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LPM

LEGAL PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

EXPERT
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LPM ASKS

*Emma Whiting at
Torque Law on the firm's
neurodiversity campaign*

LPM EVENTS

*Retail-like branding lessons
from 2019 speaker
Bernard Savage*



Seeds of change

*How can SME law firms nurture the environment, finance
and support to encourage growth?*

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Welcome back to the wonderful world of LPM. Hope you've had a lovely summer – it may be nearing the end but we're kicking off September with a story of growth.

What does it take to tighten finances and find the funding and right strategy needed to support growth? Josh Adcock raises the curtain on p16.

Another topic taking centre stage this month is diversity – and it's two-fold. Jem Sandhu reports in from the zebra project: Diversity and inclusion – from tokenism to transformation, by Taylor Vinters (p5). And LPM asks Emma Whiting, co-founder and partner at Torque Law, about her firm's neurodiversity campaign – aimed at educating people and companies on the importance of employing those with hidden disabilities (p6). You may think you've heard all you need to hear around diversity and inclusion but topics like these are still important to talk about, especially for firms looking to grow their practices (*wink, wink, nudge, nudge* p16) – so get involved in the conversation.

Also – drum roll, please – the LPM conferences 2020 are right around the corner! Feast your eyes on some content from the 2019 roadshow with some words of advice from speaker Bernard Savage at Tenandahalf (p23). And stay tuned for the 2020 agenda and updates after this coffee break.

Kayli Olson, editor
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IN PRACTICE

05 Reporting In Hear the latest developments from **Taylor Vinters'** inclusivity-focused zebra project

06 LPM asks: Emma Whiting at **Torque Law** about the importance of recognising neurodiversity

COLUMNS

07 Edward O'Rourke at **Ashtons Legal** on the need for firms to embrace digital engagement methods

08 Joanna Kingston-Davies at **Jackson Lees** on the effects of law firm structure and the need for accountability

09 Andy Bevan at **Pulsant** discusses the risks of a poor data policy and gives pointers to ensure safer data

10 Nick Hayne at **Quiss** explains the ins and outs of the cloud and building relationships with managed service providers

11 Sarah Trude at **Symphony APS** on the power of not only integrating but also aggregating data into one place

13 Alex Williams at **Tikit** looks to the regulatory changes coming in November and suggests how firms can keep a handle on their policies

FEATURES

16 Feature: How can SME law firms improve their finances and fund growth? Josh Adcock reports

20 Brain Training: Jane Pritchard at **Elavvate** on ensuring legaltech doesn't go rogue for SME law firms

23 LPM events: LPM conferences 2019 speaker **Bernard Savage** at **Tenandahalf** offers top law firm branding tips

INDUSTRY VIEWS

26 Jon Whittle at **LexisNexis** on the unique challenges facing SME law firms and how they can grow effectively

28 Bethany Kayser at **Propero Partners** says law firms would benefit from taking a closer look at client perceptions

REAR VIEW

30 Day in the strife: Our put upon practice manager at **Juncker Boiling & Biggergrove** takes five to let off some steam



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REIMAGINING INCLUSIVITY

If there is one dreaded outcome for an organisation aiming to be more diverse and inclusive, it's appearing tokenistic. Is there any way to avoid this? Jem Sandhu attended Taylor Vinters' zebra project event this summer to find out

What are the 'elephants in the room' when it comes to truly making inclusivity the default position in an organisation? These were the creatures being discussed at Taylor Vinters' zebra project event on 6 June, Diversity and inclusion – from tokenism to transformation. The zebra project brings together business leaders and thinkers to 'reimagine business' – including business culture.

Matt Meyer, Taylor Vinters' CEO, introduced the session by saying how the firm is an identity-led business. "The makeup of our people – the different experiences, backgrounds and priorities of each individual – are what make our organisation what it is."

Partner Kim Wedral-Rooke chaired the afternoon, and the aim was high: to try to figure out how organisations can move away from mere tokenism and make diversity and inclusivity truly transformative. The 'campfire' setup, with everyone seated in a circle – none of that speakers seated up on high stuff – encouraged frank comments on this tough question. And, yes, things did get personal!

But the first order of business was to get real. True diversity shapes innovation, brand and performance. But it's important first to get leadership to appreciate the actual number value of such diversity.

"When it comes to diversity and inclusion, quotas and sexy acronyms have become fashionable," observed one participant pointedly.

Anya Navidski, founding partner of Voulez Capital, talked about how, for her organisation, the impact of diversity on growth has been dramatic. "The numbers have been strong – in the double digits."

It was an incredibly diverse group, as was clear when people started sharing their backgrounds and viewpoints. Navidski noted how building true diversity in an organisation means recognising that each person has unique needs – for example, some may be caring for elderly parents. "Diversity means acknowledging all these needs, rather than just a segment of needs," she said.

Getting away from the usual tickboxes means that inclusion can incorporate many factors. One person in the group rattled off a list of aspects of her being – including her disability, and the fact that she studied philosophy. "An organisation needs to value all those elements. If I can bring that to work, even if it's irrelevant to the actual work, I will be more engaged."

Yes, these elements can include night owls who do their best work in the middle of the night. The Hoxby Collective is made up of over 800 contractors with

very different personalities and working styles, from parents needing flexible hours through to those who might want to do adventure breaks at odd times. Ed Horrocks, purpose director at the company, says that the key is that they have a common purpose – coming together to solve client problems.

"Staff are judged on output. People should be able to work when and where they want. Having that culture as the basis of the community ensures inclusivity."

It also makes good business sense. "We use diversity to get better solutions," he said.

The group also looked at viewing inclusion in a different way. Speaker Linbert Spencer, founding director of the Centre for Inclusive Leadership, encouraged the audience to look at inclusion as "how are we fitting together, rather than how are you fitting in." It was definitely an 'aha' moment, eliciting approving nods and murmurs from the audience.

And another comment he made really brought home the idea that inclusion was the most important aspect of diversity: "You may have a workforce that speaks 17 languages, but how many of them feel included?"

It's not just organisations' responsibility to make sure that they are diverse and inclusive. Society as a whole can play a big part. The group agreed that we need to look at the talent pipeline early – when people are still at school. Women need to be encouraged to go into science, technology, engineering and maths careers. Navidski advocates that people start even earlier, by combating stereotypes when it comes to their young children – encouraging daughters to try coding, for example.

Inclusion most definitely includes social inclusion. "The dropout rates at Cambridge of students not from privileged backgrounds are very high," said an attendee. A number of attendees related stories of some kids being advantaged because of a parent's profession. "Let kids think they can be what they want to be," said another person.

In keeping with the mood of self-scrutiny, the audience noted that everyone around the circle was fairly privileged. But this was just further testament to how honest the discussion was – in fact, one of the most frank discussions of diversity and inclusion I've been to in a long time. **LPM**





NEW DIVERSITY

Emma Whiting, co-founder and partner at Torque Law, on teaming up with a neurodiversity specialist as more employers tackle creating a diverse workplace

Q What is neurodiversity?

A The term is used to recognise that everyone's brains are wired differently. In HR circles, neurodiversity is the movement to create a more inclusive working environment for people who have 'hidden' disabilities such as autism, ADHD and dyspraxia. People with these conditions are neurodivergent in that they're different from those who don't have those conditions and are 'neuro-typical'.

Q How did the opportunity to work with Creased Puddle come about?

A We wanted to find a team to complement our own, and who would be able to help take clients' neurodiversity initiatives to the next level. We're expert employment lawyers in the field of discrimination law; we're not experts in any of the conditions or knowing the sorts of adjustments that will work and make a difference in the workplace. We worked with Creased Puddle to deliver a seminar and, off the back of positive feedback received, we've started to work more closely in partnership.

Q What was the drive to start a neurodiversity campaign?

