieved at ADDS, and how have we helped our clients? Where have we worked the hardest during the year? And the all-important question: where could we improve? We normally have this meeting with the feedback from our client satisfaction questionnaire, which is sent to every ADDS client. We also gather the feedback from every person within our organisation, from client happiness managers to the operations team, delivery team and cataloguing crew. Not forgetting the external stakeholders, such as suppliers and advisers!

Not all organisations ask themselves these questions, and I wonder why. They are simple but hugely important. We want to know what we're doing well, because we want to improve continuously on this and make sure those resources that help us achieve these wonderful results are nurtured and invested in so we can improve. We need to take stock of these elements and take action for continuous improvement.

Many organisations choose to focus on processes that are in trouble – the ones causing all the headaches. Yes, these should be your priority and fixed, but so many organisations ignore the process in between, the 'middle child' processes that work most days, are not the best but by no means the worst. These are normally the process where the little monsters hide, waiting to be released.

Shouldn't we be reviewing these processes and testing them? What would happen if certain elements changed? The saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' is no longer viable in business environments that are at their most competitive. With clients having access to so much information and choice, firms should not be waiting for a process to fail.

Prime examples of this are the firms with in-house files; rooms with no gatekeepers; index cards still used for storing or locating files; deeds and wills not in fireproof storage units; or files held in a partner's garage! Yes, it hasn't yet been a problem, and the process seems to be working, but what if that key member of the team who goes to that storage unit/garage every day falls sick? What if the team member running the secret archiving library process wasn't there tomorrow or the next day? How would you survive?

We see these potential process issues so often, and continuously advise action is taken. So, LPM readers, what action are you going to take? Are you going to run through all your client, operational, support and admin processes? Are you going to document these processes and highlight the potential issues? Are you going to book your firm's 2018 recap meeting? Are you going to put that questionnaire together and email your clients (those who have opted in to be contacted of course – don't forget that big GDPR), reach out to your suppliers, speak to the stakeholders? Let's do this! Here's to an awesome process year in 2019! 

“The saying ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ is no longer viable. With clients having access to so much information and choice, firms should not be waiting for a process to fail.”



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Ready for ... anything?

At that traditional time of year for taking stock, Lucy Trevelyan asks SME law firms how they feel going into 2019, about some of 2018's top talking points

The year 2019 is likely to be one of tumultuous change for SME law firms. Apart from the daunting prospect of a no-deal Brexit looming in March, deregulation and increased competition is also on the horizon with radical changes to the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) Handbook coming into force.

GOOD REFORM?

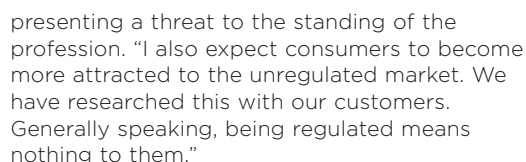
Measures introduced under the SRA's Looking to the Future reforms – approved in November 2018 by the Legal Services Board – include a new requirement for all regulated firms to publish price information for the public and small businesses for seven types of legal services, including conveyancing, employment tribunals and probate.

Perhaps even more controversial though, are the provisions that will free solicitors to offer unreserved legal services through any business,

outside the remit of SRA regulation, and allow them to offer reserved legal activities – including litigation, conveyancing, probate and some advocacy – on a freelance basis.

Critics – including the Law Society – argue the reforms will mean differing layers of protection and redress for clients, but the SRA says it is merely lifting barriers it cannot justify, and giving solicitors more chance to innovate and offer services to meet consumer needs. It says the safeguards it has put in place – such as a ban on freelance solicitors and those working for unregulated businesses holding client money – will reduce the possible risks.

Ben Power, senior partner at Springhouse Solicitors, says, although his niche employment law firm prides itself on openness and transparency, and carefully tailors cost estimates to individual jobs, he foresees a tendency towards underpricing at the publication stage,



As with all change, says Gina Connell, head of infrastructure at B P Collins, there are both opportunities and threats. "Shorter, clearer principles are good for everyone. But pricing is a thorny area for many. Change presents opportunities to differentiate, but there is a risk that buyers will end up comparing apples and pears for some less process-driven services, where experience and being a field leader are the value propositions."

Although the debate primarily centres around threats of increased competition, Stephen Attree, managing director of MLP Law, says he is more concerned about unregulated and less-regulated entrants and businesses operating with little, if

any, checks and balances to maintain the professional high standards expected of solicitors.

“Those standards are absolutely key to protect clients, client money and the ongoing professional training to maintain the necessary high standards of advice. Is it likely that a for-profit, unregulated business will ever put a customer’s interests and needs above its own? Yet this is, in essence, one of the core duties of a properly regulated professional solicitor and legal practice.”

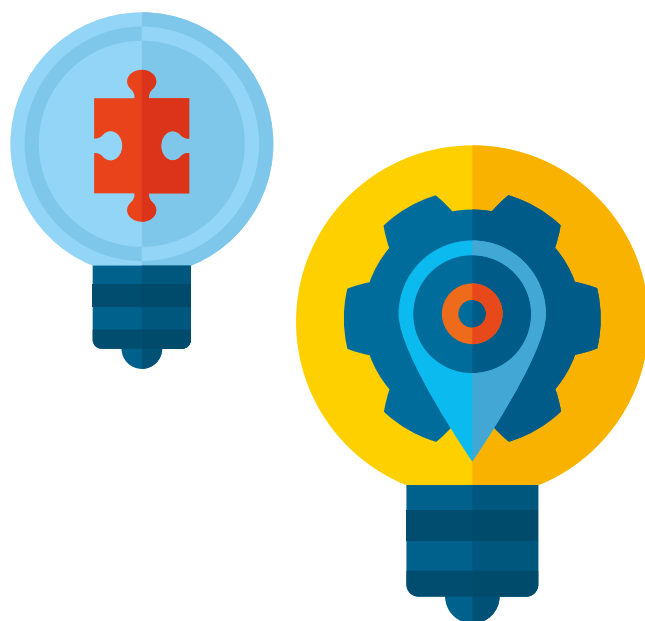
Firms dealing in personal injury and legal aid will have to adapt more than most to the reforms, says Viv Williams, consulting director at Symphony Legal. "The adoption of the new SRA rulebook will mean all firms will have to consider the way they deliver legal services in the future. Other businesses will be able to employ solicitors to deliver a legal solution to their customers and these firms will not be regulated by the SRA. This creates disproportionate regulation between law firms and other individuals and is not a level playing field for law firms."

But Nick Clarke, partner and head of dispute resolution and insolvency at Aaron & Partners, says the SRA reforms are unlikely to pose a threat to SME law firms, as the basic principles by which they are regulated will remain largely the same. Additionally, as a given reason for the reforms is to increase access to legal advice, this could provide opportunities for some law firms and be beneficial for the industry as a whole.

He adds, however: "There are larger issues at play, such as the recent changes to legal aid and the abolition of recoverability of success fees in relation to conditional fee agreements, both of which have done more harm than the SRA can

“Change presents opportunities to differentiate, but there is a risk that buyers will end up comparing apples and pears for some less process-driven services, where experience and being a field leader are the value propositions.”

Gina Connell, head of infrastructure, B P Collins



possibly undo with these proposed reforms.”

INNOVATE THE CASE?

Next year is also likely to see a more concerted push behind the SRA Innovate initiative, which simplifies the existing waiver process by allowing the SRA to grant a waiver for some regulations to, for example, resolve a conflict between its rules and regulations and those of another body that regulates the applicant, or to avoid unnecessary duplication of regulatory requirements.

The biggest opportunity the SRA Innovate initiative presents is that it allows firms to be more flexible and deliver a more holistic approach, says Nick Johnson, managing partner at Manchester-based Glaisyers Solicitors. “For example, there is not only delivering legal services, but also partnering with other professional providers and offering more of a ‘one-stop shop’ to include accountants and HR services.”

The notion of the SRA, the legal profession and innovation has often been regarded in a very much tongue-in-cheek light, says Rhiannon Cambrook-Woods, managing director at Lysander Law. Lawyers rarely celebrate, or indeed publicise, their innovative successes.

“The SRA is clearly attempting to make matters easier through the creation of simplified criteria for granting waivers. SMEs are often either an ABS or a multidisciplinary practice, where the commercial realities of business meet the law – and some regulations stifle growth and

opportunity. Seeking waivers allows for opportunities while upholding the letter of the law and regulations law firms are restricted to ... it’s a small step, but a step nonetheless.”

BREXIT EARS

While Brexit remains such an unknown, the best consideration is to think of matters as a ‘no deal’ when considering the range of impacts, says Cambrook-Woods. “There’s no doubt that Brexit, in whichever guise, will create work, whether commercially lucrative or indeed a headache. Whether advising in relation to regulatory implications or more far-reaching affairs, such as assisting clients to move their business operations or indeed themselves from London to Monaco, there are opportunities, certainly in the short term.”

The pain points longer term, she says, are that work that may have been conducted in the UK no longer will be, creating a windfall for EU lawyers. “However, there will equally be opportunities in the finance and banking sectors in the UK advising on the supply of services between Europe and the UK.”

Brexit is most likely to affect SME law firms on a macro-economic level, says Clarke at Aaron & Partners. “Uncertainty over whether there will be a deal, and what it will look like, has the potential to delay investment decisions, so there may be some slowdown in corporate activity; though we haven’t seen significant evidence of it yet in our practice. Brexit is, however, a growing concern for our road haulage clients operating on the continent because of the customs and border issues a no-deal Brexit will cause.”

