

Briefing

PEOPLE, CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

MAY 2014

*Interview***Andrew McEachern**

Norton Rose Fulbright's director of people and development talks global firm culture, getting your values through, and building in collaboration

*Feature***Managing change**

What's next for HR as the legal business transforms – get views from leaders in strategy, transformation and HR pushing firms to the next level

*Industry views***Driving change**

Industry knowledge from suppliers for human resources leaders

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Reaching for new skies

With great change ahead, how can firms best harness people power – and who will those people be?

Business Transformation

ONE-DAY CONFERENCE, LONDON 19 JUNE 2014

The new **Business Transformation** conference recognises a number of key strategic issues that large law firms are tackling right now

Our research identified a clear demand for a relevant, topic focused and thought provoking conference that delivers delegates access to fresh and innovative ideas from high calibre speakers, both inside and outside the legal market. Expect to see expert panels of GCs, leaders in business transformation and executives from law firms leading the transformation of their businesses.

9.00 Registration and coffee

9.30 Welcome and Opening Address

9.35 Keynote Address

10.15 Panel Discussion (LAW FIRM)

INFLUENCING AND CREATING A STRATEGY FOR LEGAL BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

- Getting partners and lawyers engaged with change and wanting to change
- Increasing partner understanding of change processes, change awareness & willingness to embrace change
- Obstacles and challenges when approaching key stakeholders – the importance of gaining buy-in from the top down
- Strategy that recognises the market – aligning transformation strategy to client needs and demands

10.55 Panel Discussion (NON-LAW FIRM)

LEARNING FROM THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SECTOR TO INNOVATE AND ASPIRE WITHIN THE LEGAL INDUSTRY

- Insight into how accounting and consulting reformatted their business sectors
- Capturing best practice from these firms and applying to the legal sector
- How business-to-business transaction services are delivered

11.35 Coffee

Choose one of the following three sessions

12.05 Resourcing Stream

RE-ENGINEERING THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS THAT PEOPLE PLAY WITHIN A FIRM

- Creating retention, engagement and pipelines for tomorrow's firm
- Finding enough initiatives to celebrate people's success and recognition of that success
- New measures and ways of getting work done without using a lawyer; exploring the role of non-lawyers delivering services to maximise revenue and profitability
- Looking at how talent should be assembled and deployed within law firms – is it the end of the partner/associate?
- Engaging and empowering employees in the new agile workplace

Business Process Stream

DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE FIRM OF THE FUTURE – STREAMLINED AND IMPROVED EFFICIENCIES THAT ADAPT AND EVOLVE TO THE FUTURE SHAPE OF THE INDUSTRY

- Operational analysis – identifying better measures of productivity and how to make them work
- Driving process improvement in a legal business and business services application
- Breaking down silos to enable transformation – cross system and cross function integration
- Realigning a firm's infrastructure, centralisation of process and resource

Technology Stream

FORMING NEW LEGAL ENTERPRISES

- Exploring the use of technology to replace what lawyers have traditionally done
- Bringing service delivery to the forefront of your firm's business processes
- Creating collaboration and joined up data across departments
- Understanding capability and scope of existing technology before investing in new



What to expect

There will be three key themes that we will flow throughout the day – business process, technology and resourcing – as well as hearing case studies from non-law firms and law firms who have gone through transformative journeys in some shape or form.

13.00 Lunch

14.00 **MINING FOR INTELLIGENCE – KNOWING YOUR MARKET, YOUR CLIENTS AND YOUR COMPETITORS**

- Understanding clients' business and processes and building your firms processes around these
- Innovation in products to deliver what clients are asking for or are responding to in other markets
- Evidence based decision making – implementing consistent client service internationally
- Competitor intelligence – pricing rationally, justifiably, affordably and profitably to compete in today's marketplace
- Importance of gaining a sound understanding and analysis of spend and profitability from your clients

14.40 Coffee

15.10 **EFFECTING CHANGE WITHIN A LAW FIRM – PRACTICALITIES OF RUNNING TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS**

- Ensuring firms are clear about their vision and ensuring it is distinct enough to create enough differentiation
- Identifying the necessary governance to identify, select and run transformation projects
- Implementing change that is measurable – practical steps and guidelines

15.50 Case Study (NON-LAW)

16.20 Case Study (LAW)

16.50 Stream Outcomes and Summary of the Conference

17.10 Closing Address

17.20 Networking Drinks Reception

Don't miss this unique opportunity to network and share experiences with your peers

Who should attend

- Leaders involved in change management and business transformation
- Directors and senior managers in finance, operations, HR, facilities, telecoms and IT
- Law firm senior managers responsible for outsourcing and shared services
- Managing and senior partners
- Managers responsible for implementing legal project management

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Change up, before it's too late



Law firms are changing. Some slowly, some quickly – but change is now the order of the day. You could, at a pinch, call it transformation.

In this issue we look at how law firm leaders are riding the chimera of the modern legal business – a beast constantly growing and changing (usually through eating its competition or its neighbours). From instilling global cultures to how firms are resourcing their work, it's a world in flux.

Our interview with Norton Rose Fulbright's HR leader, Andrew McEachern, and our feature article, with wise words from leaders in Clifford Chance, Clyde & Co, DLA Piper, Eversheds, Hill Dickinson, Olswang, Parabis, Pinsent Masons, Weightmans and Withers, report from the spearhead of change in legal.

We also have input around change, transformation and efficiency in hiring and running HR from leading suppliers in the legal sector from p25.

Are you coming to our Business Transformation conference in June? You should be – find the agenda and how to register in the opening pages of this issue. Should you or your firm be in Briefing? Email me at rupertw@lsn.co.uk – it's good to talk.

Rupert White, editor of Briefing

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Interview: Andrew McEachern Norton Rose Fulbright



An influx of new entrants are changing legal. We speak to BLP's ex-agency marketing and BD chief about how law firms should be reaching out – from pipelines to phasing and beyond

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Feature: Managing change



Leaders in legal business transformation, strategy and HR talk developing your people and your culture in tandem for the best of the business.