A We were finding that neurodiversity issues were cropping up in the workplace and becoming a feature of our work. Employers are familiar with good practice in areas such as sex discrimination, race, age, physical disability, and mental health. A lot of employers are now more in tune with mental health issues and develop campaigns around it but there's very little done presently around neurodiversity. The campaign started off as a drive to educate employers to avoid the legal pitfalls around mishandling of situations involving employees or candidates with these types of hidden disabilities. But the more we delved into it, the more we felt that there was a real opportunity for employers to exploit the flipside - their creativity, loyalty and brilliance - at a time of an ever-decreasing talent pool. We want to get employers to see the competitive advantage that can be gained by embracing neurodiversity and seeing it as a positive.

Q What does the campaign involve?

A It's about education and awareness. We're delivering seminars to a broad audience of employers and business owners targeted

predominantly at a local (Yorkshire) level. We were delighted to be asked to deliver one of the keynote addresses at an event organised by Westminster Briefing in London in March, with industry experts in the field. We delivered the legal angle, with other attendees from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the National Autistic Society, and Optimize, a neurodiversity training firm. We have other speaking engagements planned for September and October. It's great to hear this subject being spoken about, embraced and focused on as opposed to the negative image that's often portrayed. There's also an element of pro bono work - supporting local neurodiversity charities and advising individuals for no charge where their cases have a neurodiversity angle.

Q Top tips for firms looking to become more neuro-savvy?

1 Consider the positive side of those who are neurodiverse and the benefits that they could bring to your organisation. Recruitment processes and workplace practices are typically geared towards recruiting and retaining generalists. There's a

huge missed opportunity as only 16% of adults with autism are in employment - think about all those great potential employees you're missing out on. Cast the slide rule of neurodiversity across those practices and procedures and make them neurodiversity-friendly.

2 It may surprise you to know that the majority of the adjustments/accommodations for people with hidden disabilities are either no cost or low-cost items. So give it a go - what have you got to lose?

3 Create an inclusive culture where disclosures of disabilities are positively encouraged and role modelled. Easier said than done? Most businesses will employ people who are neurodiverse without necessarily knowing it and manage to accommodate them - so bring them to the forefront of your organisation and promote their positive stories to encourage others to share theirs.

4 Look afresh at your policies and procedures to see whether they're inclusive enough. Ask whether they allow your neurodivergent employees to flourish just as much as your neurotypical employees and change them where they do not. **LPM**

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Law firms need to start embracing the digital world and look at ways to offer their clients a greater choice in how and what they are offered



One blockbuster away

EDWARD O'ROURKE, CEO

The world of legal can learn a lot by looking at what is happening in other sectors. Over the past 12 months, the world of retail has seen a rapid increase in the pace of change and the failure of those businesses that struggle to keep up with the pace of that change.

Included among the big names that have shown signs of being in jeopardy, or disappeared from our high streets over the past 12 months, are the likes of Debenhams, Toys R Us, Maplin, LK Bennett, Carluccio's, Jamie's Italian, Patisserie Valerie, HMV, American Golf, House of Fraser, Poundworld, Gin Festival, and East.

A common theme that appears to run through the stories of all these businesses is a failure to keep up with the changing ways in which customers want to interact with businesses. This is not a new phenomenon; changing consumer tastes have seen the demise of many businesses throughout history.

The big American railroad companies were, at the time, among the biggest corporate entities in the world, but they failed to spot the change in transport and invest in airplane technology, instead allowing two brothers with the assistance of what must have been one of the earlier forms of crowdfunding to change the history of transportation. Kodak was the dominant player in camera film but failed to adopt digital technology quickly enough. Blockbuster was offered the opportunity to buy the fledgling business Netflix but turned the opportunity down. The board of HMV once

decried the advance of streaming music, citing the desire of their customers to own a tangible piece of music – the CD, for example – and the list goes on.

The lessons are clear – a failure to look at changes in the buying habits of the customer leads to a decline in business revenue and ultimately business failure.

There are many changes that can already be seen and no doubt many more yet to come. However, as an illustration, here are a couple:

1 A desire to be able to reach out to a business online. It is not just shopping that has been impacted by the likes of Amazon. Many people these days buy insurance, book holidays and do their banking online. This allows the consumer to choose when and where they interact with business.

2 Greater choice for the client to select what they want. Again, it is not just Amazon that has broadened choice. The rise of businesses such as Deliveroo has had an impact on the restaurant trade, as more people can now eat their favourite restaurant foods at home and eat out less. The restaurant trade often relies on the markup on its drink sales to boost profitability, and while they may still be selling the food they are no longer selling the drinks.

Law firms need to start embracing the digital world and look at ways to offer their clients a greater choice in how and what they are offered. The reverence with which clients may have once held lawyers no longer exists and there is a greater need to listen to the client rather than demand that the client listens to us. **LPM**

LPM FIRM FACTS

Ashtons Legal

Revenue: £20m

**Corporate status:
Partnership**

**200 fee earners, 377 total
staff**

**Offices: Cambridge,
Norwich, Bury St
Edmunds, Ipswich**



Trust in each other is absolutely crucial in allowing decisions to be made quickly and confidently



Structure matters

JOANNA KINGSTON-DAVIES, GROUP CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

An article in the Harvard Business Review about the interplay between the CEO and COO roles got me thinking about the impact of effective leadership in law firms.

The article talks about the necessity for implicit trust between these two key roles for organisational effectiveness and prosperity. For me, whatever titles we give to roles at senior level, that trust is absolutely crucial – as indeed it should be throughout the organisation.

The corporate structure of law firms can have a huge impact on both the culture of the organisation and on productivity levels. When decisions have to be made by committee, or require multiple layers of approval, law firms risk holding themselves back and losing their competitive edge.

Agile decision-making has never been so important in allowing law firms to thrive. Layers of bureaucracy can also harm an individual's confidence in their own decision-making ability and potentially foster a lack of ownership throughout the organisation.

Trust in each other is absolutely crucial in allowing decisions to be made quickly and confidently, yet I can't help but think that so many entities undermine that trust by creating layers of red tape through overly burdensome authorisation processes.

Someone from a large law firm recently asked me about our dress code. We moved to 'dress for your diary' a few months ago because, in a three-minute conversation between myself and the CEO, we realised that things were evolving

naturally towards it anyway so it made sense to confirm it. The larger organisation had just moved to a similar policy, having had a partner vote on it after presentations to the partnership about the relative merits of different types of dress policy.

The stark contrast with the manner in which we'd changed our own policy really made me realise just how agile our decision-making culture is at Jackson Lees, and how quickly we get stuff done.

It also reminded me of how much things have changed – I've sat in partners' meetings in the past where redecorating the meeting rooms, or discussing who takes responsibility for the stationery order, have been highlights on the agenda, instead of accountability for performance, growth strategy and exception reviews on the management information.

It doesn't really matter what the structure of the business is as long as accountability is clearly defined and, more importantly, that trust is there for the decision-makers to lead the business on a day-to-day basis and get on with their jobs without interference.

A culture where the shareholders, whether they work within the business or not, trust the people in charge of running the business – and trust them to learn from their own mistakes without retribution – fosters ownership and accountability and allows everyone to focus and become more productive.

I consider myself so lucky to work in an environment like this, which is still a fairly rare commodity in legal services. **LPM**

LPM FIRM FACTS

Jackson Lees

Revenue: £11.8m

Corporate status: Ltd

135 fee earners, 280 total staff

Offices: Liverpool, Manchester, Hoylake, Birkenhead, Heswall



As we shift our ways of working and adopt a more flexible approach – working from home, while travelling, from a client site – we need to ensure we're keeping client data confidential and our own firms safe from risk



Policy police

ANDY BEVAN, THE CLOUD EXPERT

It has been more than a year since the compliance deadline for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect and we're now seeing the impact of this new legislation. A case in point is the £183m fine issued to British Airways for a data breach last year. Yes, customers were affected. Yes, BA will no doubt feel the financial impact – but for firms in the legal space the consequences of data loss are even more far-reaching.