The impact of Brexit, says Power at Springhouse Solicitors, will depend on what ‘Brexit’ ultimately looks like. “A soft version may have little impact. A harder version means that UK plc is likely to deregulate to keep an edge over its new competitors on the continent. Which areas of law this will impact the most is hard to tell. The sounds are that employment rights, and therefore the employment law market, will not be drastically affected, but I cannot see this being the case in the long-term.”

GAME CHANGE

All of next year’s potential upheaval will force

LPM FIRM FACTS

Aaron & Partners

Revenue: £9.6m

Corporate status: LLP

**76 fee earners,
131 total staff**

**Office locations: Chester,
Shrewsbury, Manchester**

LPM FIRM FACTS

Lysander Law

Revenue: Undisclosed

**Corporate status: Limited
company**

**18 fee earners,
25 total staff**

Office location: Bristol

LPM FIRM FACTS

MLP Law

Revenue: £2.4m

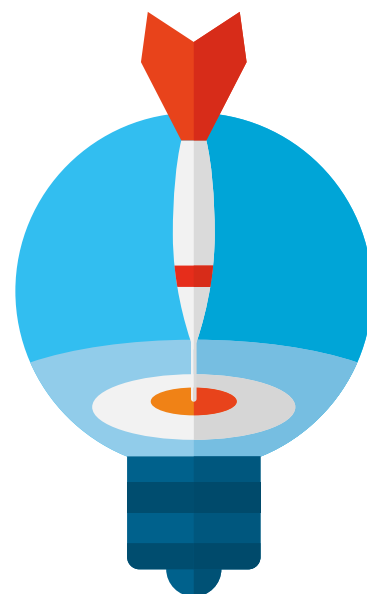
**Corporate status: Limited
company**

**25 fee earners,
38 total staff**

**Office locations: Altrincham,
Liverpool, Lymm,
Manchester**

“Accepting that clients want great service – speed of response, clarity of advice, transparency on charges – and to enjoy their experience of engaging with their solicitor, presents a significant opportunity.”

Stephen Attree, managing director, MLP Law



firms to become more competitive in presenting their services to the market, and perhaps take a more FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) approach to the promotion of some transactional services to help buyers choose, predicts Connell at B P Collins. "It is likely to impact on how firms deliver services, and those that use technology to help them be efficient will be the probable winners."

"Multiple factors – including LSA reserved work, pricing transparency, AI, Brexit, technology advancement – mean all firms need to re-imagine their approach, but there are some that are slower to realise that change is necessary to survive," she says. "In addition to these factors, client demand and buying approaches are forcing change. That is not a bad thing, but for some it can be daunting in a traditionally static industry that is now filled with disruptors. Those firms grasping the commercial nettle will be the winners in the evolution of the sector."

The opportunity for those firms modern enough, and continually modernising, is that there is still a need for trusted professional advice, Attree at MLP says. "Accepting that clients want great service – speed of response, clarity of advice, transparency on charges – and to enjoy their experience of engaging with their solicitor, presents a significant opportunity for those firms ready to embrace the future landscape."

He counsels against modernising simply to copy or compete with new entrants, however, as it's too early to say if their models will be successful. Firms should instead concentrate on modernising to meet clients' increasing demands in terms of speed, efficiency and the methods of delivery of advice.

"We've been offering Skype and other methods of communication, secure client portals, and so on, for over two years now. We use voice recognition transcription and securely access our cases from wherever we are, promoting work-life balance and agile working. Yet there are still firms that are sending letters by post, consider 'it's in dictation' is an acceptable response to an enquiry on progress, and arrange meetings days into the future to discuss relatively simple aspects of a matter."

"We focus on client experience, team wellbeing – such as flexible and agile working, mental health

“ *The traditional equity model needs to change. I see an increasing lack of appetite from the younger generation, which concerns me. They appear hesitant about risk.* **”**

Nick Johnson, managing partner, Glaisyers Solicitors

wellbeing, and buying or selling holiday – and operational efficiency, including legal tech such as data portals, AI, voice-recognition transcription and automatic document comparison. That's the battleground."

Cambrook-Woods at Lysander agrees that increased use of artificial intelligence and flexible working initiatives have the potential to help firms pull ahead in the coming year.

"There's certainly going to be a shift in the use of AI in legal firms," she says. "A great example is Clerksroom, which has an online clerk allowing solicitors and lay clients to check barrister availability, as well as getting quotes online. This increased efficiency is important when modernising. Allowing clients access to information about claims online could be beneficial too. Not only will it allow them ease of access, but it should free up more of our 9-5 day to focus on the job at hand."

She has also noticed an increased emphasis on flexible working from candidates of late. "It's great for motivation and productivity, and it frees up more lawyer time to speak to clients and make home visits. All of this will improve client relationships and help to sell 'brand solicitor'."

Springhouse Solicitors has long placed a heavy emphasis on "personal service," says Power, but the meaning of personal service is evolving. "Miniaturisation of hardware and the rapid advance of online comms means that our solicitors can work far more flexibly from a variety of locations. We also use legal tech to help our lawyers provide a consistent personal service

LPM FIRM FACTS

Glaisyers Solicitors

Revenue: £4.3m

Corporate status: LLP

**40 fee earners,
70 total staff**

Office location: Manchester

LPM FIRM FACTS

B P Collins

Revenue: £8.4m

Corporate status: LLP

**56 fee earners,
99 total staff**

**Office location:
Gerrards Cross**

LPM FIRM FACTS

Springhouse Solicitors

Revenue: Undisclosed

Corporate status: Limited company

**8 fee earners,
12 total staff**

**Office locations: London,
Croydon, Twickenham,
Chichester, Winchester,
Woking**

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across our network of offices, to ensure quality and provide cost transparency.”

The very best way SME firms can compete, says Clarke at Aaron & Parnters, is by delivering the best value to their clients. “Our approach is to provide cost-effective, bespoke solutions to clients’ legal issues. To this end we offer flexible charging structures, including sharing the risks and rewards with our clients, where appropriate. This will increasingly be what clients expect from their lawyers.”

CRYSTAL BALL GAZING

SMEs are in a good position going into 2019, says Connell at B P Collins. “The majority of SMEs are embracing change, and we have the ability to be agile so can implement change quickly. There is growth within SME firms and this is likely to continue as we help clients through the Brexit transition. We can’t afford to be complacent – change is fast paced – but SMEs are well placed to keep up. Technology changes are driving efficiencies within law firms in terms of business process, business intelligence and cost savings, allowing firms to innovate and pass on additional value or cost savings to clients.”

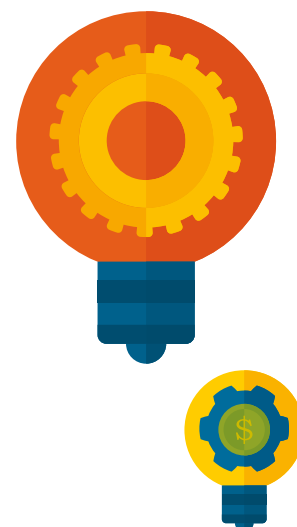
However Johnson at Glaisyers Solicitors foresees a number of firms struggling in the coming year – and says some will fall by the

wayside. “We will see some mergers, with bigger firms acquiring SME practices. The traditional equity model needs to change. I see an increasing lack of appetite from the younger generation, which concerns me. They appear hesitant about risk and running businesses.”

The lingering death of the partnership, and to a degree the LLP, will continue, Williams predicts, with the incorporation trend that has swept up nearly 70% of the sector continuing, and many firms adapting a more commercial approach to management and succession.

“Younger people who traditionally strove to become a partner no longer want the responsibility but will become directors of a limited company. We will see further consolidation with many firms forced into some form of merger, or being acquired. If firms are concerned about their future plans they should begin preparing for merger now. Obviously there will be winners and losers but failing to plan is planning to fail.”

“Everything will change and everything will stay the same,” concludes Attree at MLP, which seems a fitting turn of phrase for this time of uncertainty. “I do predict an era of consolidation and firms that haven’t yet addressed their succession-planning issues need to make sure 2019 is the year they do. Don’t expect your junior lawyers to simply be your succession plan.” **LPM**



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Alpha sales



Alex Moyle, author of *Business Development Culture* – taking sales culture beyond the sales team, says help lawyers to learn to love the s-word

Along with many other professional services firms, lawyers run a million miles away from the 'S-word'. Yes, selling. Or, to put it in a lawyer-friendly way, 'generating fees'. It can strike fear into the heart of even the most hardened, yet selling sits at the heart of a law firm's ability to thrive and continue to grow.

A lawyer's reticence to proactively develop business is understandable. Most lawyers did not start their career with the aim of being a 'rainmaker'. But, as their careers progress, taking on management, leadership and business development become more important drivers of career success.

Why is this more important today than ever? Well, 20 years ago, when law firms were more likely to be locally based, life was simpler. Business development involved a few dinners, playing some golf and networking with the local business community.

However, in today's global economy, where companies think on a global scale, a local network is unlikely to deliver the growth in fees a practice requires. Added to this, changes to how companies buy and use legal counsel means that firms are having to work harder than ever to retain and win clients.

This all adds up to firms having to re-imagine how they approach business development across their firms.

Does this mean that all partners need to turn into full-time business development professionals? No, but it does mean firms need to think differently about how they approach business development.

So, how do you make yours a legal practice where everyone is onboard and engaged with selling?