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Photography of Andrew McEachern: Jonathan Goldberg
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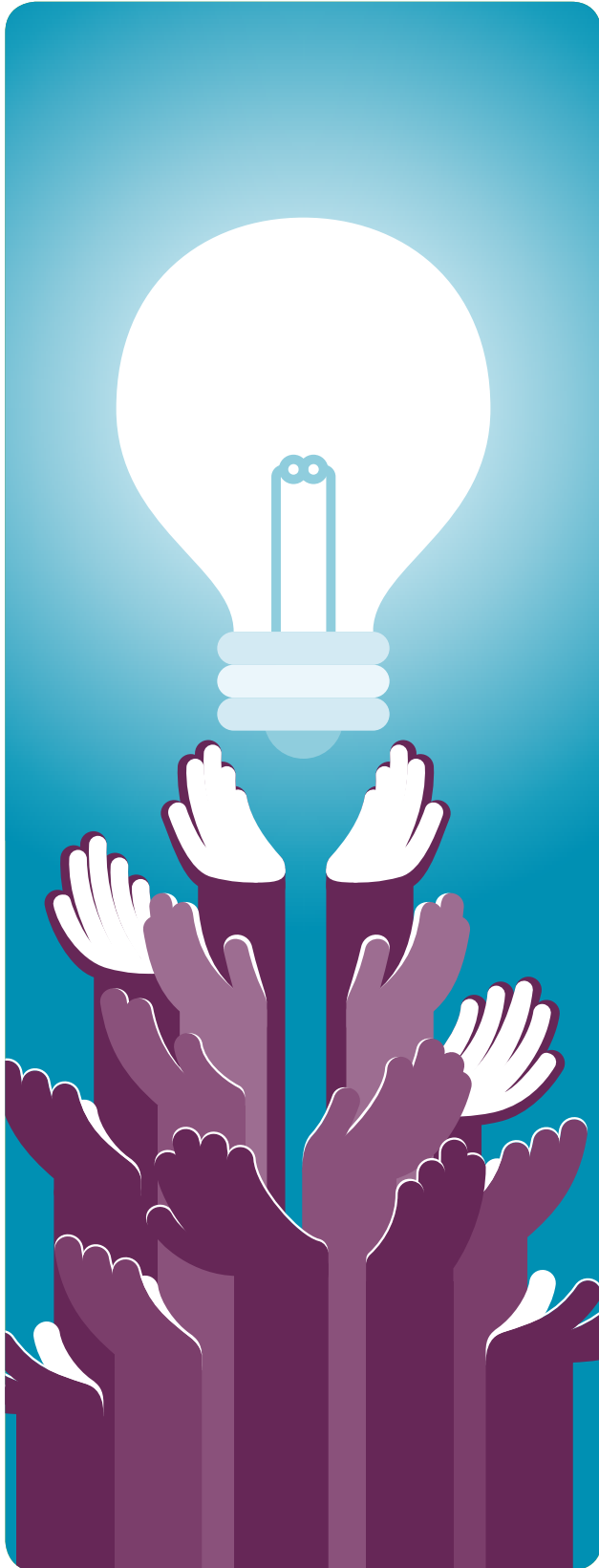
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Richard Hooper of **Balance** on doing what's best for your people and the business, by uniting talent across your firm

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Analysis: **Joining up the change journey**

IT can play an enormous role in making change work, as much as leadership, culture and buy-in, says **Andy Sparkes** at **LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions**

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Adopting HR technology once the preserve of graduate recruiting will be HR's next best move, says **Matthew Broadbent** of **AllHires**

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This month's interview with

Andrew McEachern of **Norton Rose Fulbright** was

transcribed by:



Main interview photography by

Jonathan Goldberg:

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New Business Intake is Too...

Slow ■ Frustrating ■ Inflexible ■ Time Consuming ■ Hard to Change
Complicated ■ Dependent on Data Entry ■ Painful on Mobile Devices

(We Can Fix That)



Efficiently taking on matters is critical to the practice of law. Today, several market trends are putting new pressures on law firms to transform the way they evaluate and engage new business:

- **Clients** expect greater service (and want to pay less for it)
- **Lawyers** want to start work immediately (sometimes before conflicts are cleared or matter numbers are issued)
- **Firms** want to more carefully evaluate the clients and matters they accept (to avoid surprises or unpaid bills)
- **IT and Risk Teams** are eager to provide lawyers with easier tools, faster service and a pain-free experience

Thriving in this environment requires an innovative approach to intake and conflicts — one that allows firms to act quickly (while still rigorously evaluating new matters), to delight lawyers (especially on mobile devices) and to easily change processes over time (without outrageous delays or expense). In short, intake must evolve.

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The Briefing Interview

Change culture

Norton Rose Fulbright's global people and development director Andrew McEachern talks growth, culture and change on a global scale – and why the challenge of firm-wide unity brings profits to everyone.

Words: Rupert White

Photography: Jonathan Goldberg

Andrew McEachern has a big task on his hands. As global director of people and development at Norton Rose Fulbright, one of the world's biggest law firms and one of the biggest verein firms around, NRF (not an approved abbreviation) is a top-tier firm and fairly enormous by legal standards: over 7,300 people worldwide, revenues of not far off a billion pounds.

McEachern cut his teeth as a lawyer in private practice before going in-house at Shell in the nineties. He wound up Shell's head of legal for north-east Asia, and then made the jump to banking in 2000 – spending nine years at Goldman Sachs. He left Goldman Sachs not long after the dark days of the credit crunch and crash, roughly the same time as Rolling Stone writer Matt Taibbi dubbed his then employer “a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity”. It was probably a good time to leave. Working for lawyers again must, by comparison, have seemed a positively popularist move.

Heading HR in a global business formed from a structure like a verein requires some special thinking, and hard goals of community, sharing, collaboration and communication. It's about creating and fostering a culture in a distributed business. This can show itself in many ways – from a 150-person charity cycle ride in Texas that the whole business is involved in fundraising for, to 1,200-partner conferences.

There are many ways to achieve this, says McEachern, like building networks within business services and across teams that do the same sorts of work in fee earning. “Having people talk with each other to solve a problem is a fantastic way of building relationships. Culture was the number one priority in terms of putting all of the firms together to make the global practice – and it was refreshing for me that the culture imperative was so prominent,

because in the corporate world of mergers and acquisitions, culture is rarely a big driver [in change]. As a result, many – if not most – mergers and combinations fail.”

NRF has tried to pick firms to bring into the fold that match its culture, says McEachern, for this reason. Taking on lots of firms that are highly dissimilar to the vision of the future business is asking for trouble, he says, especially for people management.

“Any number of law firms are looking round to combine, and some of those are distressed acquisitions or distressed combinations, and I think that will prove to be very difficult on the people side of things.”

When Norton Rose (as was) set out on its mission to grow through M&A, says McEachern, it organically grew its understanding of the ‘rules’ of becoming the firm it is now. Every firm brought into the verein needed to match the global firm's ‘business principles’ and come up to the high quality bar set. More rules were developed as more firms were pulled in.

The firm wants people to feel part of “a single firm with a common culture, so unity was key”. McEachern also says that it was really important to make new firm people feel they'd be valued in the absorbing business. So, whenever a firm is merged, it's vital to make it clear the value NRF puts on its people.

“The best way to do it is to get people together, and to make sure that people are moved around the group as much as possible. Mobility at all levels in all parts of the firm really assists with the embedding and sharing of the culture.”

NRF is determined to stick to a “one leadership, one strategy” approach, he says. “It's something that we talk about a lot, and embed in all of our training programmes. You have to take every opportunity you can to embed that. You can write out a set of business principles,

but if they're not lived, they're for nothing.

"To the same extent, writing down who we are and what we do is less effective than talking about it and sharing the experiences. Storytelling is a very powerful way of sharing culture."

It's still early days for the current incarnation of NRF, says McEachern – Fulbright only came on board in June 2013, which was "the last big piece of the jigsaw". The challenge for the last three or four years, he says, has been to put the international practice together – the challenge of the next few years is going to be to be making it work.