Data protection remains critical. This isn't another article about GDPR. But it is about data – how we use it, store it, transmit it, and who has access to it. In today's business environment, with increased cyber risk, compliance issues and a change in the way we work, data is more important than ever before.

Law firms need to make sure they've got the right processes in place to mitigate risk. They have a duty of care to clients and keeping their data confidential, and to employees to make sure they've got the tools needed to maintain that confidentiality.

In practice, this means there are three key policies every law firm should develop and implement:

- 1 An email usage policy – governing how emails are used, what data can be included, and what needs to be encrypted
- 2 An internet usage policy – that includes technical controls to protect against the spread of malware and accessing questionable sites
- 3 A data-protection policy – which will be specific to the different types of data used within the firm, how they're stored and how they can be transmitted.

Often, developing these policies is one of the tasks that keeps getting pushed back because, operationally, there's always something more urgent to address. And this is the main challenge: lack of resource.

Furthermore, once policies are in place, they need to be embraced by staff and adhered to. It's about more than communicating the policies to staff (with refreshers); there's an element of education required in getting employee buy-in.

One of the best places to start is applying a risk-management framework to the business, such as Cyber Essentials, which lays the groundwork for the development of the policies mentioned above. Part of this certification includes identifying your data assets and how you use them, which gives firms visibility of their operations.

Of course, Cyber Essentials covers more than just data and aligns with GDPR best practices. It also gives you a foundation from which to deal with the cyber threat.

While Cyber Essentials also includes an element of self-assessment, there are also third-party companies that guide SMEs through the process, identify gaps and then remedy them, solving the resource challenge.

What comes next? The threat posed by cyber criminals will only increase going forward. More than that, as we shift our ways of working and adopt a more flexible approach – working from home, while travelling, from a client site – we need to ensure we're keeping client data confidential and our own firms safe from risk. The time is now to get the policies and tools in place to help you meet these objectives and mitigate any risk. **LPM**



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Q&A

Cloudy prospects

Nick Hayne, the data master, answers some key questions around cloud provisioning and managed service providers (MSP) relations

Q When talking to law firms, do you find they all want cloud solutions?

A There are any number of reasons law firms are seeking to engage managed service providers and typically cloud features somewhere in the conversation. But a 'cloud at all costs' approach is not necessarily a helpful frame of mind and law firms need to work with service providers that will do what is right for the client within the constraints given. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, with all the business and technological aspects being considered when deciding a way forward.

Q Should an MSP tell a prospect the solution they are asking for is wrong?

A Honesty between client and service provider is critical. Prospects usually have a general idea of what they want to achieve and the direction they want to take. But this should be tempered by advice from service providers with years of experience working with clients in the legal sector and knowledge of the technology

stack, so typical pitfalls can be navigated around. Cloud is not right for everyone, and now the initial buzz has died down we are beginning to see some serious repatriation of cloud-based data. Your MSP must be brave enough to tell you your on-premises solution is still the optimum choice.

Q What questions do law firms need to ask of an MSP?

A Prospects usually ask similar questions and often it focuses on the technology and the solution. But the expertise of an MSP with Microsoft apps, Azure, cloud solutions, security and IT infrastructure, and so on, should be a given – they know how to keep the cursor blinking. However, as a law firm prepares to sign a long contract, then the MSP's credentials as a business become increasingly important. Do they have relevant experience deploying similar solutions and services in a law firm environment? Are they a viable business, likely to survive the contract term at least? Questions should be asked about vendor relationships and the MSP's ability to handle third-party service providers. The MSP should be able to demonstrate the business is led by an experienced, reputable management team, supported by the skilled technicians the average law firm could not justify employing. The MSP must recommend the right solution, based entirely on the law firm's specific needs, rather than

what the service provider prefers to sell, like cloud. It's about what's right, not what's easy.

Q What does the future hold for the cloud and MSPs?

A It's critical the chosen MSP understands the entire IT ecosystem and how the various parts interact across the legal sector. They should be able to demonstrate different configurations of systems and how they work with the full range of practice management systems, third-party security apps, dictation apps, archiving and recovery solutions, to name but a few. The chosen MSP should offer a solution that reflects modern, agile law firms that put their clients at the heart of the business decisions they make. If the solution is all about fashionable technology like cloud, and not what works best for the firm, or you have doubts about the service provider's stability as a business, or its need to deliver big profits for investors, walk away. **LPM**



Cloud is not right for everyone, and now the initial buzz has died down we are beginning to see some serious repatriation of cloud-based data

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When you can see it all neatly pieced together, you can see some really interesting patterns appearing



Aggregation power

SARAH TRUDE, THE DATA OPTIMISER

We have recently secured a major deal to license, develop and support a product that is taking the accountancy sector by storm – it's called Practice Portal. Price Bailey developed this groundbreaking platform as a direct result of getting a £500k quote from a major industry-renowned supplier and, in my opinion, quite rightly felt that there had to be a better way to harness the power of CRM firm wide without such a huge ongoing financial footprint.

So how does what Price Bailey did change the narrative? Well, I'd like you to think about aggregation as opposed to integration. Once we let go, albeit only momentarily, of the hunger to attain an integrated ecosystem, we can start to see that aggregation brings huge service delivery and client relationship benefits.

Let me elaborate. You almost certainly already have systems in place that provide information on your clients' WIP, billing and lockup, which teams sell to them currently, how engaged they are with marketing, recent documents, open opportunities, appointments, their Companies House status, outstanding tasks and so on.

So all of that critical information is stored in a variety of places: CRM if you have already deployed it, (Excel spreadsheets if not); your practice management system, Outlook, document management, Companies House, MS Planner, a tool such as Act-On, Mailchimp or Salesfusion ... the list goes on. Now that data, in all of those different platforms, is great, but it becomes invaluable when you get to put it all together like a fabulous client jigsaw puzzle. When you can see it all effortlessly laid out, you will notice some really interesting patterns appearing.

Let's imagine you have a key commercial client who you've been happily working with for the last two years – you're busy, he's busy and

naturally you don't speak quite as much as you did in the beginning; let's call this client Bob.

So, Bob's debtor days have slipped recently, and he hasn't been signing off opportunities where you would normally expect to see work closing regularly. His company accounts are late at Companies House and he's stopped engaging with your marketing activity and cancelled your last two meetings. You're a good relationship builder and so you'll have noticed the cancellations, and possibly the open opportunities if you're a coveted rainmaker, but by my reckoning that's at least five – yes five – systems you'd need to check to build that whole picture as described above.

If your firm is on top of its game, maybe three of those areas are producing reports for you, but you still have to apply the logic and business rationale to pull everything together to see the trends.

And this is where we need to put our grownup pants on and honestly ask ourselves, do we actually really do that consistently, and do we take action on it? Because Bob is either going through a tough time, and could potentially benefit from your advice, or he is disengaging from your services.

You see, integration would mean that the systems above would all share data, improve data quality and of course bring a host of other benefits – there is no disputing that.

But what it wouldn't tell you, from a single source of truth, is that you need to call Bob and offer to reschedule those appointments he's cancelled (in the pub preferably as an incentive) and get to the bottom of what's going on in his world.

Integration won't do that, but aggregation will, and the good news is that aggregation is a simpler beast to tame – you just need a portal to your practice.