STOP TALKING SELLING DOWN

Whether you call it selling, business development, marketing or customer success, being involved in business development makes you neither a bad person nor a bad lawyer. Good selling or business development is not about pressuring people into parting with their cash, but about positioning yourself as the person people want to buy from.

Apple is the master of this approach. It has

built a brand and a reputation where millions of people want to buy the product and pay a premium for it. If partners talk down 'marketing' or 'business development' activities, it can reinforce employees' negative associations and make them reluctant to engage in business development.

To get the ball rolling ask a few people in your team: 'How do you feel the firm views business development activities?'

BUILD A VISION

Believe it or not, most people in your firm are not motivated by helping their partner to buy a second home in France or put their children through private school. What people are motivated by is getting what they want and helping others. Firms with high levels of engagement around business development have built a vision of how the organisation achieving its own goals will help customers, employees and the world at large. Law firm Morrison Foerster is a great example of how to build engagement for a larger vision. Check out its cultural ethos here: www.mofo.com/culture/. It has a vision and it's paying dividends for them.

As a starting point, ask a few people in your team: 'What are our goals?' Start a conversation and begin involving all staff in the development of the vision.

SHARING IS CARING

In most law firms there is a near ubiquitous culture of client ownership. This translates as partners being unwilling to introduce different practice lines to 'their' clients. In turn, this is reciprocated by other partners and the cycle continues.

To be fair to the partner who looks after the firm's largest account, it must be frustrating when every fortnight another partner asks for an introduction to 'their' client. However, firms who are successful at business development have an expectation that partners work together and introduce different service lines to their clients.

How do they do this? Some create account management teams for large accounts, where stakeholders meet quarterly. Others have an internal process where partners apply for an



introduction, which in turn is prioritised by a senior partner group. Some even just talk to each other, and know that a favour given quickly turns into a favour returned.

To test the water, ask a few people in your firm: 'How effective are we at introducing all relevant service lines to existing clients?'

SPREAD THE LOAD

Business development should not be the sole preserve of partners. Every level of the organisation can contribute to business development activities. Associates should be encouraged to build their own networks by attending industry events or using social media. They can also be taught how to look for additional opportunities when working with clients. Directors can be involved in account expansion strategies and tender processes. The more people that are involved, the less mystique there is about business development and the more acceptable being involved becomes.

An important strategy when involving more people is to find individuals who are excited about being involved in business development, rather than pushing people to do something they do not like. Ask yourself: 'Who do I think would

enjoy being more involved?'

LAST BUT NOT LEAST – GIVE FIRST

Lawyers are infamous for their six-minute increments and the stopwatch by their phones. The perception is that lawyers will want to be paid before they dispense any advice. But the way business development has evolved in the last 10 years is that firms increasingly give their knowledge away for free in the form of white papers, webinars and events. The premise is that you can give away what people need to do; knowing how it applies to an individual's situation is what you charge for. Giving knowledge first is the softest way of demonstrating your capability – building trust and making you the person others will call at the moment of need.

Ask yourself: 'How much value do we offer potential clients before they commit to using us?' These suggestions are just a few of the things that law firms can do to improve their ability to win new customers. My hope is that you see that improving your sales, business development or marketing process is not all about the hard sell, but very much about engaging your team so that they want to help their colleagues and their customers succeed. **LPM**



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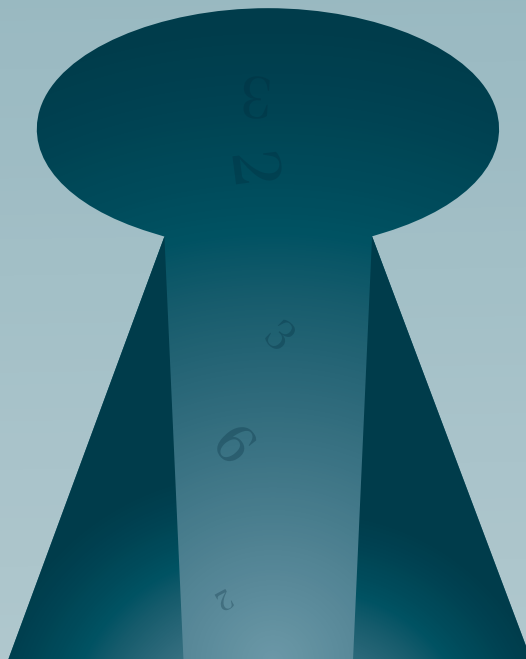
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SUPPLEMENT
DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019

LPM

LEGAL PRACTICE MANAGEMENT



WON THE RISK?

Where do SME law firms have most work to do in the realm of risk management?

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Compliance behaviour

What's on the risk platter for SME law firms and how can they best stay out of trouble? Richard Parnham reports

The past few months have not been easy for law firms' risk management and compliance professionals. Updated money laundering rules, GDPR, Brexit, cyber risks, yet another rewrite of the SRA handbook – these are just some of the issues that have been keeping these dedicated bands of professionals busy.

With so many potential threats to keep on top of, how can law firms – especially SMEs – prioritise which areas to focus their efforts on? Here, one option might be to use the SRA's Risk Outlook, which, each year, offers the regulators' view on what it regards as 10 priority risks.

Certainly, some compliance specialists say they find the Outlook helpful, and use it as the starting point for their firm's periodic risk reviews. "It's a good document," says Barry Davies, practice director and compliance officer for legal practice (COLP) at Douglas-Jones Mercer.

Others, though, have a less positive view of this document. Richard Nelson, founder of Richard Nelson Solicitors, speaks for many practitioners when he says: "When the SRA talks about risk, it doesn't talk about common or garden risks, which are so key to a practice. You have to get the work in, and do it properly. And you have to make a profit. The business element is a huge risk factor,

and one that is often overlooked."

In truth, this complaint is arguably valid, at least to a certain extent. Several of the key risks that the SRA identifies are very much top-level justice sector challenges, such as access to legal services and diversity, rather than the bread-and-butter issues that typically feature highly on law firms' own risk registers. "In fairness to the SRA, it's trying to cover the risks to 11,000 law firms and 130,000+ solicitors in just one document," observes Adam Entwistle, partner and head of compliance at JMW.

CYBER WITH RELIEF

Although there are significant differences between what the SRA regards as being key risks and those identified by law firms themselves, there is one danger that both sides agree on: cyber risk. In recent years, DLA Piper's global tribulations at the hands of the Petya malware made headlines around the world. And, closer to home, research undertaken by the SRA suggests that more than £20m of client money has been stolen from law firms due to cybercrime within the past two years alone. With SRA-reported cyberattacks reaching a record 157 incidences in 2017, this risk to the legal sector is real and growing.





So, how are firms responding to this growing danger? Many are investing in technology solutions, which can actively guard against known risks such as network penetration and email spoofing. But a key element of many practices' risk-reduction activities focuses on the human element, often known as Picnic – 'problem in chair, not in computer.' For example, Michelle Rosen, partner and compliance officer at Brightstone Law, says her firm has reformed its client onboarding and ongoing engagement processes, with the specific aim of ensuring it doesn't inadvertently send client money to criminals.

"I made it a mandatory policy that clients have to produce a certified copy of their bank statement, which includes their account details," she says. "Then, in their letter of engagement, clients also have to submit their bank details and sign it."

The firm also instituted a blanket ban on accepting changes to bank account details via email, Rosen adds. Safeguards such as these, she says, "can be implemented very simply, but give you quite significant extra protection."

In addition to this type of ad hoc protection, a small – but respectable – number of law firms have now obtained Cyber Essentials accreditation, with a view to reducing their risk of a cyber-attack. Launched in 2014, this government-backed accreditation scheme comes in two flavours, Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus. Cyber Essentials is essentially a questionnaire-based self-certification option to be validated by an external provider, which costs in the region of £300.

By contrast, Cyber Essentials Plus also requires a security assessment to be carried out by a recognised cybersecurity professional, and costs around £1,900 to obtain. Helpfully, some bodies that oversee Cyber Essentials also offer free cyber insurance – worth tens of thousands of pounds – to any firms that sign up to the scheme via their accreditation process.

INSURANCE ASSURANCE

Certainly, cyber risk insurance policies are becoming increasingly popular among SME law firms – not least because they typically offer

“Some insurance policies could be worth it for the helpline support alone. In an attack, most law firms would really panic, and not know who to call.”

Adam Entwistle, partner and head of compliance, JMW

access to a 24-hour support helpline. "Some insurance policies could be worth it for the helpline support alone," says Entwistle at JMW. "In an attack, most law firms would really panic, and not know who to call."

But cyber insurance is not the only option available to firms that want to mitigate against risks associated with a cyberattack. If the scope of a firm's cyber insurance policy is limited, a separate business-interruption insurance may also be useful, because it can help tide the practice over financially while its IT systems are being restored.

Similarly, if a cyber risk policy does not cover the cost of a subsequent regulatory investigation, protection against this expense can be provided for via a directors' and officers' insurance policy. Some firms also take out crime compensation policies, which they can draw on if they are the victims of various law breaking incidents.

Of course, every time a firm takes out an additional insurance policy for a specific purpose, it increases the possibility of an overlap between policies – which may cause conflict between insurance providers should a claim be made. Worse, a multi-pronged approach to insurance cover may leave specific dangers uninsured, if that danger falls between different policies.