McEachern says the tie-up with Fulbright & Jaworski, because it was based in Texas, not New York (for example), and had a sizeable international business, was a better fit than a more home market-focused East Coast firm. "The Texans are good listeners. They're very secure in their legal market and I think more like the rest of the Norton Rose folks. The top New York firms, I suspect, just aren't interested in combining with anybody else. They're comfortable with the business model they have." The US practice has embraced very quickly the concepts of national practice heads and team leaders "to help focus the business to be looking more broadly", says McEachern.

Problems of scale

As the biggest firms get bigger and more global, the world around them is changing. How will those in charge of the people side of legal business cope – and succeed – in firms that could have 15,000 or more staff?



"Writing down who we are and what we do is less effective than talking about it and sharing the experiences. Storytelling is a very powerful way of sharing culture."

"It will be really interesting to see how the legal market evolves over the next three to five years. The big four accountancy firms were created because the clients actually demanded it – they had to have, or they wanted to have, the same auditor in each of the locations where they had a presence. Law firms don't have that imperative, so I don't think law firms will get

to the size that those guys have.” This is partly because, he says, consulting and accounting firms have a wider variety of offerings than law firms – but is that true? Most of the biggest firms mainly, arguably, do consulting with some law at the centre. Why can’t they get really big?

McEachern agrees that, even if the biggest firms don’t get as big as KPMG or PwC, things have to give – and one of those things is how many partners a firm should have.

“In terms of the overall size, managing numbers that size is a huge [challenge]. The partnership structure is a strong and useful one, [but] I think the PwC model, with multiple associate directors and managing directors and all sorts of levels underneath, may come in [to the sector]. [But] it doesn’t feel as though anybody is rushing towards that.

“Do law firms have too many partners? I’m not sure that they do. [But] inevitably I suspect the numbers of partners in the legal sector probably will come down in the next five or so years.”

With fewer partners comes a more corporate career path. The big challenge behind that, of course, lies in incentivising people who might previously have worked for the carrot that is equity partnership.

But a bigger challenge may be for firms that want to stay with the old partner-focused firm model, because in a global firm it might be holding the business back. Future leaders now tend to follow partners in their path to success – but global professional services businesses such as accountants and consulting firms need to move people around a lot more than law firms. That’s an inherent tension in the standard partnership-route firm: to ‘stir the pot’, you need to move people around globally – but if your best people are stuck to partners’ chairs to get promoted, you can’t move them.

“It is a problem and a challenge, and one

that we are working on in terms of how we can encourage more mobility of people around the firm. Lawyers are, as a breed, somewhat risk averse and very many of them view their careers very cautiously.” McEachern, in typical lawyer fashion, says he “doesn’t disagree” that some lawyers will think that taking them out of their established place for two or so years in the second half of their run into partnership is not going to help them, because “they’ll bring world experience back but [they fear that they’re] unlikely to be able to bring clients back, and that’s what they want to be focusing on”.

Stirring the pot

NRF is looking hard at how to “develop an international mobility programme, where we ask people to go to other locations with a view to building their careers so that, when they come back, they’re better for it” and, one assumes, not robbed of their future as they see it.

This might be helped by the fact that more lawyers than ever don’t want the old goals, but there’s still no shortage of people who want to become partners, says McEachern.

“I think the main difference, if you look at the law versus the accountancy firm model, is that there are fewer options for a partner who is specialised in one area to move than there are for accountancy firms. The accountancy firms seem much better at moving partners either from one sector to the next, or from one geography to the next.

“It’s easier to argue that, as a consultant, your skill set is more transferable than if you’re a banking partner. It’s a challenge. That might sound a little defeatist but I have thought long and hard about why it is that we seem to have less flexibility.”

Following his experience at Goldman Sachs, McEachern contends that even in banking it can be easier to ‘stir the pot’ inside the business than it is in legal. “Goldman was certainly able to move people around, and did whether or not they really wanted to. My previous career to Goldman was within Shell, and certainly

Not sure, but if you’re a currency trader in London you could do it in New York or in Singapore.”

Change and transformation

McEachern, and those in similar positions, have over recent years had to become experts in change and transformation. And though NRF is causing transformation in other firms through competitive pressure, it’s also constantly going through change itself.

Neither can it be immune to threats from a changing competitive backdrop. The big international firms may become enormous over the next few years – 2020 might bring a Baker & McKenzie with 20,000-plus people, a PwC legal business the size of CMS or larger, or another super-massive merger-rigged firm heaving into view. NRF must continue to adapt to survive and thrive.

“In the short to medium-term, [businesses like PwC] are the big threat. The accountancy firms piled into the legal sector [years ago] but probably as a result of Anderson Legal and Enron and so on, that sort of halted. But now they’re piling back in, they’re very serious and they’ve got deep pockets.”

These and other pressures will drive firms like NRF will have to look in the mirror as the legal market is remade over the next decade. “The change to the legal sector in the next five to 10 years will be of a scale unseen before in the profession, and law firms are realising that the world is never going to go back to the high



“The accountancy firms seem much better at moving partners either from one sector to the next, or from one geography to the next.”

mobility in Shell was hugely important. When I was there, there was something like 5,000 ex-pats around the world and they viewed that as key from both a cultural point of view but also for getting best practice shared around the world.

“Is it harder to move lawyers than bankers?

days of 2007. So we're looking at our business model [for the future], such as where and how we advise our clients, what they need and what business might disappear.

"Some firms have their heads in the sand, and lawyers can be world-class resisters of change – though some partners absolutely get that the world is rapidly changing."

Lawyers' natural cynicism also doesn't help them react rapidly to change, says McEachern. But NRF is facing into the wind – because it has to. McEachern says NRF has taken on a new COO for Europe, Middle East and Asia from outside the legal sector to carry out a root and branch review of how those regions work.

Something else holding law firms back from faster change is, once again, partnership structure, he says. Because a partner's fiscal interest evaporates once she leaves the firm, unlike company shareholders, partners are pulled towards thinking only about the nearer term. But a longer vision is needed to appreciate some of the true threats in the market.

"Everybody should be [analysing] the short-term threats, the longer-term threats, what technology is going to do to us and how much of the business we're in is likely to be automated, or can be done by somebody else in a different place, in a much cheaper way?"

This will mean adjusting who works for the firm and how they work. From remixing the ratio of business services and lawyers to changing the number of trainees and paralegals in the firm, from deciding on outsourcing to working out where to put business services support – it's all up for grabs, says McEachern.

For now, NRF isn't keen on outsourcing, says McEachern. "Norton Rose Fulbright

is one of the few major firms which hasn't gone down the offshoring route," he says, but now the firm's merger mania is turning into consolidation, it will need to look to the best way to structure the business in terms of efficiency.