Funnily enough, I know someone who can help you with that. Office or pub will do! **LPM**



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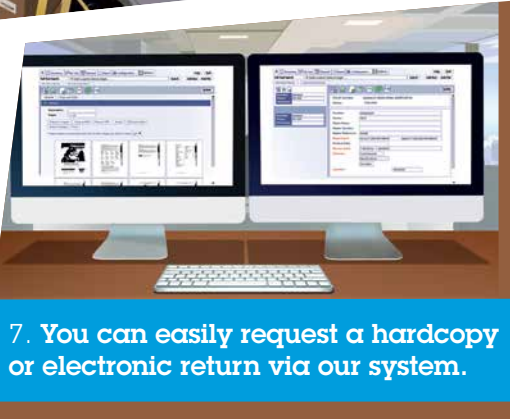


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Firms will need to consider how employees will be trained on the new standards and regulations, and understand the impact this will have on their risk and compliance processes



Setting standards

ALEX WILLIAMS, THE TECHNOLOGIST

On 25 November 2019, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) will launch its new regulatory model – but what does this mean for firms? In essence, it will allow solicitors greater flexibility in how they work. It will remove many prescriptive rules and take the burden off law firms, meaning their solicitors have freedom to use their own judgement to consider how they meet the SRA standards.

Some of the key changes include:

- Separate codes of conduct for firms and solicitors
- Simpler account rules
- The ability for a solicitor to carry out 'non-reserved' legal work from a business not regulated by a legal services regulator
- Allowing solicitors to provide reserved legal services on a freelance basis

The SRA sets high professional standards but by stripping away outdated rules and regulations it's allowing solicitors flexibility to deliver services around clients. This brings a lot of potential for both firms and solicitors. The public will have access to a wider range of services, while still having the peace of mind that they are backed by the proper protections.

This means that solicitors and firms will change from a predominantly rule-based focus

to a more outcome-based one. There will be a reduced list of principles and prescriptive rules that dictate how solicitors and firms must behave, while ensuring that the most important issues of protecting the public and their money remain at the forefront.

To be ready for November, firms will need to review their existing policies and processes and make sure that they are still relevant and valid. It will serve as a good time to question whether these are still in keeping with protecting the public and their money, as well as increasing efficiency, while ensuring the firm's reputation is not compromised.

It's not just reviewing and updating the policies that are in place that will need to be done. Firms will need to consider how employees will be trained on the new standards and regulations, and understand the impact this will have on risk and compliance processes.

By changing the focus of the standards from rules to outcomes and principles-based, firms will need to build in periodic reviews of their policies. This will allow them to monitor these policies to check for effectiveness and appropriateness.

As always, Tikit is keeping up with industry changes and ensuring that P4W allows firms and solicitors to remain compliant. **LPM**

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FEATURES INDEX

SOARING HIGH

**16 FEATURE****Capital ideas**

Financial vigilance is one thing but, in order to grow, SME law firms need vision and strategy too. Josh Adcock asks how firms are funding growth

20 BRAIN TRAINING**Technology transfusion**

How can firms better handle digital transformation? **Jane Pritchard** at **Elawvate** offers a three-step process to make tech work for legal businesses

Capital ideas

How can firms expand their business without breaking the bank? Josh Adcock reports on the ways SME law firms are improving processes and cultivating relationships to fund growth

The finicky nature of funding growth makes finance at SME law firms a delicate balancing act. While there is a range of options available for finding the money to make change happen, sometimes it can boil down to improving everyday financial hygiene – but it can also mean rethinking a firm's identity.

Several firms we spoke to this month have chosen to become limited companies, which offers more options for raising equity and incentives for transformation and flexibility. A common theme, however, was the need for eternal vigilance and the ubiquitous potential for improvement.

"Cashflow forecasts have really helped," says Brian Cullen, CEO at Liverpool-based Jackson Lees. Clinical negligence is the firm's biggest department, and although the working capital requirements of this practice area are a barrier to entry for potential competitors, the firm has found effective management of cases crucial for its own business.

"Each case has a three-to-five-year lifecycle – sometimes longer. We have to fund the people working on that until we're paid. So, some months you might make £50,000 out of a £250,000 target and suddenly there's a £200,000 hole to fill. We have to manage the peaks and troughs."

Jason Rahman, practice manager at Sykes Anderson Perry, has seen similar hurdles at a variety of law firms over the course of his career. "If you have key lawyers working on big files that won't have interim payments you have to try and fund those, or suddenly you'll find you can't pay rent or PAYE."

He also says that, in order to grow, firms need to delineate their financial planning. "There's a massive difference between business-as-usual costs and project costs. You must split them up."

Having detailed information on cashflow is also crucial – at a previous firm, Rahman says, accurate planning was the key to growth projects. "We calculated an average case time

and could predict, within a seven-to-ten-day window, when we'd have cash spikes coming in. So, instead of borrowing, we could predict when would be a good time to invest, because we'd have extra capital."

In fact, many SME law firms will look at becoming more financially disciplined to fund growth before looking to lenders, as Julia Warrilow, finance director at Thursfields, says of her firm. "As we're a fairly traditional law firm, we looked internally first. Our growth has been entirely financed by changes to our policies and procedures around WIP and debt housekeeping. It's not been a quick win at all."

Over at Druces, finance director Edward Gordon-Hall says: "Where possible we fund from existing cashflow, but for longer-term investment projects, such as strategic technology programmes, we would consider external financing. Leasing, for example, provides greater funding flexibility in areas like IT."

ASKING FOR THE BILL

Keeping on top of working capital finances inevitably involves prompt billing of clients, but those with the most direct contact with the clients – lawyers – can be subject to what Barry Davies, practice director at Douglas-Jones Mercer (DJM), calls "client fear".

"Some lawyers are too afraid to ask for payment because they think they'll upset their clients. Particularly in the more commercial areas of work, they're hesitant to talk about anything other than the status of the case."

It isn't a logical fear, says Davies. "You wouldn't go into a restaurant and say 'I enjoyed my meal – I'll pay you in two months'. Clients respect that our lawyers do a good job, and are prepared to pay. So, I'm always trying to improve our fee earners' understanding of working capital management, and even pricing."

Rahman at Sykes Anderson Perry agrees. He stresses the importance of scheduling interim payments when possible, but he also believes



that there are times when removing the fee earner from the billing process, or at least distancing them from it, is the right thing to do.

"It's good to have an intermediary – the accounts manager or a credit controller, for example. High-profile clients forget to pay, so you've got to have regular communication."

Melissa Butler, head of operations at Greenwoods GRM, says her firm is looking at ways technology can help people collect on money owed to the firm. "Part of my remit for the next 12 months is to look at our processes, particularly billing. I'm investigating whether automation would be helpful and, if so, how we implement it across the firm. Although they're on the same case management system, teams have different processes and ways of doing things."

Butler also says her firm is further exploring the utility of fixed fees and differing pricing models, across all work types. In addition to improving the client experience, she says it could make internal processes slicker. "It depends on the type of work, but we can see it being implemented in the next 12 months."

Gordon-Hall says Druces, like other firms, is currently working on technology projects intended to further automate standard working processes. "It remains as important as ever to ensure that fee earners have the up-to-date tools needed to facilitate useful conversations with clients, whether that's related to pricing, work in



You wouldn't go into a restaurant and say 'I enjoyed my meal – I'll pay you in two months'. Clients respect that our lawyers do a good job, and are prepared to pay

Barry Davies, practice director, Douglas-Jones Mercer

LPM FIRM FACTS**Douglas-Jones Mercer****Revenue: £4.5m****Corporate status: Ltd****32 fee earners, 54 total staff****Offices: Swansea, Mumbles, Porthcawl, Cardiff****LPM FIRM FACTS****Druces****Revenue: £11.7m****Corporate status: LLP****21 partners, 90 total staff****Office: London****LPM FIRM FACTS****Greenwoods GRM****Revenue: Undisclosed****Corporate status: LLP****80 fee earners, 140 total staff****Offices: London, Peterborough, Cambridge****LPM FIRM FACTS****Jackson Lees****Revenue: £11.8m****Corporate status: Ltd****135 fee earners, 280 total staff****Offices: Liverpool, Manchester, Hoylake, Birkenhead, Heswall****LPM FIRM FACTS****Sykes Anderson Perry****Revenue: Undisclosed****Corporate status: Ltd****14 fee earners, 19 total staff****Office: London****LPM FIRM FACTS****Thursfields****Revenue: £8.9m****Corporate status: Ltd****75 fee earners, 155 total staff****Offices: Birmingham, Worcester, Solihull, Halesowen, Kidderminster, Sedgley, Stourport**

progress and outstanding debt, or to facilitate regular billing discussions with clients.”