LPM FIRM FACTS

Aaron & Partners

Revenue: £9.81m

Corporate status: LLP

**60 fee earners,
130 total staff**

**Office locations: Chester,
Shrewsbury, Manchester**

LPM FIRM FACTS

Douglas-Jones Mercer

Revenue: £4m

**Corporate status: Limited
company**

**33 fee earners,
55 total staff**

**Office locations: Cardiff,
Mumbles, Porthcawl,
Swansea**

LPM FIRM FACTS

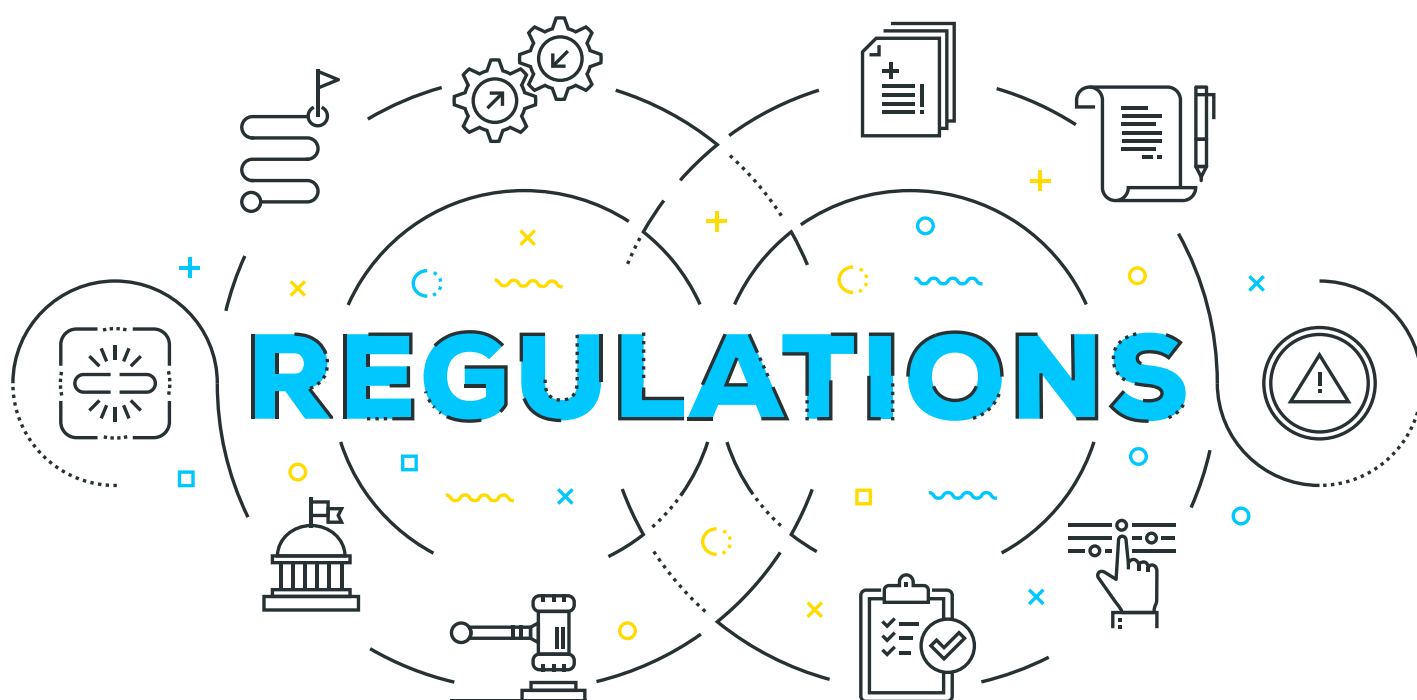
Stephensons Solicitors

Revenue: £19.66m

Corporate status: LLP

**105 fee earners,
420 total staff**

**Office locations: Bolton,
Leigh, London, Manchester,
St Helens, Warrington,
Wigan**



To avoid precisely this outcome, Ann Harrison, chairwoman and COLP at Wigan-based Stephenson Solicitors, says her firm is currently doing a review, looking at all of its different policies, to make sure there aren't any gaps. Other COLPs spoken to for this report say they are also undertaking similar reviews.

On a related point, Linda Lee, a solicitors' regulation specialist at RadcliffesLeBrasseur, has some useful advice for anyone who opts to use a single vendor for all of their insurance needs, with a view to avoiding coverage gaps. "Do not confuse using the same insurance broker with using the same insurance provider," she recommends. "Sometimes, people merge these two together. If you're just using the same insurance broker, that's not really going to help."

CONVEYANCING COMPLIANCE

In terms of practice area risks, one type of work above all others continues to trouble risk and compliance specialists at SME law firms – property transactions and, in particular, residential property transactions. In terms of revenues, this type of work may only contribute a small percentage to the firm's bottom line. However, in terms of compliance and potential liability challenges, property law represents a veritable honeypot of risk. These dangers not only include cyber fraud, but also vendor identity fraud – where a property is 'sold' by someone who does not own it – and ever-increasing anti-money laundering obligations, including those relating to unexplained wealth.

Unfortunately, compliance officers' workloads in relation to money laundering are likely to increase in the near future, according to some who monitor this issue closely. "Under the new money laundering regulations, there's now a new oversight body, which the SRA has to report to," observes JMW's Entwistle. "And because the SRA is now being supervised in relation to its money-

“Following the previous SRA reforms, we now have everything in place – and we're probably going to have to change everything again. It typically takes several years for firms to get their heads around what the SRA is trying to achieve.**”**

Michelle Rosen, partner and compliance officer, Brightstone Law

laundering compliance activities, it's now going to be putting us as a profession under increased scrutiny, and asking more questions.

"To be honest, I think that's a good thing. As the SRA hasn't been an active money-laundering regulator until recently, I think that many lawyers continue to struggle with this issue."

That is also an impression given by Paul Bennett, partner at Aaron & Partners, who specialises in advising law firm compliance professionals. "Everyone I speak to is discharging their duties to the best of their abilities – but they still have questions in their own minds about whether they're doing enough," he says.

GDPR WE DONE YET?

Arguably, one danger that appears to have dropped down many compliance officers' risk

LPM FIRM FACTS

JMW

Revenue: £32.03m

Corporate status: LLP

**350 fee earners,
500 total staff**

**Office locations: Liverpool,
Manchester**

LPM FIRM FACTS

Richard Nelson

Revenue: Undisclosed

Corporate status: LLP

**11 fee earners,
41 total staff**

**Office locations: London,
Nottingham, Cardiff, Bristol,
Birmingham, Manchester,
Leeds**



registers in recent months is the GDPR. After several months of intense preparation ahead of the new regulation coming into effect, and a small flurry of disclosure requests afterwards, this issue has now entered a compliance 'tick over' phase – something that is routine, rather than an area of extreme focus. That said, several COLPs said they were, in the words of Douglas-Jones Mercer's Barry Davies, "sitting with bated breath, waiting for the first law firm to receive a hefty fine."

On a related theme, a new EU ePrivacy Regulation is currently coming down the tracks, assuming the UK continues to abide by EU laws post-Brexit. "That is something that firms that do a lot of digital marketing are going to have to navigate," says JMW's Entwistle.

RULEBOOK REVIEW

In terms of solicitor-specific regulations, the SRA's forthcoming rulebook change is causing headaches among many law firm compliance specialists. Many of these concerns relate to the sheer effort of drawing up internal compliance regimes that match the SRA's new expectations.

"Following the previous SRA reforms, we now have everything in place – and we're probably going to have to change everything again," says Rosen at Brightstone Law. "It typically takes several years for firms to get their heads around what the SRA is trying to achieve and what they need us to do."

Other concerns arising from the new regime that the SRA is now promoting include measures to allow solicitors to retain their professional title while working for unregulated entities. "This issue

has gone flying to the top of the pile as far as I am concerned," says Davies at DJM. "There are going to be people coming into the market who are more entrepreneurial than law firms have been so far."

Among the forthcoming SRA reforms, one of the most hotly-debated issues is the new requirement that law firms should offer clients greater costs transparency, by displaying their prices on their websites for specific types of work. Some who have studied this reform closely say, in reality, it is not particularly complicated to understand, nor burdensome to implement. Bennett at Aaron & Partners says he even recently declined to give a one-hour webinar on the subject "because there's not enough to talk about." Instead, he released a podcast lasting just 20 minutes.

Arguably, the greatest risk regarding this specific SRA rule change is that it will lead to greater competition for work, based around price, suggests Entwistle. "Most people think it's inevitable that you're going to get price comparison websites, especially for practice areas such as conveyancing," he says. "That's quite a cultural departure."

However, the challenges arising from the latest rulebook review arguably illustrate a deep irony regarding the regulator's annual risk outlook: some of the most significant risks that law firm risk offices are now grappling with relate to the commercial risks the SRA is actively creating. Cynics may wonder if the day will ever arrive when a future SRA risk outlook identifies 'the SRA' as a key risk challenge for the period to come. **LPM**





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Risk or reinvention?

Jonathan Whittle, market development director, LexisNexis, reviews whether changes facing the legal profession are forcing some changes to firms' risk management beliefs

For many in the legal industry, what comes to mind when we talk about risk could be anything from regulations and personal indemnity insurance to handling client funds. While those are all legitimate concerns, there is an increasing number of additional risks that are subtly creeping up on practitioners, and slowly but surely changing the legal landscape.

Although solicitors typically keep a weather eye on regulatory changes, for example, that may not be enough in the current environment. The challenges posed by the changes coming into force may require them to take a more vigilant stance than simply being aware. The Solicitors Regulation Authority's recent Price and Service Transparency Rules and Looking to the Future reforms are just two that have the potential not only to usher in an age of upheaval for solicitors, but potentially reinvent the way law firms operate.