Law firms also need more business services

"Some firms have their heads in the sand, and lawyers can be world-class resisters of change – though some partners absolutely get that the world is rapidly changing."

people from outside legal, says McEachern. "It's really important to bring new blood into the sector. There was a time when people in legal business services would just move from one firm to the next, and that wasn't necessarily enriching the gene pool. Now bringing people in from outside of professional services is happening. Part of my role is to identify where the gaps are [in the firm] and help bring in people from outside – and we're hoping that that will benefit the organisation."

Merger seems to be the hardest word

Merging, especially in the *verein* world that NRF lives in, can be a tough marriage. McEachern says he's learned a lot from the mergers NRF has done – and it's done plenty – but the lessons mainly reduce to not



trying to tell merging firms how to work, and instead finding ways to convince them that a big business like NRF can provide them with things they couldn't otherwise afford or haven't invested in, such as advanced skills development and training. Of course, the horses need to come to the water, so there needs to be lots of encouragement.

One of the big problems of a merged firm is consistency, especially in a global business. All the firms under the NRF umbrella have adopted the firm's 'international academy programme', says McEachern, which is a huge driver for consistency. "We can say to GCs in our biggest clients, who do worry about consistency of the big firms around the world, that we're working towards every associate or attorney having a defined set of competencies they are expected to have as they progress through the ranks, and underpinning all of that is the common training programme."

Career and capability consistency across the businesses inside NRF, or "alignment", is the big push for McEachern over the next three years, he says. This isn't always easy with a business spread across the globe – just

handling communication across the time zones can be very difficult – and in a firm made up of mergers it's especially hard.

"You can also be separated by a common language, so you need to recognise that the way we communicate and the way people respond to things is very different [across the business]. When I joined the legacy Norton Rose it was reasonably international, but the way different parts of the world, South Africa and Australia and the US and Canada respond, is very different. It's about not getting frustrated, and recognising that not everyone works like you."

But this alignment is also about some very simple, very important outcomes. Bringing people into a community and getting them to communicate across a business the size of NRF is a challenge, but it's vital to get people across the firm to work together outside their 'old' cliques and alliances, because future revenue lies in the latent ties and cross-selling that can be leveraged in the new, larger business.

"Our biggest client opportunities are within our own firm. There are 1,200-plus partners in the organisation. The work is there. It's a case of how can we unlock it, how we tap it." ●



Feature

Managing change

.....→

Polly Botsford talks to leaders in business transformation, strategy and HR about developing your people and your culture for the best of the business. Client-focused change is the heartland for today's firms. Here's how they'll be doing it tomorrow.

In a recent conference on innovation in the legal sector, one speaker spelled out one of the main obstacles to change in law firms: lawyers. She also outlined one of the main agents of innovation: non-lawyers – those who come into the business from outside and influence from within, bringing with them new tricks and methodologies.

If she's right, this makes the business of change management – transforming a modern legal business in response to the demands of a revolutionising legal market – a huge challenge. But firms are adapting and remodelling themselves, opening up to those outside influences. HR has a key role in what one HR expert calls the task of “reshaping the bowler hat”.

Changing the ‘how’

One of the main areas of change goes to the very heart of what a lawyer does. In responding

to the challenges of the market and greater demands from clients, firms are looking at changing how lawyers work – changing the delivery of the legal service, making that delivery more efficient, more cost-effective, more client-centric.

This has led firms to analyse what lawyers do and to break down the legal process into component parts and process map roles and responsibilities. Ffion Griffith, global director of HR at Olswang, says her firm is running a process mapping programme and is “focused on the firm’s occupational design”.

“The firm is asking itself: how does it change the shape of the resources it uses?”

Clifford Chance has run what it calls its continuous improvement programme for the past few years, which involves lawyers (with the help of business analysts) drilling down into what tasks and what sequence of tasks they do. This could be a large M&A transaction, or how a partner picks up the phone to give advice on a highly technical aspect of law.

Most of the top 40 firms now employ business analysts and transformation staff who focus on process improvements. But it is important to see these improvements as not just the domain of IT.

Andrew Neill is global programme manager and head of development at Withers, the private client-led firm. He says changing 'how' people work is not about technology on its own.

"IT is not the goal in itself – it is about exploiting IT to foster change. [And] change management is not the same thing as IT training."

Changing the way services are delivered, the introduction of new IT projects, and simplifying or re-routing a legal process does clearly impact hugely on lawyers. They fear this exposure leads to automation and de-skilling. Persuading them that change is a good thing is problematic.

Oliver Campbell is Clifford Chance's global head of business transformation (and he's a good example of an outside influence, having worked in the NHS before joining the magic circle firm). The way he engages with lawyers during the programme might be a good way forward.

"We are not prescriptive about the solution, and we don't impose our ideas on lawyers. We say that this is about 'right skilling', not de-skilling. If we can find a better way of doing things, this frees them up to do the bit that is most rewarding. We also get those who have been through the programme to talk about it".

Jane Tribaudi, head of HR at Parabis Group



"IT is not the goal in itself – it is about exploiting IT to foster change. [And] change management is not the same thing as IT training."

Andrew Neill, global programme manager, Withers

(speaking in a personal capacity), says getting the lawyers on board is about communication, communication, communication. "The majority of employees will come with you on an organisational journey if they know and

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understand the direction of travel and reasons for change.”

In her previous role at John Lewis, Tribaudi lived through the transformation of the retail sector (“from bricks to clicks”, as she puts it) as people radically changed their shopping habits. She understands what unprecedented



“There are predictions that there will be 150,000 lawyers in India [and] three million in China. This is an added potential source.”

Charlie Keeling, global human resources director,
Clyde & Co

change actually feels like for businesses on the receiving end of changing consumer behaviours, and is under no illusion that this level of change is coming to law firms all too soon.

“The trick is to get our thinking caps on and reshape the bowler hat,” she says.

Resource mix ‘n’ match

Fostering change in service delivery and process mapping leads firms to look closely at who should be delivering the service. As a result, they’re rethinking their resourcing.

People in legal HR say the lesson from the recent recession is they need a more flexible resourcing model. Jonathan Bond is director of HR and learning at Pinsent Masons, which recently went through a merger with Scottish firm, McGrigors.

“In down times it is very difficult to turn off a resource if it is fixed,” he says. “So, we have introduced initiatives such as our minimum hours contract where you work a certain number of hours in a year but it is not prescriptive exactly when.” The firm also has a “Vario service”, which places Pinsent alumni lawyers in-house at the client on short-term placements. “This hedges against an unpredictable market and the variable needs of our clients.”

Charlie Keeling is global human resources director at Clyde & Co, which has doubled in size in the last four years.

He agrees that law firms need a broader resource model, from what he calls “seconded junkies” through to homeworkers, flexi-workers, and outsourced workers. He also believes that those firms with an international agenda, like Clyde & Co, will look more for



lawyers outside the UK. “There are predictions that there will be 150,000 lawyers in India [and] three million in China. This is an added potential source.”

The pinnacle of flexibility would be to enable lawyers to switch from one practice area to another to respond to changes in the market. Keeling believes this may just be possible, and relates his experience of doing this when he was COO at Field Fisher Waterhouse. “At the height of the recession, the firm redeployed some lawyers from the corporate to the litigation teams successfully”. Apparently, the litigation partner noted that the redeployees turned out to be some of his best lawyers. Lessons for many in that, perhaps.