Back at Thursfields, Warrilow says that business services professionals can and should handle more business decisions and protocols. She says her firm has employed business managers to support the central finance function and to dive into the details of financial processes.

“One of our key objectives is to implement a billing protocol suitable for each area of law – what works in a conveyancing transaction won’t work in a corporate one. We have two business managers currently – one’s a former fee earner and the other is from outside the industry, with a third, who is currently with a national logistics company, joining us at the end of September 2019.”

She adds that having appropriate central resources to manage cashflow is a vital progression. “We’ve almost completely taken credit control away from the fee earners by creating an internal recoveries team. We used to allow our lawyers to chase the debt, because they have the relationship with the client, but that can often be counterproductive. Now the debt-chasing process automatically switches to the central resources after 60 days.”

In much the same way, Davies says DJM chose to implement new processes. Though lawyers might not feel comfortable with the idea of using workflows to routinely chase up a client, for fear of offending, Davies says that removing the human element is a necessity. He explains that some follow-up letters and calls are currently being held back at the request of fee earners – a power which shouldn’t be in their remit.

About three years ago, the firm migrated to a new practice management system, to help join up and automate these processes. “We decided to develop a number of workflows so that, if everyone decided to go on holiday, the follow-up process would still happen.”

BANK ON IT

But what about external partners? Cullen at Jackson Lees says getting those relationships right is crucial. “We’ve been very lucky with our bank – our account manager feels like an extension of the firm.”

Cullen says that his firm has been with its bank for just over three years, but the beginning of the relationship was unusual. After its previous bank couldn’t support the firm during an acquisition, another was happy to seize the opportunity, despite the circumstances.

“Bizarrely, we used the target firm’s bank to fund the acquisition – and they’ve been superb ever since,” he says.

The urge to achieve that personal touch, which might be more down to firms themselves to encourage, might also be part of a wider shift among banks. Davies says that the feeling used to be that cold, hard computer logic drove banks’ decision-making, but he’s noted a reversal of the pendulum more recently.

Davies says that, having previously been a client of DJM, Svenska Handelsbanken caught the firm’s attention: “It has a more personable approach, with a commercial manager who oversees the relationship. The model offers a very mature, professional opinion.”

Rahman at Sykes Anderson Perry says that, following a number of large firms over-extending themselves financially and going into administration in the last five or six years, the banks were justifiably jumpy for a while. But clearing the air is not that difficult. “Tell them your vision, invite them to your office and they’ll understand you’re genuine – that you’re not in any sort of panic. But you have to be transparent.”

Warrilow says that Thursfields’ recently improved financial health has facilitated a better relationship with its bank – enabling new investments. “It just makes the conversations much easier – Lloyds have been able to help us invest, through purchasing the freehold of one of our key sites and relocating others.”

MIND HOW YOU GROW

Sometimes, however, the banks are not enough. Having previously acquired another firm with help from its bank, Jackson Lees is contemplating a number of others, Cullen says, and it has set an ambitious task for itself. “We have seven target firms – we’re talking about tripling the size of the business over two to three years. That’s going to require significantly more funding than the bank could ever provide, so we’re looking into private equity.”

Cullen says that, as a limited company, the firm is able to work with corporate finance to create



We have seven target firms – we're talking about tripling the size of the business over two to three years. That's going to require significantly more funding than the bank could ever provide, so we're looking into private equity

Brian Cullen, CEO, Jackson Lees

funds for its future acquisitions. "We're not in a rush to do anything – alignment with our sense of purpose is very important – but a number of existing shareholders are looking to sell, for lifestyle and personal reasons. We'll dilute some of our shareholding as owners of the business in order to fund our growth."

Warrilow says that her firm has benefited from changing its structure. About 18 months after she joined the firm, Thursfields converted from an LLP to a limited company, and this was a catalyst for change – prompting growth targets of 20% each year, many of which the firm has met. Now the intention is to grow further, adding more stakeholders into the mix.

But this was one part of a larger transformation. When she joined Thursfields seven years ago, Warrilow says the firm was losing revenue, but the managing director had the vision to change that.

"Our MD had seen that the writing was on the wall for legal aid, and that was a significant amount of our revenue. The turnover was just shy of £3m, the lowest many of the partners could remember it being. He could see what needed to happen – which is why I think my skillset was of interest. We did formerly have a financial controller, but they only worked on the traditional chargeable hours information, profit and loss, balance sheets and audit work. I was the first person to take on the detail of the role."

But whether or not business services expertise is leveraged successfully can depend enormously on the firm in question. "I know one person at another firm who was promoted into the same role as mine, but she couldn't even see the bank account. The partners very much felt it was their business. The culture of a traditional partnership doesn't necessarily support the potential of the role," says Warrilow.

Keeping people on their toes, and constantly open to new ideas and ways of doing things better, is an important part of her remit. "One of the things I've been challenged with this year is income maximisation strategy, starting with time recording and effective billing rates. Everyone says, 'Yeah, yeah, you don't need to tell us Julia, we know what we're doing'. As soon as you say

'Well, your charge-out rate is £250 an hour, but your effective billing rate is around £100 per hour', that gets them thinking."

Looking to the future, Davies at DJM says that alternative business structures have opened up new capital-raising opportunities, but there may yet be more change to come. "When the new Solicitors Regulation Authority standards are enforced on 25 November 2019, I think we'll see a whole new approach to the market and raising capital, due to the ability to employ freelancers."

Considering alternative ways of doing things seems to be key to firm growth, whether that be corporate structures or new processes. As Warrilow puts it: "It's all about having the culture and the processes in place. But that's probably the hardest thing to achieve in an SME law firm." That's not to say it's not a worthwhile challenge to set oneself against – it just requires a little flexible thinking. **LPM**

LPM FIRM FACTS

Keystone Law Group

Revenue: £42.68m

Corporate status: plc

300+ fee earners, 345 total staff

Offices: London, Bristol, Newcastle, Leeds, Belfast, Douglas, Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane

GROWTH FACTORS

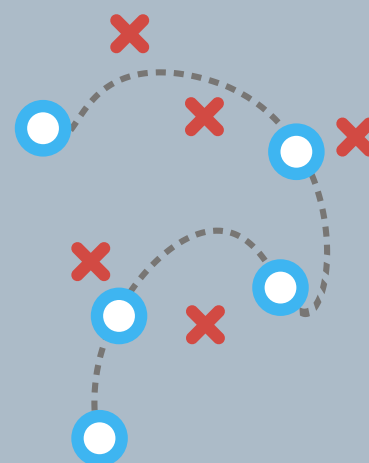
Keystone Law has been a big growth success story. Having climbed past the SME ceiling, the firm's revenue grew from £18m in 2015 to £42.7m by January 2019. Director of operations and compliance William Robins says the firm's November 2017 public listing on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) was helpful for growth, but he points out the specific advantages of such a move. "Equity finance is nothing like debt finance. It might be cheaper, but equity is not just about the money – there needs to be another reason, and for us it was transparency. We wanted to open our books to the public and reassure our lawyers that their firm was in good shape."