With such a cocktail of concerns and changes, not to mention ongoing compliance issues and the rise of consumerist culture, it's understandable that many operating in the legal profession are despondent.

However, there are things that can be done to improve the situation. Over the past few years, we've heard reports of how technological advancements and automation are positively changing the way law firms work. Even though uptake to date has been slow, the signs are encouraging.

Our own research – Is your tech Smart? – revealed that 75% of firms whose profits have increased over the last three years have also increased their tech investment over the period. Tools such as CRM, matter management, research and guidance and automation tools are popular

with firms owing to their benefits for staff and clients, as well as their ability to help mitigate risk. With this in mind, we took a deeper look at the risks facing law firms and how advancements in technology can help.

A NEW WAY OF WORKING

With the SRA Price and Service Transparency Rules (coming into effect in December 2018) affecting some practitioners, depending on the work they do, and the requirement to publish your complaints-handling procedure and ensure that your regulatory status is prominently displayed, it's clear to see that the regulatory burden is increasing heavily for law firms.

Furthermore, the Legal Services Board has just approved the SRA's application for its Looking to the Future rule change, permitting solicitors to provide unreserved legal services from unregulated firms.

The changes could mark a significant shift in the way legal services are obtained, the practice of law, and how law firms operate. According to the research from our Bellwether Report 2018, the majority of solicitors see the current situation as one laden with risk. Some 70% believe that the new changes could compromise the ability of firms to compete effectively with solicitors working outside of regulated law firms, while a further 65% believe that the proposals (put forward at the time) will increase competition. Indeed, almost 70% of respondents said that it will lower standards across the legal market as a whole.

So, what measures could you take to safeguard your firm, staff and clients? In order to cope with a changing regulatory landscape, especially one of this magnitude, firms will need to be agile and

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LexisNexis works with customers to drive productive, efficient and reliable business decisions – including solutions for case and matter management.

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“Solicitors need to be able to step out from the crowd and offer unique insights and analysis in order to meet the increasing expectations of a more critical – and, crucially, more informed – client base.”

adapt. However, our research reveals that law firms have become ingrained with traditional practices. Nevertheless, the SRA changes are the perfect opportunity to challenge yourself and your law firm and think about how things could be done differently. Legal online tools like LexisPSL Practice Compliance and Management will keep you up to date with changes, as well as providing you with the guidance you need to tackle them with minimum impact.

Now more than ever, law firms need to safeguard themselves – and their futures. Make sure you're on the winning track by employing the right tools, with the right attitude, and these potential risks could reveal themselves to be an opportunity.

THE CONSTANT COMPLIANCE HEADACHE

Even without the impending upheaval from the new SRA changes, everyday compliance is still a formidable prospect for firms, with 81% of solicitors asserting it's a significant challenge facing independent law firms today. The cost of compliance – both time and money – is continuously increasing, leading many in the industry to feel like they are being set up to fail.

But the clock is ticking. With the new SRA Handbook coming into play in 2019, the sheer heft of the compliance burden seems like an unwelcome distraction (albeit an important one) for practitioners. As many legal professionals will agree, the SRA does seem to be trying to put the client first with regard to getting access to legal

services and giving them the best options when instructing a law firm. The pressure is on law firms now more than ever to deliver good-quality service at the right price.

However, with the spectre of consumerist culture quickly making itself felt in the legal profession, how do you ensure you maintain regulatory compliance and minimise the risk to your law firm? There are many compliance solutions in the market that can help, from consultants to courses, but with changes coming thick and fast, is it enough? An online compliance toolkit such as LexisPSL Practice Compliance would provide you with the full protection you need, keeping you fully compliant and ahead of the fast pace of change.

CHANGING CLIENT DEMANDS (THANKS, GOOGLE)

With consumerist behaviours becoming more apparent in the industry, it's understandable that many practitioners are wondering whether clients can actually be a risk to law firms. In fact, they can. Clients are shopping around for the best deal generally, across all industries – not just the legal profession. Clients are much more informed today, thanks to online search tools like Google and the increase in 'self-help' forums and guides informing and emboldening them when it comes to their rights. Solicitors need to be able to step out from the crowd and offer unique insights and analysis in order to meet the increasing expectations of a more critical – and, crucially, more informed – client base.

Indeed, the impact on clients can already be felt. Our 2018 Bellwether research revealed that 58% of respondents believe client demands are impacting their ability to uphold the integrity of the law, with a further 26% of those surveyed attributing this to “reducing cost at the expense of quality”.

However, an incredible 97% of the solicitors we spoke with feel that having a “client-first” culture is important to their law firm. If that’s truly the case, taking the needs of clients into account must be top priority. With the SRA reporting that 27% of clients compare legal providers, law firms should start to look seriously at how they work with clients going forward, especially as maintaining client loyalty and attracting new business remains one of the greatest concerns for law firms in today’s market.

Furthermore, it’s important to take client values into account. Rather than assigning value to quality advocacy, clients are increasingly focused on expediency of service. It’s vital, therefore, that firms differentiate themselves by their ability to satisfy client need for quality and quantity. Clients also value outcomes, making it essential that solicitors have access to the best legal resources in order to resolve client queries and cases.

Research and guidance tools like LexisPSL are invaluable. A cloud-based legal research software tool, this has been developed to help legal professionals to obtain quick, accurate answers to specific issues of law, reducing research time and keeping them up to date with the latest developments. With links to authoritative sources in LexisLibrary, it will ensure you’ve got all sides of your argument covered.

THE COSTLY MISTAKES

With clients demanding more, solicitors working faster and becoming more outcome-focused, and with many outsourcing work to junior members of the firm, the risk of mistakes is increasing hugely – while burdens are only increasing. Two-thirds of respondents that we spoke with while researching for our *Is Your Tech Smart?* report revealed that they are ‘anticipating growth’, thereby adding to the pressure to get more done in less time.

As demands rise and time is in short supply, it’s essential that law firms employ smart technologies to help shoulder the burden of legal work, drive efficiencies and mitigate risk. Document automation tools can make a world of difference to firms looking to improve productivity. Indeed, 63% of the 2017 Bellwether report respondents assert that drafting and proofreading tools contribute to efficient working practices.

A document automation tool like LexisDraft can really help with productivity and mitigate risk. This is a Microsoft Word toolbar that helps lawyers draft faster and more efficiently. It checks for inconsistencies in documents and flags areas that need your attention. Such tools safeguard

RISK IN BRIEF

You know the risks. How do you make a case for investing in technology at your firm?

When it comes to developing a case for investing in technology, you need to ensure you present a structured brief and evidence-based case that answers the following:

- 1 What do I want to change? (What is the problem you want to solve?).
- 2 What will technology do to improve how we currently do things?
- 3 What are the risks?
- 4 What is needed to make it work?
- 5 How do I make success measurable?

By focusing on these five central enquiries, your investment case will allow decision makers to procure meaningful buy in from colleagues and ensure that any new technology will resolve the problems specified in consultation meetings.

Download the full Bellwether and *Is your tech smart?* reports here:
www.lexisnexis.co.uk/businessoflaw.

“The sheer amount of risk can feel overwhelming. However, there are steps that firms can put in place to protect themselves, serve their clients and not only weather the changes coming down the pipeline, but also get ahead of them.”

quality and quantity of output, offering valuable efficiency savings without risking legal value.

STRAIN TRAIN

The increase in the regulatory burden facing law firms, as well as growing demands from a more informed, tech-savvy client base, are putting significant strain on legal professionals working in today’s rapidly changing legal market. The sheer amount of risk can feel overwhelming. However, there are steps that firms can put in place to protect themselves, serve their clients and not only weather the changes coming down the pipeline, but also get ahead of them and stand out from the crowd – an important consideration considering the focus clients, and the SRA, are putting on shopping around.

But investment in technology needs to be smart in itself. You need to look at the bigger picture, at the wider environment, as well as stay focused on the specific issues at your firm. Smart investment in technology and tools, such as LexisPSL Practice Compliance and Lexis Draft, will be vital components in your arsenal moving forward. **LPM**

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Jeremy Rooth, Divisional Operating Officer, Withers

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WHAT COUNTS TO CLIENTS



Derek Fitzpatrick, business development coordinator and general manager, EMEA, Clio, considers what clients are calling for in 2019

While most law firms are highly skilled at practising the substantive legal aspects of a case, many firms can improve how they work with clients to actually deliver their legal services. Client expectations are increasingly being shaped by purchasing experiences in other industries – whether it's signing real estate documents electronically or booking an appointment online with a health practitioner. As today's clients come to expect more transparency, better communications and more responsiveness from professional service providers, lawyers need to find ways to adapt. Making this shift will help leave the type of lasting impressions on clients that will earn repeat business and future referrals down the road.

On the other hand, falling behind on client service will mean losing business to firms that are better able to meet expectations.

UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S LEGAL CLIENT

Consider the findings from the 2018 Legal trends report, which found that of people who had a legal problem in the past two years, 68% spoke with a lawyer they didn't hire. While not every potential client will be a perfect fit, the research also indicates that lawyers could be driving away their clients by making poor first impressions. According to the same report, when it comes to telling a lawyer the details of a case, 70% want to do this in person. However, 90% of lawyers assume that clients want to do this either over the phone or via email.

Sharing information about a personal legal problem – with anyone, legal professional, or otherwise – can be difficult and uncomfortable, especially when dealing with the unknowns at the beginning of a case. If a client reaches out to multiple lawyers to find someone they want to work with, the one that makes the best impression is the one that's going to get hired.