But others are more sceptical of this. Andrew Rushworth, director of HR at Hill Dickinson, says that this level of re-skilling is unrealistic. “Lawyers have trained for a number of years as a certain type of lawyer, and that is what they want to do. There are probably certain points in a career where you can do that, but then you quickly get to a point of no return.”

Ultimately, HRDs and COOs would prefer to be able to effectively plan and forecast the firm’s resourcing into the longer term, designing the firm’s resources in a more imaginative and strategic way. Instead of capacity managing in the short term, it would be better to be “thinking more inventively and differently about resourcing in the future”, as Griffith at Olswang puts it. This appears to be a goal rather than a reality at present.

But even if a firm knew very precisely what resource it needed, would it be able to find it and hold onto it?

As part of this broader resource model, law firms can no longer promise a path to partnership to everyone, so they must offer something else to retain good people. And, as law firms become increasingly corporatised,

will lawyers want to stay the distance? Keeling says attracting and retaining talent is about partners having greater involvement in their lawyers' careers.

"You need enough partners with what I call 'the people gene'. When I was at PwC, I found three types of partner: those with the people gene, those without, and those who have a latent gene which needs uncovering. The accountants have managed this. Now it is the law firms' turn."

Growth and globalisation

One of the other key themes in change management is growth, either by merger, acquisition or organic growth.

Among the top firms this has led to the internationalisation of a firm's business. In PwC's 2013 annual law firm survey, around 83% of the top 25 firms say a merger is very or fairly likely by 2016. Of the top 26 to 50 firms, 42% are considering a merger to be very or fairly likely. Both are, or should be, staggering statistics. Handling the people side of mergers, acquisitions and organic growth, is therefore likely to develop into an almost routine task for HR.

There are the obvious fallouts from what may be termed 'merger premium', namely restructuring and redundancies – and there are no easy solutions to deal with these. For Tribaudi, it again goes back to communication. "Employees ask the question: 'How does this change affect me?' That is their primary concern. The only way to answer that is with good and honest communication." Firms cannot afford to be shy in answering those "awkward questions", she warns.

For Bond at Pinsents, consultation is the cornerstone of a successful merger. "We had representatives from all the different groups,

as well as 'merger advocates' who could communicate to their colleagues what the merger meant and how they could engage in the consultation process."

Consultation must also overcome what has been called 'the disenfranchisement' that comes with a merger. Staff find themselves working for an organisation they did not choose to work for and a brand they did not

"Employees ask the question: 'How does this change affect me?' That is their primary concern. The only way to answer that is with good and honest communication."

Jane Tribaudi, head of HR, Parabis Group

sign up to.

Hill Dickinson undertook a series of acquisitions in the 2000s, including acquiring a part of Halliwells, and last year gained the insurance practices of DLA Piper. Rushworth there explains his firm's tactics of rapid integration and a policy of co-existence: "From day one, we made sure we were all working alongside each other. This overcomes a silo or an 'old team versus new team' mentality. Where possible, we were physically in the same space."

For Pinsent Masons, Bond says the firm made a conscious decision to put everyone in an open-plan office in order to increase collaboration, not only between lawyers and business services but also between lawyers from previously different firms.

Of course, a big opportunity for growth for UK-centred firms is about expansion overseas, which means delivering change on a globalised footing.

DLA Piper is now tagged as the world's largest law firm, with offices in thirty countries. Carol Ashton, DLA's international HR director, explains how globalisation is creating its own impetus for change. "DLA Piper has experienced phenomenal growth [, which] means we need a new breed of lawyer: one that reflects the face of our clients, who thinks and acts globally, is culturally adept, and shares ideas as well as opportunities with colleagues across the globe – in essence, a global team player – and we have a number of initiatives to help realise this."

Outside influence is an important agent of change within law firms. Firms are going externally for advice on implementing transformations (and sometimes bringing in external consultants to work within the business as members of staff). But there is also a strong feeling that change has to be led by partners, and that the real ownership of change is inside the firm – if it's too external or alien, the lawyers won't engage with it.

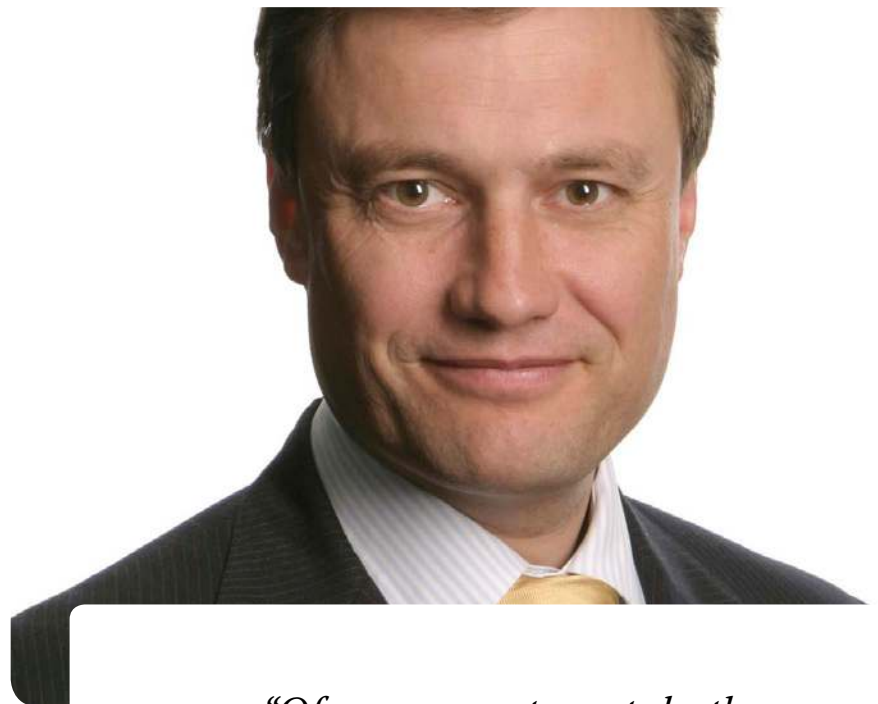
Lee Ranson is managing partner of Eversheds, which has witnessed internal consolidation, mergers and new international offices. Change is everyone's responsibility, he argues.

"Of course, partners take the lead, and HR should input into this. After that, it is about getting engagement from all the lawyers and business staff". With so much focus on re-

skilling, reshaping, restructuring, firms appear to be in perpetual motion. Perhaps that image of a lawyer as an obstacle to change is itself in need of changing.

Legal apprentices have arrived on the market for a number of reasons.

First, changes were made to the national



"Of course, partners take the lead, and HR should input into this. After that, it is about getting engagement from all the lawyers and business staff."

Lee Ranson, managing partner, Eversheds

apprenticeship framework to include legal services. There was also political momentum for a path to the professions which will (in theory) deliver social mobility. At the same time, tuition fees were making university a less attractive option. Now that apprentices are an option, firms are beginning to see the benefits.