Its fee earners, referred to as 'principal lawyers', contract with the firm, offering flexibility. But it's a two-way street – Robins says lawyers are paid when the firm is, aligning the interests of those doing the work and those paying for it, and prioritising the solicitor-client relationship over involvement from management.

Technology is also a priority, being one of the firm's "big-budget items." But, perhaps most importantly, Robins says focus and strategy are crucial. "Managing growth is harder than you'd think – so many things change. We've had to turn down many lucrative opportunities because they don't fit with who we are – and if you don't know who you are, you're lost."



"Managing growth is harder than you'd think – so many things change"





Technology transfusion



Jane Pritchard, founder and consultant at Elawvate, discusses SME law firm technology assimilation and how not to get absorbed in the disruption

If only it were as easy as a Star Trek Borg assimilation – being plugged into the mainframe platform and obtaining the mindset needed for the digital transformation.

Over the past 20 years in practice, and the last five in consultancy, I've been immersed in digital transformation – working from an SME private practice background as a practising lawyer and then into consultancy across multiple firms. The behaviour and attitude of lawyers to a digital revolution can be unrealistic. I'm allowed to be brutal when discussing lawyers' attitudes to technology, as I am one.

Chairing a national technology user group for the Tikit P4W UK client base gave me some real traction to incite revolution from within a trusted network of tech-lawyer specialists. It may be total sci-fi overkill, but it has been a journey not unlike navigating the matrix – thinking you're all alone and finding a network of rebels already unplugged and ready to take up the mantle.

When I talk of rebellion, I mean the disruption in legal needed to deliver digital transformation from within. So much emphasis is on tech companies providing solutions lawyers need: big data needing big solutions based on the perception of how legal services need to be delivered in a fast-moving international market place.

The problem with relying solely on software houses to deliver solutions is that without tech-lawyers being involved in the design process, without true consultation and stakeholder collaboration, digital solutions often fall short. Not just for the lawyers expected to use them, but for their client base too. As soon as expectations are not met, tech is put back in the box and rather than having moved on, firms can move backwards.

In SME firms, where we can inform and deliver transformation more speedily owing to our agility, there are several barriers to change which can be

removed remarkably easily.

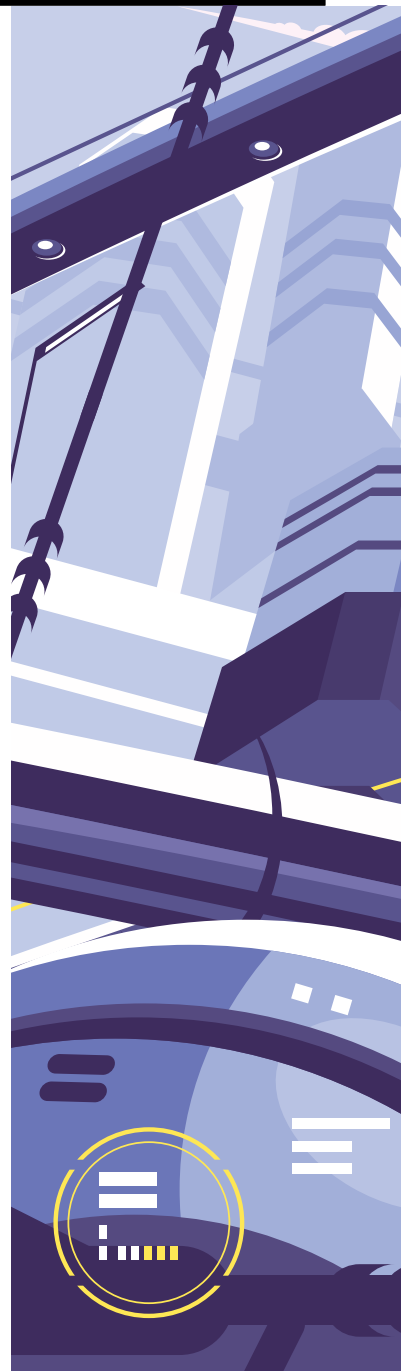
I have been incredibly lucky over the last five years to be able to work for client firms that have already made the decision to invest in a digital transformation of their business. Whether it has been regulation changes (GDPR and pricing transparency) or business planning, which inspired the commitment, let's look at how the tech transfusion can succeed:

1 Identifying digital transformation as central to the business plan

Goes without saying, right? Well no, not really. Investment in a plan for digital transformation is fundamental but often missing. The strategic roadmap, which places digital legal services at the centre of the practice, is as important as winning new clients for future growth; how many business plans detail the roadmap? In my experience in SME, resources are directed to dealing with the short-term challenges as they emerge, reacting to them and moving to the next one: making tax digital; SRA rules; accounting changes; what the latest regulatory framework will provide. Those firms I have worked with who are well on their way to transformation are those who have embedded the project into the core business and designed all of their business strategy around it.

2 Attitude to change management

So, we have the plan, the big picture, the way the future will look, but who is going to deliver the change needed? It's no secret that lawyers, like many professionals, are poor at coping with change. In fact, it is not a lawyer thing at all – it is often a reflection of poor change management. Get your key stakeholders within the business involved in the business plan itself and the change management process will be far easier. Understanding how the changes needed will impact on the entire practice, on each team and identifying barriers can be liberating. Start from as basic as who can use a mobile





device, and build robust training cycles. All the most successful projects start with face-to-face consultation, round tables, and on to the shop floor.

3 Training in-house teams of tech lawyers

This next challenge is the one I get excited about. That addictive lightbulb moment when lawyers who have worked one way for 30 years embrace change that improves their working methods. It is where we started with the Borg and where we need to concentrate our tech transfusion without the radical assimilation!

I can confirm that there is no mayday signal that is to be intercepted by a digital hero, who can transform legal practice in a Captain Marvel fashion. We are without doubt the masters of our own destiny. There are gaps all over the profession for tech-lawyers who can translate the business needs into plans for software development, intelligent workflows, streamlining and automation, but we simply can't wait for those new waves of lawyers in law school to provide the disruption we

need.

I asked myself how I became a tech-lawyer, why I refused to accept mediocre out-of-the-box solutions that didn't fit and I guess it started when I was introduced to the treasury tag. It never made any sense to me that we would work digitally, store digitally, print the document off, punch a hole in it and push it over a treasury tag into a paper file. Back before we talked cloud technology and digital legal services, many of us were practising at paper-light firms, believing in better, and I was lucky enough to work with colleagues and partners who encouraged my curiosity and determination to be different. What are we doing now to encourage the tech-lawyers who work within our practices? Give them the freedom to design, invest in their training and promote IT skills in the same way you would business development. Recruit yes, but invest in the talent that is without doubt already within your business and your technology transfusion will be complete. **LPM**

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TELLING
RETAIL

Bernard Savage, director at Tenandahalf and speaker at LPM 2019 conferences, discusses what lessons law firms can learn from retail

It's often said that things come full circle in life. After spending the first 10 years of my career at Procter & Gamble in the 1990s, working with Boots, Asda and the Co-op, I've spent much time in more recent years advising law firms to do what savvy retailers do.

Here are five lessons I believe law firms can learn from retailers:

1 Understand that a brand is more than a logo. A brand is what your clients say about your firm when you are not in the room.

2 Retailers understand their customers because they invest regularly in research. This requires more than just sending questionnaires to clients after a case is completed.

3 New product development is valued. How many law firms are truly innovative? How can you be

innovative if you are not actively listening to clients and don't have people accountable for piloting new initiatives?

4 Leaders walk in their customers' shoes by visiting stores and experiencing what their customers experience.

5 Care is taken to create a positive impression front of house. Can your clients have confidence in the quality of your legal work if your reception is untidy and not in tune with your brand identity?