Ease is also a major factor. In an age when clients are accustomed to accessing their bank information online, watching their favourite movies and television shows on demand, and receiving same-day mail deliveries for products purchased from their mobile phones, the traditional ways of doing business won't always cut it. As these technological conveniences continue to evolve, finding ways to grow and adapt will be increasingly necessary to attract and retain new clients.

IMPROVING CLIENT EXPERIENCES WITH TECHNOLOGY

When looking for ways to improve client interactions, lawyers need to excel at working with clients, not just when they're sitting across a desk, but also at every touchpoint leading up to, and following, a formal meeting. Every interaction with your firm, from booking an appointment and having phone and email conversations, to document reviews and submissions – all the way up to receiving that final invoice – is all part of the end-to-end client experience.

Being prepared for every interaction is what will define care and professionalism in the legal industry in the 21st century, and expectations are high. In fact, 68% of consumers say they expect their lawyers to be available outside of the office, and 59% expect their lawyers to be available outside of regular office hours. It may seem excessive for lawyers to make themselves

“If a client reaches out to multiple lawyers to find someone they want to work with, the one that makes the best impression is the one that's going to get hired.”

**ABOUT THE SPONSOR**

Clio is a cloud-based legal case management system that is optimised to meet the needs of small to medium sized firms.

www.clio.com/uk



available to clients 24/7, but software solutions can help alleviate the demand put on lawyers while helping to meet client needs.

For example, an online client portal can streamline case communications, allowing clients to access password-protected case information that may include shared documents, communication logs, a calendar of events, and even assigned tasks. For a client, that can mean getting updates on a case without having to wait to speak with their lawyer.

For lawyers, when it comes to actual case communications, regardless of the medium, having access to the relevant case and contact information is crucial, especially if dealing with a high volume of cases. Nobody wants to work with a lawyer who doesn't have the facts of their case top of mind. On the other hand, being able to quickly recall minute details – even if it's the name of a family member, business partner, or the deceased – is what shows a lawyer cares.

This is where cloud-based case management software can help. With just an internet connection and a laptop or mobile device, a lawyer can securely access all firm information, so that they're ready to discuss the details of a

case whenever needed – without the need for expensive in-house servers or a virtual desktop infrastructure.

CLIENTS WILL ALWAYS NEED LAWYERS

With all of the hype around artificial intelligence, machine learning, and blockchain in the UK and around the world, it's important to remember that nothing will replace the expertise and care of a professional lawyer. In fact, the majority of clients still want to work with their lawyer in person when it comes to dealing with the substantive details of their case.

What's crucial for lawyers who want to adapt and thrive in the modern world is that they strive to better understand the needs of each individual client beyond the facts of their matter. Delivering on those needs is what will distinguish successful law firms from the rest.

For more insight into what today's clients are looking for, the 2018 Legal trends report provides in-depth analysis of what makes clients hire, recommend a lawyer's services, and how they want to communicate. Read the report at www.clio.com/ltr. **LPM**

COME THE RESOLUTION



Martin Palmer, regional sales director at Pulsant, says embed cybersecurity in your end-of-year reflections and (committed) resolutions

The close of one year and the dawn of the next is a time for reflection and renewal. Typically, we set ourselves goals for the upcoming 12 months that will improve our health, knowledge and wellbeing in some way. But do we achieve them? Our success or failure is closely related to how achievable and realistic our goals were in the first place.

So, what about your business resolutions? What should you focus on as a priority and how do you ensure success? We believe that innovation – using technology to provide cost-effective and improved products and services – should be high on our agenda, and law firms will agree with us on this. Your staff expect access to their case files at any time of day, while clients demand regular updates, greater efficiencies and cost effectiveness from their legal services. Technology is one way to ensure that you deliver.

However, the downside of employing more technology is that it can increase your threat landscape. You're a prime target for hackers because you hold valuable and confidential information that can easily be monetised. You may even be at higher risk than a large law firm, because the hacker's perception will be that you have less secure infrastructure to keep them out, and that you can more easily be manipulated.

This risk is too important to be ignored. The Solicitors Regulation Authority reported that over £11m of client and law firm money was stolen between April 2016 and March 2017. Also, in a 2017 survey, PwC found that 60% of law firms had suffered from a security incident in the previous year.

You want to embrace technology and mitigate your risk from attack. But before you can make any decisions, you need to be aware of where the threats are coming from and how technology affects your risk.

FOUR TYPES OF THREAT

Cyber actors will typically use the easiest entry

point into your practice and the most common methods used against small and medium law firms appear to be phishing, data breaches, ransomware and supply chain compromise.

Phishing relies on attackers' ability to influence your email users to disclose information by impersonating other companies and people within both your firm and your clients'. It may be the most common form of attack, but it's also one of the lowest tech, and therefore one of the easiest against which to reduce your risks.

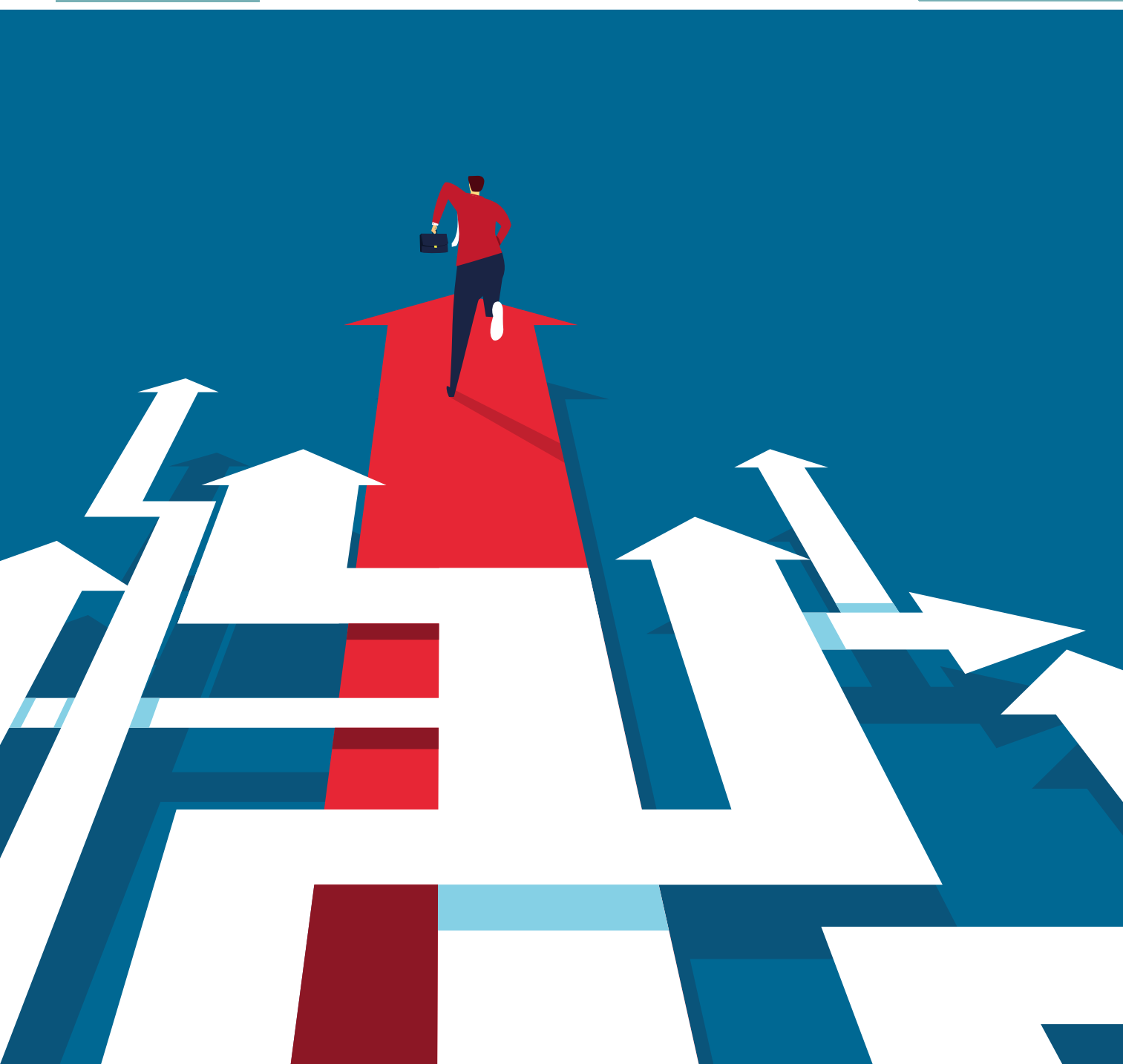
Often more malicious and thoroughly planned than phishing attempts, data breach attacks can be both internal and external. For example, the attackers may be part of an organised crime group, actively targeting client information to pass on to buyers. These attacks can be devastating to both you and your clients. It is also worth remembering that major breaches can be caused by employee negligence.

Ransomware attacks are the Hollywood stars of the cybersecurity world – who hasn't heard of WannaCry? But you would be wrong to think that all ransomware attacks are as high profile. Unfortunately, they're becoming all too common and with ransomware-as-a-service available on the dark web, if cybercriminals want to attack your business, they will.

THE THREAT FUTURE

Artificial intelligence and machine learning might be on your wishlist for the New Year. AI can be used to do a lot of legal research and document

“ You may even be at higher risk than a large law firm, because the hacker's perception will be that you have less secure infrastructure to keep them out, and that you can more easily be manipulated. ”



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review, thus reducing workload and improving due diligence.