Rough estimates are that around 20 of the top 100 firms have signed up. The first was Weightmans, which took on two apprentices in May 2013 (the firm is so pleased with it that it has made a video about it.) A number of firms have followed suit, such as Pinsent Masons, DAC Beachcroft and Clyde & Co. Other non-

Cynics may be concerned about apprentices being a form of cheap labour. Jon Gregson, an associate at Weightmans who has supervisory responsibility for the apprentices there, disagrees.

“Apprentices may be cheaper than trainees, but there is a lot of time and management invested into apprentices. It’s not just the financials. They need a higher level of support, supervision and development. The cost to us is there – it’s just a different cost.”

Nor are those firms which have established schemes then giving up on training contracts; rather this is part of a strategic decision by firms to have a broader resource mix.

Rushworth at Hill Dickinson, which took on seven apprentices in its Manchester office last October, says “there are areas where we are revisiting the resource mix such as insurance, health litigation, real estate or property. Certain parts of the process do not need to be done by someone senior, and our clients are no longer prepared to pay for it. But we want to have a resource that is more committed in the longer term than paralegals tend to be. We hope that apprenticeships will fit the bill.”

Gregson adds that an apprenticeship scheme is a chance for both the firm and apprentice “to see if they’re cut out for a career in law”.

“So many people study law, try it and then don’t like it. This way they can try it out before they and the firm have invested too heavily in their training and without getting into student debt”. ●

Jane Tribaudi left Parabis Group just days before this issue went to press and was in her position at Parabis when interviewed.



“We want to have a resource that is more committed in the longer term than paralegals tend to be. We hope that apprenticeships will fit the bill.”

Andrew Rushworth, director of HR, Hill Dickinson

law firm organisations such as the BBC and a consortium of conveyancers, facilitated by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, is also offering an apprenticeship scheme.

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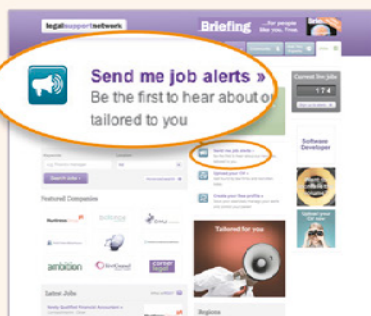
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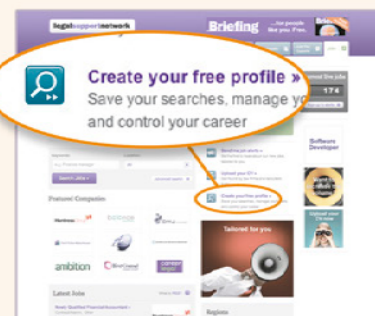
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Driving change

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Case Study

Taking the HR power back



Bhagvanti Hirani, HR systems manager at Holman Fenwick Willan, talks to Briefing about delivering flexibility, independence from IT and self-service capability with Access SelectHR

Law firm HR people should be just as much a strategic asset as the fee earners and other business services people they work with. Most of the time, though, HR people are bogged down in transactional processes, not more useful or strategic work.

When Bhagvanti Hirani joined Holman Fenwick Willan as HR systems manager, her goal was to improve the performance and effectiveness of HR processes. The outcomes of those improvements were purely strategic: increase efficiency and flexibility, reduce cost, and achieve an independence from IT support. Poor or inefficient HR processes also have direct operational downsides for legal business – they can create inefficiencies and blockages in other departments.

Hirani determined that HFW, a firm with 800 people and 450 fee earners across 14 offices worldwide, needed a robust HR system with centralised processes. She also wanted an intuitive system that can be used and maintained easily and independently by HR professionals and remote office managers alike. Removing paper processes was another goal, as

was moving towards a self-service model for staff, giving greater control of personal data to users.

Hirani and the HFW team chose Access's SelectHR system to deliver all those goals – and drove an “aggressive” implementation schedule of just two months for core elements. Hirani says the firm learned lessons worth sharing in that process. “Preparation is key – create and customise your fields first and then upload the data, rather than the other way round.” She also says firms should consider what data they actually need to migrate. “Do we need holiday data going back more than two years? Probably not.”

HFW put SelectHR into all the firm's offices, configured for local requirements, and delivered using WebEx. A strategic consideration had to be that some of the firm's international offices are small, and it's often the case that the office manager looks after data, not a dedicated HR professional – one reason Hirani wanted an intuitive system.

“We needed the system to be flexible and for HR to have greater control in making changes

themselves as business needs dictate, without IT support.” Not needing technical support to manage and maintain SelectHR is a big win for both HR and IT, she says, because in a fight for IT’s time, HR might come behind other stakeholders. Hirani says the firm hasn’t relied on consultancy time since not long after it was installed. The user-friendly admin tool has meant system changes have been instant.

HFW can now capture personal data, carry out absence and career history management, and manage contractual change maintenance in a more process-oriented way. “They are fixed processes, and all users can maintain the data. We now have a complete data flow from joining to leavers – the full cycle.”

This is also helping with the firm’s compliance for SRA reporting. “For diversity statistics, for example, we are capturing and reporting on the right information,” says Hirani. The firm is now about to go live with the health and safety module, creating “an online accident recording book”, part of a much wider move to self-service HR.

“Given HFW’s existing culture,” she says, “we decided to roll out self-service in stages, rather than have a big bang.” But six months after starting down the self-service road, the firm is now live with 350 users for key elements of self-service in the UK: managing personal data and various absences online.

“It’s true employee self-service, amending data with workflows that fire off [information] to payroll, for example. We’ve also provided access for finance and IT to certain areas of the system and reports, ensuring people data changes are updated in a timely manner across various systems.”

The firm is also using self-service within training to capture and expose CPD data for qualified lawyers in England and Wales. Those users can view current and historical CPD years and print their own records. Hirani says

feedback around self-service has been quiet, and silence is golden when it comes to change. “In a law firm, that’s a good sign – you hear more when there’s an issue.” Her plan for the rest of 2014 is to focus on international offices, to remove the paper admin that comes with HR processes, and to roll out international self-service, including capturing CPD for Hong Kong and French qualified lawyers.

Despite making immediate cost savings over the previous HR system, the big benefits in turning to SelectHR for HFW have come from time saving and efficiency in the business.

“Just reporting on headcount would have taken half a day before – now with one click we have standardised reports.” Hirani also says the firm’s made time savings in admin for salary reviews, holidays – and, more important for long-term thinking, data is consistent across the firm.

“If someone is on secondment or maternity leave, SelectHR has enabled HR and finance to standardise the way they are treated. HR and finance reports are now in alignment.” Admin time savings also mean that HFW’s lean HR team of just eight people can focus on more strategic HR, where before they were involved in transactional work. Entering holidays or address changes was not an effective use of HR’s time, she says.