Based on these lessons, I recommend firms take the following three actions:

1 Invest in third-party client listening programmes

2 Get more informal face time with clients outside of open matters

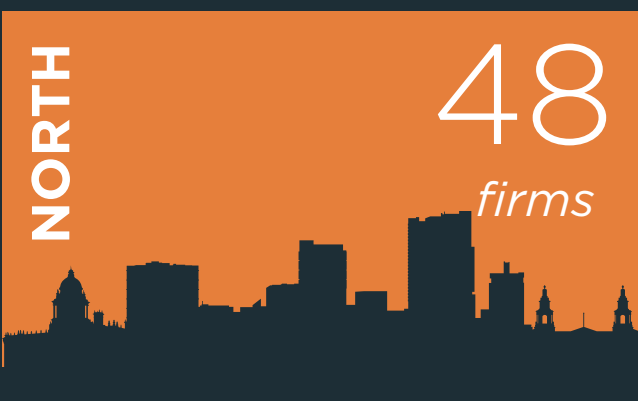
3 Tidy up your reception!
If this piques your interest, please let me know. **LPM**



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INDUSTRY VIEWS INDEX

A DETAILED IMPRESSION



26 INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Size the day

Jon Whittle at **LexisNexis** discusses the capacity for growth at SME law firms, as well as the advantages and challenges facing firms when retaining their talent

28 INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Boardroom birthday suit

Bethany Kayser at **Propero Partners** on the often overlooked significance of appropriately presented content and making the right first impression

SIZE THE DAY



Small law firms make up the majority of the current legal market (at 95%). Jon Whittle, market development director at LexisNexis, looks at the link between a firm's size and its ability to scale and grow effectively

Research conducted by LexisNexis for the Bellwether report series highlighted that small firms are becoming more and more attractive to legal professionals as their chosen employer. The Bellwether report, entitled *Is the Future Small?*, surveyed solicitors currently working at small law firms, where the majority – two out of three of those surveyed – had previously worked in medium to top-tier firms.

Currently, small firms make up an overwhelming majority of the legal market, with 95% of firms earning under £500k and 50% earning less than £150k. The study found that 44% of respondents said they would consider working for a small firm in the future, with fewer than two in 10 citing that they would choose to work for a large firm. The benefits of small firms were resoundingly clear: a better client experience, workplace efficiency, an agile approach, competitive pricing and the ability to remain in control.



Over half of the respondents to the study felt that model and succession planning would be stunted as a result of individual lawyer–client relationships in small firms

SME VANTAGE

Many of the positive attributes of small law firms relate to a lawyer's ability to focus on their work, and their clients, as opposed to being bound by the high levels of bureaucracy typically associated with larger law firms.

What is evident is that solicitors who have worked hard to study law have usually shown real commitment to their subject, and a passion for the industry and their area of expertise. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that so many are attracted to the qualities offered by smaller firms. Swifter decision-making, a greater control of their work, and a single point of contact managing client issues, all invariably affect not only the experience offered to the client, but the potential impact the lawyer can have, and their ability to focus on delivering high-quality law. Interestingly, The Bellwether series research found that, while there are challenges associated with working in smaller firms, there are typically sensible ways to combat these issues.

For example, while 82% of solicitors are concerned that a lack of capacity could force them to turn good work away for larger company deals, firms can, in fact, turn to affiliate networks, co-branding and other means to bulk up in their lighter areas. In addition, three-quarters of those surveyed from small law firms admitted to finding it hard to take time off. However, at 44%, the majority of solicitors surveyed said they would consider working for a small or solo outfit (firms with fewer than 20 fee earners) in their next role, meaning that their overall outlook seems unaffected by the potential disadvantages of working in small law.

In spite of the positivity of small law firm solicitors, the question remains whether a company's size has a real impact on its ability to grow. And, to what extent can a small firm stand up to larger firms regarding succession planning,



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client strategy and growth targets?

BETTER BIG?

One point which remains prevalent among solicitors of small firms is that the majority (91%) feel that growing the business model is a potential problem. Indeed, a key part of a law firm's business model is individual relationships between client and solicitor – a model which is difficult to replicate and scale – leading to overall growth of the business.

Additionally, over half of the respondents to the study felt that model and succession planning would be stunted as a result of individual lawyer-client relationships in small firms. Also, 39% said that a lack of capacity for taking on good work was a 'major' problem in their role.

However, if we assess the key challenges faced

by all law firms, including those in the top tier, 55% of lawyers quoted attracting new business as a key issue, while 32% stated retaining clients as one of their main challenges.

It would seem, therefore, that challenges in growth and scalability cannot be directly attributed to the size of the firm. In fact, a total of 91% of the solicitors in the study felt positive about the future and 76% were planning to grow in the next five years. When comparing this with figures from 2016, we can also see a 10% increase in the number of lawyers stating that they believe their small firm is optimally sized for success, (currently standing at 51%). Evidently, in the legal market, big is not necessarily better, and confidence in small law among its solicitors is on the rise.

To read the *Is the Future Small?* Bellwether report, visit www.lexisnexis.co.uk/future. **LPM**

BOARDROOM BIRTHDAY SUIT



Bethany Kayser, senior content producer at Propero Partners, on what the presentation of your documents says about your firm

You wake up and look outside. It's grey but there is no rain. Standard. Jumping out of bed, you run through the presentation in your head. Coffee on. Quick shower. You've been prepping for this all week – you're ready.

Freshly pressed suit. Crisp shirt. The cashmere and the caffeine start to work their magic. You're confident. Dressed for success. Ready to walk into that meeting and win ...

Now imagine for a second that, instead of a suit, you put your pyjamas back on. Or your dirty gym gear. Or, worse, you fail to put anything on at all. Suddenly that presentation looks headed for disaster. Why? Because you only get one chance to make a first impression, and there's research to back that up.

DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

According to McKinsey, people are not loyal – 60% of the consumers surveyed for a consumer behaviour report in 2017 said they would switch when considering a new purchase. While this research specifically looked at B2C purchases, it gives us insight into the modern buyer's journey. In 2019, 'the moment of initial consideration' (otherwise known as first impressions) is vital. Get it right, and that's part of the battle won. Get it wrong and you might as well have worn your pyjamas to the office.

But you already know this. You work for a law firm, which means you already understand the importance of perception. Whether it's a suit, or a restaurant, or the office, the choices you make matter.

Which is why it's curious that this attention to detail rarely reaches the documents that are passed between firms and their potential clients. The physical printouts that get handed from person to person. The digital documents that are forwarded, ccd, and bccd to almost everyone in an office. Do they not deserve the same consideration, since they (like your suit) form

part of that good impression you're trying to make?

The problem is threefold. First, there's the obvious skills deficit that law firms have. That's not to say that lawyers aren't creative, but rather that they're unlikely to be encouraged to hone any creative skills they do have, since those hours aren't billable. Second, the link between creative and business results has always been difficult to prove. This, in an industry that values metrics like profit per partner, makes it tricky to sell to decision-makers. If you can't prove its worth, there's little chance you'll get the investment.

A recent analysis of creativity managed to somewhat quantify the impact it has on the bottom line. McKinsey developed an index based on the number of awards that a company had won at Cannes (a well-known measure of creative excellence) between 2011 and 2016. More points were awarded based on certain criteria. Those that came higher in the index were found to have performed better financially than competitors who scored lower on the index. Of those in the top quartile of the index, 67% had above-average organic revenue growth, and 70% had above-average total return to shareholders (LawAhead, 2018). This demonstrates that there is a link between good creative and a good year.



Dressing your documents like you would yourself is the kind of thinking that will put you a well-dressed step ahead of your competition



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DRESS TO IMPRESS

Lastly, it's likely that firms don't dress their content like they do themselves because they simply haven't thought to. In an environment entrenched in tradition, it's easy to adopt an 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' mentality. Unfortunately, in an increasingly competitive market, this mentality isn't enough to cut it.