However, just as it can be used to increase business agility and performance, the bad guys can use it to compromise your infrastructure.

Cloud also needs consideration. You may already be realising the benefits of cloud computing in reduced infrastructure costs, flexible working and improved productivity. However, with increased mobility and flexibility comes an increased attack surface. There is a real possibility hackers may gain access to your data through mobile devices, exploiting vulnerabilities in public wifi networks that are often unnoticed until too late. According to the Symantec 2018 Internet security threat report, there was a 54% increase in mobile malware variants in 12 months. The company also blocked 24,000 malicious mobile applications every day in 2017.

There will be other areas of innovation, but we have found AI and cloud to be two that law firms often focus on initially. Remember, the risk of inaction – of no New Year's resolution – is greater than the risk in any one action.

Cybersecurity may seem daunting, but protecting your organisation, customers and data isn't impossible. Typically, the best approach is a holistic one that addresses three areas: your technology, people and processes. This approach needs to be supported and driven by the board and top management to be successful.

While it is impossible to be 100% safe, having the right attitude – acknowledging the threat and fostering a security-oriented culture – can go a long way. Attackers are not infallible, and embracing new technology yourself can assist you to improve your defensive strategy as well as your business agility. **LPM**

NET THE MESSAGE

Craig Campbell, product director, tmconnect at tmgroup, says the modernising SME legal practice should seek to enhance its messaging in several respects

The future is here, and has been for a while, at least to the wider population that is the consumer world.

Information is readily available at our fingertips – there's no reason why law firms can't operate in the same way. After all, they are driven by the same needs – to meet client demands by removing hassles and being transparent and efficient.

The challenge remains, however. Law firms need to learn to replace or improve their legacy systems while at the same time change the way they work, both internally and externally, with clients.

Craig Campbell, product director, tmconnect at tmgroup, says: "There are a number of challenges facing the market at the moment, and even more just around the corner.

"Law firms need to remember that it's not about 'boiling the ocean'. Incremental changes can add up to have a big effect. They will face different sets of challenges along the way and what they need is to have the right support in place."

He says tmconnect has a suite of digital tools to assist firms on their journey to becoming a modern practice.

MAKING IT MODERN

Campbell says modernisation is about being able to leverage various technologies to enrich a firm's engagement with its clients. "I've been travelling up and down the country speaking to different SME law firms, and I can see a real desire in them to modernise."

From a client experience perspective, it's all about transparency and giving the client clarity in terms of what stage their matter is in the overall process.

"A client portal is a very powerful tool. People are busy during the day, so clients should have the option to communicate with the firm when they're ready."

Not only that, he says, with the recent legislation around price transparency, tmconnect has its own quote conversion tool, which allows firms to create an accurate picture of the fees involved for a piece of work.

And with millennials becoming more prominent in the market and workplace, they bring with them the demand of having information served to them on demand – and that demand can be designed into legal technology as well, says Campbell.

"For example, within the tmconnect platform, notifications are sent to clients via email or SMS at milestones, or when there's an update to their matter. The SMS feature is a particular favourite for many clients, as they prefer updates to be received this way instead of via email – it's fast and easy. It's all about enriching the client experience and doing what's best for their needs."

When clients feel looked after and have a good experience, they are more likely to go back to the same law firm for future work, he adds. From generating a quote all the way through to the completion of the work, being able to improve efficiency in the firm and communicate with clients via multiple channels is part of the modernisation process.

CUSTODIAL WORK

The evolution of technology and consumer behaviour in the market is one and the same. However, Campbell says that the evolution of the tmconnect platform has really grown out of its clients' feedback.

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“We’re just the custodians of the platform. It’s born of feedback and suggestions from multiple conveyancing-heavy practices and panel firms, as well as those law firms’ clients. Therefore, we have a deep understanding of the operational process and equally how to drive a richer customer experience.

“Like any technology solution, tmconnect is on a perpetual modernisation journey, working with our customers to continually evolve the platform as their business needs and operations develop and respond to market and regulatory demands.”

And an important part of any evolution is integration, he says. “We live in a world of integration. The platform is designed to integrate with many of the different systems a law firm might already have in place.”

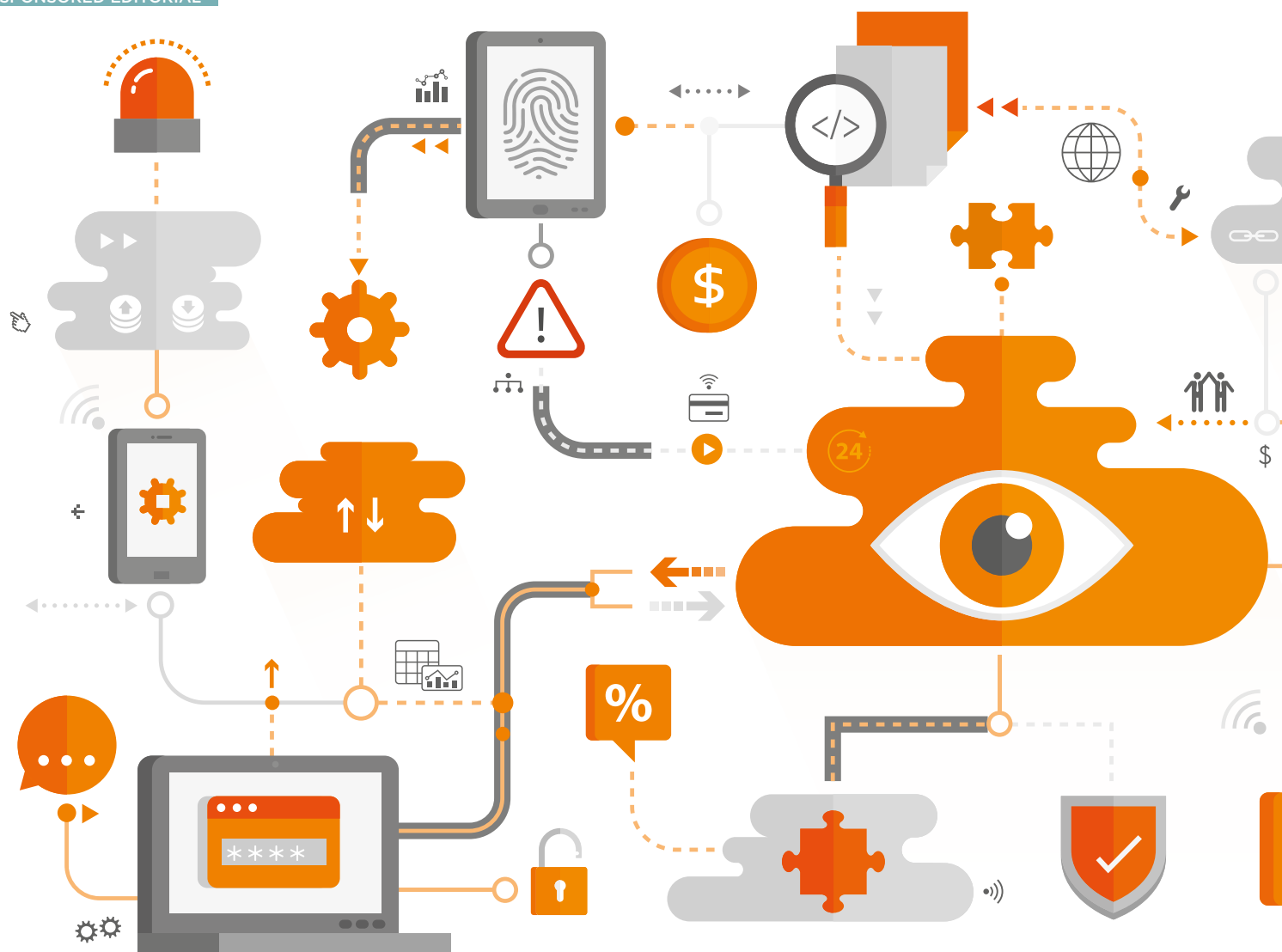
But integration isn’t only about being able to talk to other systems. Campbell says the holy grail is being able to enter that information just the once to drive efficiency.

It’s absolutely critical to drive operational efficiencies and reduce the time and cost in managing a whole transaction – and in a law firm’s case, multiple transactions each and every day, he says.

It should also reduce risk. “The client portal includes secure messaging, which allows the client to pass on bank details or sensitive information without the risk of it being penetrated via email. Email phishing attacks are on the rise and law firms traffic quite a lot of sensitive information via email.”

Campbell points out that secure messaging protects the law firm client but also the reputation of the law firm.

Modernisation is definitely a challenge for SME law firms, he says, but technology partners who understand their business, their clients’ needs, and who can go on the journey to drive operational efficiencies with them, will be key to realising the modern dream. **LPM**



SAFETY THIRST



Jonathan Swan, operations and IT director at Roythornes Solicitors, says that Quiss played an important role in meeting the demands of clients and improving the firm's cybersecurity

Roythornes is challenged to meet the unique needs of a wide-ranging and varied client base, which covers major blue-chip companies right through to private individuals.

The firm has been with Quiss now for almost eight years, and the initial business case was based on the opportunity to gain access to expertise on demand and on an affordable all-inclusive basis.

Jonathan Swan, operations and IT director at Roythornes, says: "The nature of our business is such that we need the systems and infrastructure of much larger firms – but we don't have the scale of operation to be able to afford or justify the overhead associated with the amount of resource needed to support and maintain those systems.