“SelectHR has provided greater control in how we shape our HR system to meet our needs now and in the future,” says Hirani. Better reporting and self-service has already delivered significant efficiency and financial benefit, and Hirani’s five-year view shows “the benefits will just keep coming”.

Find out more about
Access SelectHR
www.theaccessgroup.co.uk



Industry Analysis

Organising change

Katherine Heffernan, senior researcher for IDS HR in Practice at Thomson Reuters UKI, outlines why organisational development should be central to making change work in law firms

Organisational change is inevitable, whether driven by senior managers, the legal market or other factors. By taking an organisational development approach, employers can keep law firm staff motivated during times of significant change and derive lasting benefits from the process.

The world of work is experiencing a particularly vibrant period of change. In recent years, many organisations have had to contend with restructures, mergers and budget cuts, while new working patterns have also entailed a cultural shift for some employers. Organisational development practitioners are often enlisted during times of significant transformation, and can help to implement lasting change while maintaining – or even improving – employee engagement.

Organisational development has its roots in the behavioural sciences and their application to organisational problems and, though there are still many interpretations of it, certain concepts crop up time and again, including: aligning people and strategy; taking a long-term view; adopting a holistic perspective; giving employees ownership of change; seeking continuous

improvement; and embedding sustainable change.

In practice, organisational development can help organisations to manage change effectively by bringing together the people- and culture-related aspects of an organisation with the systems, processes and technology that make it work.

Organisational development experts get involved in a wide range of activities, bringing a holistic perspective that may identify issues that leaders have failed to pick up on and recommending appropriate interventions.

It usually has the biggest impact in situations where it's involved in major change exercises or other large-scale organisational initiatives from the outset, rather than with discrete activities, such as redundancies or restructuring. It's also often used to help devise organisational values and behaviours.

Maintaining engagement among staff during a time of transition is often key to ensuring lasting change, and aligning personal and organisational values plays an important role in this. To derive the greatest benefits, organisations should actively involve staff at every level of

the business in deciding what the new values should look like. If new organisational values can be agreed at the start of a major change programme, participants can refer back to them throughout.

Many organisational development professionals emphasise the importance of keeping line managers engaged during organisational change. This is not always straightforward – for example, where line managers have been promoted to their position on the basis of their technical skills, but they lack sufficient people-management capability.

Some organisational development interventions may, therefore, usefully focus on helping line managers to develop their people skills so they can keep staff motivated and performing during uncertain times.

Organisational development is often sited within the HR function and many common interventions typically fall within the learning and development remit, such as leadership or line manager development and talent management. Where organisational change entails restructuring, expertise in other HR areas such as employee relations or reward may be called upon.

But organisational development is not just about HR – it's a whole-system approach that incorporates processes and activities from across an organisation and takes account of the business context and factors in the external environment. While HR 'owns' many of the tools, systems and processes that are key to delivering strategy, so too do other functions – such as IT or operations. In practice, a key part of an organisational development practitioner's role is to bring together those with the necessary expertise from across the firm.

In nearly all cases, however, no matter where the organisational development team sits, it works with the rest of the business on a consultancy-type basis, giving it the licence to

take a step back from organisational issues – vitally important if it is to take a holistic view and provide an objective assessment of a problem.

Mutual responsibility and the concept of 'co-creation' – involving staff at all stages of organisational change so that they feel they 'own' it, rather than having it foisted upon them – are at the core of organisational development, helping to maintain morale during times of uncertainty by offering staff a degree of control over the process. This has taken on even more relevance – the latest generation expects to have a greater voice.

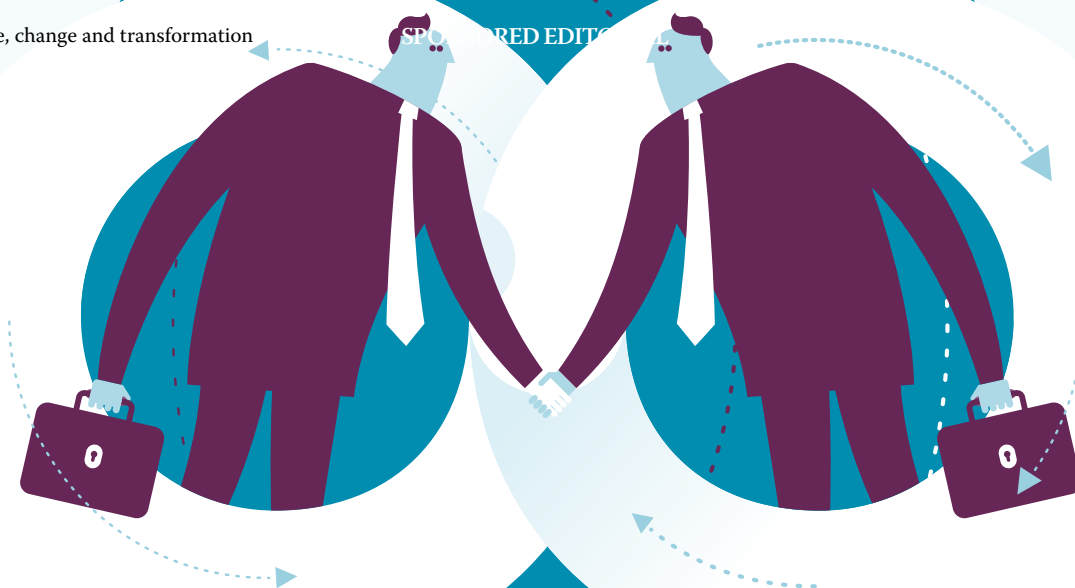
While effective communication is essential to give employees a clear understanding of what is going on, they also need to feel they have a genuine stake in any change so that the new arrangements stick, and to give them an appetite to strive for continuous improvement.

To achieve this, organisations can call on many of the traditional resources in the HR and internal communications toolkit, such as suggestion schemes, online intranet forums or focus groups. And, of course, many now use social media to gain input from employees. But it's not sufficient to simply put such measures in place – employers also need to ensure the organisational culture is such that employees feel confident putting their ideas forward and that these will be taken seriously.

Whatever the case, as staff expect to have a far greater say in how their organisation is run and evolves, the most effective practitioners are likely to be those taking a bottom-up approach to organisational development, involving senior managers and frontline employees alike.

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*Industry Analysis*

Hiring better together

Richard Hooper, co-founder and director of Balance on doing what's best for your people and the business, by uniting talent across your firm

With the economy seemingly now well on the road to recovery, competition for talented business services professionals is on the increase, and some firms are proving to be far more successful than others when it comes to hiring.

Recruiting for accounting and finance systems positions within the legal sector for 10 years, I'm enthusiastic about the opportunities and challenges that recruiters, both agency and in-house, face in the current climate.

The recruiting landscape has changed significantly over recent years, and the legal sector is no different from any other industry in that regard. Direct recruitment strategies are on the increase and the emergence of social media has allowed for far greater access to what is commonly referred to as the 'passive' jobseeker audience (ie those who are not

actively seeking a career move, but who are open to hearing about opportunities).