As part of a website redesign project we're working on here at Propero, we recently conducted market research for a law firm to find out what their users thought of their website. Reviews were mixed.

Some thought the site said and did exactly what they wanted it to. Others felt it didn't accurately represent the firm, or that it would dissuade them from contacting the firm because it didn't speak

to their needs.

This highlights the fact that many firms struggle to appeal to their multiple audiences. But with good creative, this is entirely possible. Just like the more casual clothes you'd wear if you were trying to win a startup's business versus the smarter apparel you'd don for a corporate client, so too should your content be dressed appropriately.

Ultimately, if you believe in the power of perception – that the right suit, the right restaurant, or the right office plays a role in landing you the right clients – then there's no excuse for not presenting your content in the same way, with the same pride.

In law, perception is everything. Dressing your documents like you would yourself is the kind of thinking that will put you a well-dressed step ahead of your competition. **LPM**

DAY IN THE STRIFE

SAM HUMBLE

Practice manager, Juncker Boiling & Biggergrove



When I was asked to do this little piece for LPM, I was anxious. Good business management means adhering to well-thought-out policies and procedures, and that includes a detailed HR and grievances policy – it's unprofessional to air your dirty laundry in public, my mother used to say (she was a paralegal, back in the day).

But voicing concerns and encouraging transparency around personnel and staff behaviour challenges in law firms is an important step toward a better business. We all know law is a traditional and risk-averse profession – but some behaviours need to be relegated to the history books. One lawyer at Juncker Boiling & Biggergrove who's particularly conservative in his working habits is Barry Wisecrack, a senior partner with over 30 years at the firm. I don't actually know how long Barry has been with us, having myself joined only eight years ago, and searching through the HR records proved fruitless – they were handwritten before 1998, and the ink had run.

One particularly unendearing habit Barry continues to adhere to is his 'little black book' of client contact details – multiple times over I've told Barry that it could easily be left behind by accident in the back of a cab on the way home from a five-hour-long networking lunch at Browns brasserie or The Ivy – it's hard to keep track of your fingers and thumbs after a few bottles of Château Cissac, let alone tatty old WH Smiths notebooks with client phone numbers and the name of their first pet or child (likely passwords!!!). It's a potential perfect storm of data breaches and client fury.

Our firm is currently moving over to a cloud-based, digital document process, and we're instituting a 'clean desk' policy, with the potential to move towards hotdesking and other agile working solutions in the near future. But Barry, in his wisdom, refuses to remove the – I swear – decades-old paperwork from his desk. I would not be surprised to find a Bee Gees first-pressing vinyl hidden somewhere in there – but Barry insists: "They're loyal clients; they'll come back to us one day, just you see! And I'll have all their details to hand when they do!"

We'll be looking into bringing in a consultant to help all of our fee earners to see the benefits of moving over to digital documents, and the threats of not doing so – but I'm concerned Barry's tendency to use '12456' as a password (he misses the '3', because, he says "that'll fox them!") is an indication of his attitude towards all technology.

We shall see how well our re-education programme turns out. **LPM**

“

One particularly unendearing habit Barry continues to adhere to is his 'little black book' of client contact details ...

BEST OF THE BEST

Best Companies Index (BCI) scores have decreased over the last five years for law firms, and all private companies in general. But law firm scores are declining more steeply than those for other private companies. At the moment, the scores are still good enough to be awarded a Best Companies 1 Accreditation, but not for long if the trend continues*

679.7
1000

Law firms' 2019 average BCI score

of law firms involved gained a Best Companies star accreditation status

63%

of law firms surveyed ranked in The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For 2019 list

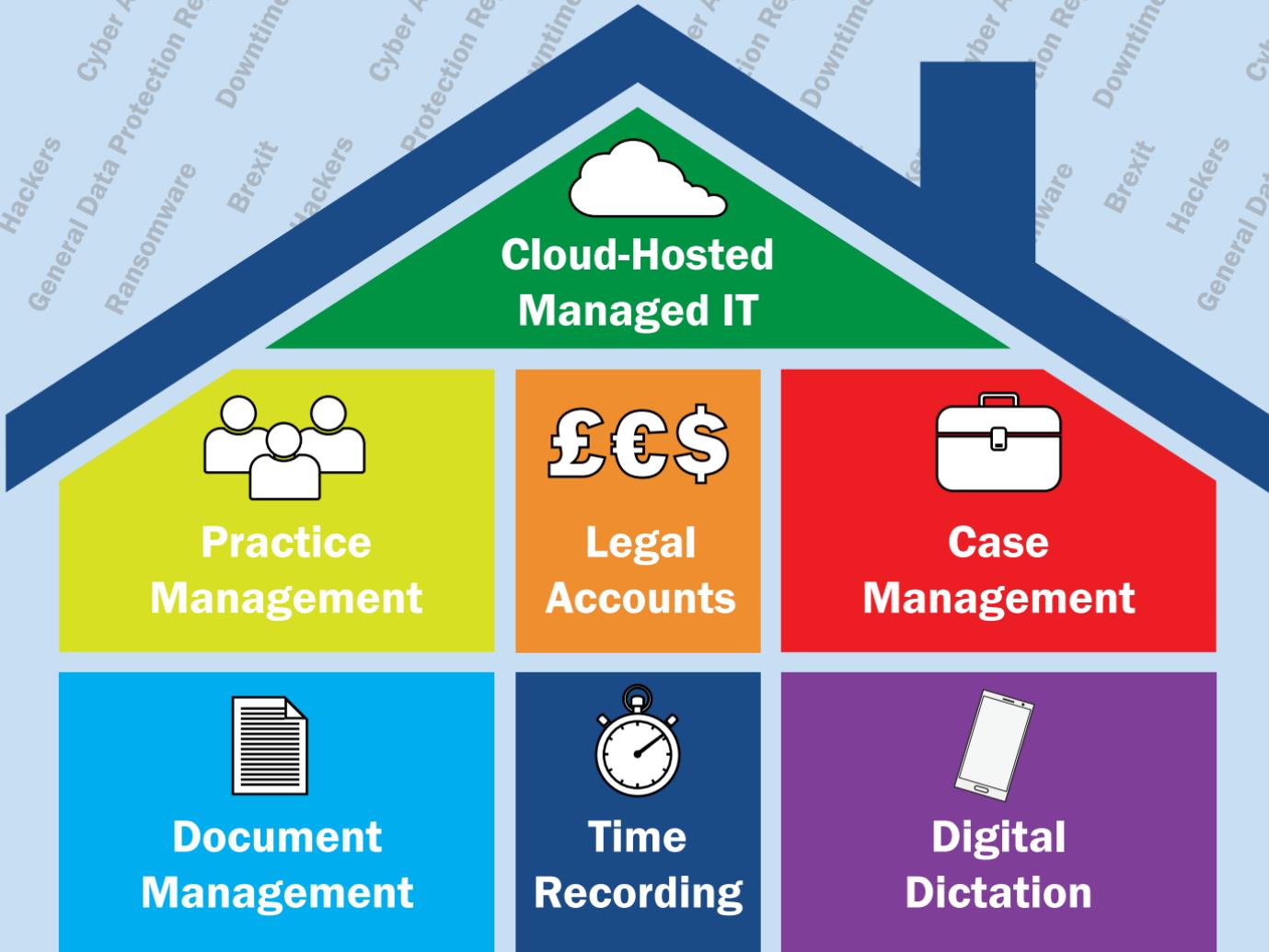
NEARLY
1/3

average spend per head for staff development at top-performing firms

£373

LAW FIRMS V PRIVATE COMPANIES
AVERAGE BCI SCORES 2015-2019

Source: Trends in workplace engagement – law firms 2019 analysis by Best Companies




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Management**


**Legal
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