"In view of the business-critical nature of systems and constantly changing landscape, the all-inclusive outsourced model simply made

practical and economic sense."

From an IT perspective, Swan says, the firm's biggest challenge remains ensuring the availability, confidentiality and integrity of its information systems.

"We're constantly seeking to innovate and improve our processes and productivity. And being able to support flexible working and mobile access to systems is a top priority."

Maintaining the high availability, business-as-usual mode of operation, 24/7/365, represents a major challenge, he says, especially in an environment where the rate of change is relentless and expectations are rising – and is why we need access to the level of expertise provided by Quiss.

ALWAYS READY

After testing the supplier market, Roythornes found Quiss to be the logical choice. Swan says it provides assistance by enabling access to subject

LPM FIRM FACTS

Roythornes

Revenue: £14m

Corporate status: Limited company

91 fee earners, 206 total staff

Office locations: Spalding, Nottingham, Peterborough, Alconbury



“It’s reassuring to know that in our moment of need (or as an opportunity presents itself) we have immediate access to expertise and can move quickly and decisively.”

to improve.

“When it comes to incident handling, system security, new projects and upgrades, the right level of resource and experience are made available, and solutions are delivered to a high standard.”

SAFE EXPECTATIONS

Security is obviously always a top priority when it comes to the smooth running of law firm operations. The most hurt to be suffered by a threatened firm is not only its reputation, but also the trust and potential livelihood of the client.

“You only have to pick up a newspaper or watch the news to realise why information security is a huge issue,” he says. “Law firms, in particular, store and process large volumes of personal and confidential data, and participate in substantial financial transactions. It’s perhaps no surprise, therefore, that law firms are particularly targeted by cyber-fraudsters.”

Roythornes operates in an ‘always on’ state, and therefore must provide high operational availability using secure systems and processes, Swan says.

“Like all law firms, one of our most important assets is our reputation, and we must ensure we do everything possible to avoid undermining it by reducing risks associated with security incidents and system issues.

“Quiss has helped us in this by implementing industry standard systems, adopting best practice procedures, and providing proactive information security support and guidance.”

Swan says Quiss also helped Roythornes to attain its Cyber Essentials Plus certification – which it has held for three years – as well as significantly supporting its ISO 27001 accreditation in 2017.

Quiss also provides quarterly vulnerability reports, he adds, which inspect the environment and provides internal and external penetration tests on an advisory basis, helping the firm stay ahead of threats and better manage risk.

For an SME law firm, being able to keep up with changes in the market, whether technological or innovative, is a huge undertaking – and Swan says that with aid from Quiss, Roythornes is able to provide its staff and clients with around-the-clock service. **LPM**

matter experts as required.

“With Quiss taking care of our environment, system administration and security, we can focus more time and resource on value-adding projects.”

The primary distinguishing feature of the Quiss offering, he says, is the all-inclusive nature of the contract. There are no restrictions on call volumes, consultancy or project management days, or access to systems engineers or trainers.

“We also have full 24-hour support, 365 days a year – something that has proved invaluable over the years. The relationship works on the trust and understanding of our needs and capabilities. It’s reassuring to know that in our moment of need (or as an opportunity presents itself) we have immediate access to expertise, and can move quickly and decisively.”

Swan says Roythornes is committed to its relationship with Quiss, and together they have developed a good understanding over the years.

IT support is often likened to a ‘distress purchase’, and helpdesk support is something that can always be improved, he says.

“Quiss has increased its support resources, including support coordinators and onsite staff to improve response times and the overall user experience. This aspect remains a work in progress and one that we are constantly striving

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SIX OF THE WORST OFFICE PHRASES

LPM takes a look at the office buzzwords or phrases that people working in legal hate the most. Drawing on a survey of 1,000 UK legal workers carried out by The Leadership Factor on behalf of 4Com, we break down the worst phrases in legal to help you survive in a world of clichés

1 **Definition** This is a great idea! **Translation** I wish I had thought of this idea, so I will act as though it was obvious and I was thinking it all along. **Example** "Replacing all of our lawyers with chatbots is a no-brainer!" **Response** "No it's not, Darren. Please only provide useful inputs from now on."

No-brainer

It's on my radar

2 **Definition** I'm aware of this and working to address it. **Translation** I have no idea what you're talking about. **Example** "Oh, the new SRA pricing transparency guidelines? Yeah, it's on my radar." **Response** "Hopefully your inevitable failure is also being picked up by this radar."

Smashed it!

3 **Definition** I've succeeded in completing a task. **Translation** I hated every waking minute of stumbling through this task but would like my colleagues to think I'm passionate and competent. **Example** "Yeah mate, smashed it." **Response** "If 'barely adequate' equates to 'smashing it', then yes, you did."

I've got a lot on my plate

4 **Definition** I'm afraid I'm rather busy at this moment in time. **Translation** For goodness sake, please don't give me any more work. **Example** "I would love to help, Sharon, but unfortunately I've got a lot on my plate." **Response** "It's a good job this place is all-you-can-eat then."

5 **Definition** We're all valuable and can achieve great things if we work together. **Translation** If this goes to hell I'm taking you all down with me. **Example** "Come on guys, there's no 'I' in 'team'!" **Response** "But there is a 'U' in 'useless'."

There's no 'I' in 'team'

Run the numbers

6 **Definition** We should undergo a more thorough analysis of this. **Translation** I can't do maths; please delegate this to someone who can. **Example** "This is great, but we should run the numbers before committing to it." **Response** "Buy a damn calculator, Derek."

15%

of legal workers agree office buzzwords are annoying

15%

admit to using them daily

15%

claim to use office jargon without noticing

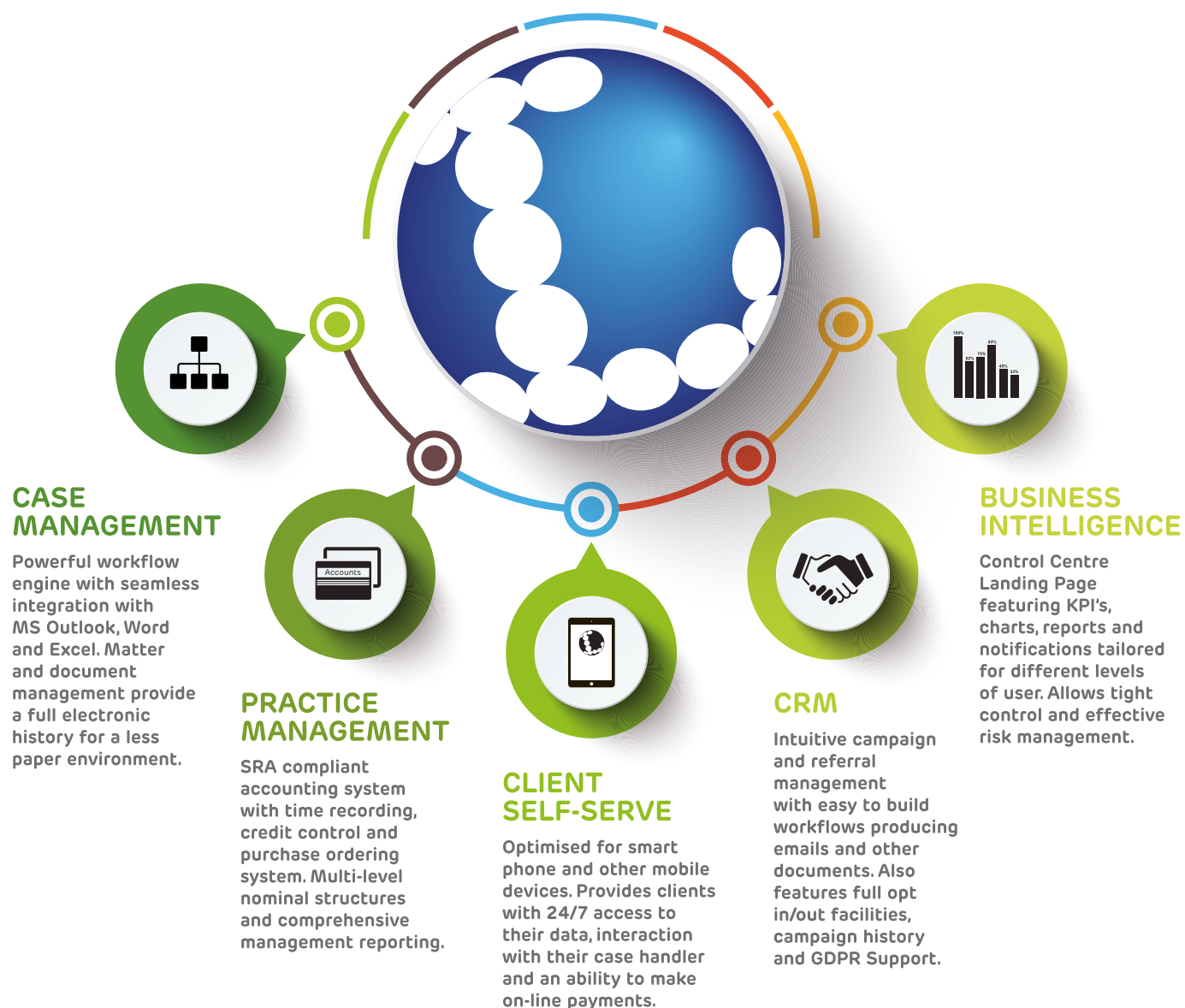
15%

choose to use the language in order to impress their co-workers

31%


of people use buzzwords without knowing what they mean

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It is essential that experts respond immediately following a cyber event.

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