That said, the UK recruitment industry has already caught up with its pre-recession peak of £27bn, with the Recruitment and Employment Confederation predicting it will overtake this by some margin in 2015, so it seems clear that recruitment consultancies are still heavily relied upon as part of employer hiring strategies.

Change is inevitable in any line of work, and quite rightly ensures that industries need to evolve and continually look to improve on their offering to stay relevant and offer value. Those firms who have the infrastructure and investment to establish in-house recruitment teams will still look to partner with recruiters, but will look for those with a genuine niche market presence and a deep network of

established contacts.

While social media sites have provided great access to an extensive audience of potential employees, as with job boards before them, the filtering of quality can only go so far, whereas a specialist recruitment consultancy will have years of experience meeting these people face to face, and can therefore cut through the traffic to target the most suitable candidates quickly, including, crucially, the high calibre individuals who don't yet have a social profile – of which there are many.

A modern day agency recruiter therefore has to differentiate how they can build their network of contacts, both active and passive, and reach the consciousness of those an in-house team don't have the time or current requirement to reach.

It's also worth noting that for many individuals, a third party consultant is a welcome and entrusted adviser when it comes to making a career move. Well-established industry-specific recruiters are a rich source of employer-neutral information on which firms may or may not meet an individual's expectations of their next employer, whether that's historic knowledge of how often progression opportunities are realised or potential red-flags about why previous employees have moved on.

Despite sitting in opposing camps, there needn't be a 'them and us' relationship between agency recruiters and in-house teams, however. Both have a place in the hiring strategies of today's employers and need to work in partnership to give the best performance.

We work with one of the larger international law firms in London who particularly stand out for the success of their direct recruitment strategy. They're great at engaging candidates and selling the opportunities available within their firm, but they still work closely with us as a recruitment partner to ensure we're aware of

what's happening within their finance team and wider business. Therefore, when opportunities arise where they do need our assistance, we're able to be accurate in sourcing and introducing the most appropriate and interested individuals to them. As a result, they maintain an excellent employer reputation in the market and the candidate experience is consistent, whether via direct or introduced via a recruiter.

Another challenge is managing relationships with recruitment partners in a way that benefits both parties. The term 'no win, no fee' was coined by the legal industry, but has been in practice within the contingent recruitment world for decades. The difference is that recruitment consultancies will often be competing with several others before the 'win' is decided. It's a system with flaws, and encourages recruiters to carefully weigh up the investment of time they can dedicate to any given process.

The firms who work closely with and get to know a smaller number of carefully selected recruiters or a sole supplier will always see the best results. Providing access to line management, giving detailed briefs and providing feedback all takes time, but when recruiters have a greater understanding of your business and the specific skills, experience and attitudes you are seeking, it makes commercial sense for them to dedicate more of their time to your search than to other firms who keep recruiters at arm's length. They are also able to be far more effective in introducing the individuals you actually want to see, saving a considerable amount of time for everyone.

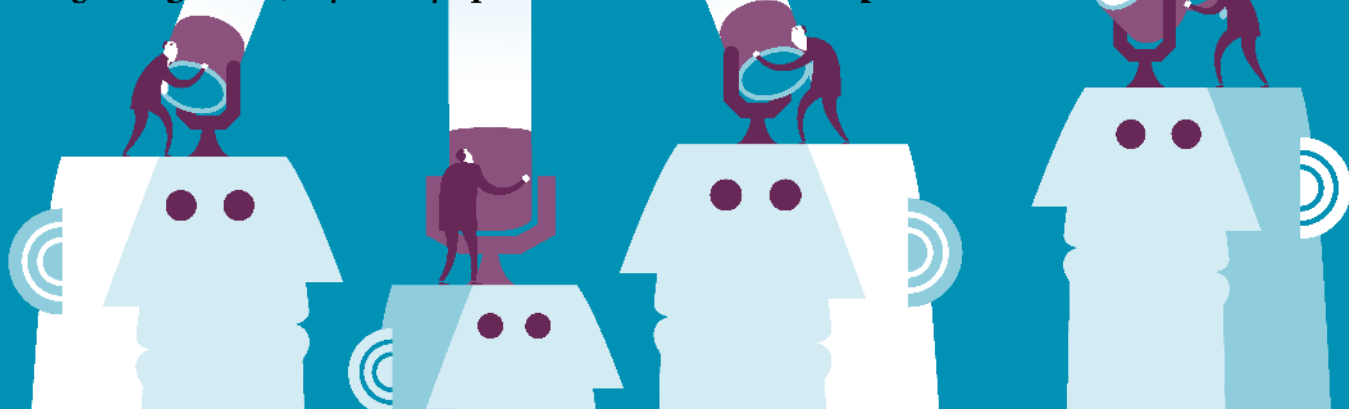
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Industry Analysis

Joining up the change journey

Making change work in your law firm is as much about leadership, mindset shifts and buy-in as it is about technology – but IT can play an enormous role in making change work, says Andy Sparkes at LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions



‘Change’ is the new big thing in the legal sector. Most law firms we speak to are trying to decipher how to effect change – altering the way they operate, developing new business models and revenue streams, undergoing restructures and merging appear to be the most common approaches.

Evidence suggests that merger activity among the top 100 firms reached a record high in 2013, but the ‘change’ they are attempting to engineer through merging may not lead to the outcomes they hope for.

Change should not be viewed as a one-off process – it’s an iterative and continuous journey of improvement. Setting change initiatives into motion based on new growth strategies or operational improvements is easy, but making sure they deliver tangible benefits in the long-term requires an underlying, collective change in mindset, firm-wide capabilities and competencies.

Effective leadership ensures positive change

One reason firms struggle to execute deep-rooted change is that, until recently, very little altered in their operation. New recruits joined and over time adopted the styles and attitudes of the people they worked for – absorbing the same characteristics, strategy and formulaic approach to business. Consequently, there has been limited experience or enthusiasm for change at the highest levels.

Today, change is not an option for law firms. It is driven by factors such as market forces, the economic and regulatory environment and the technology the firm has implemented.

Partners and senior executives need to demonstrate strategic leadership. Leaders in law firms must convincingly exhibit their own appetite for ongoing change and innovation based on substantiated business logic. Typically, resistance to change arises

due to insecurities, unfamiliarity or a lack of appreciation for its drivers. Employees often find themselves at the receiving end of change without an explanation of its rationale or benefit to them as individuals. To overcome these issues, firms must articulate a vision, develop a strategy based on sound business/market insight, and create a flexible/agile internal environment to enable that vision.

Technology can enable this.

Winners make change part of the fabric

Adopting the right IT facilitates (and even helps mandate) change by providing efficient and joined-up access to the required business operations. Enterprise-grade business management systems (like Microsoft Dynamics AX) provide real-time insight into the firm's performance – made possible by the interconnected capabilities it offers. This in turn highlights the gaps in expertise and process that may be inhibiting the achievement of business objectives.

An understanding of a firm's health metrics offers the opportunity to identify areas to drive down costs, create more efficiency, enhance productivity and do things differently – in response to client/market needs. Business management systems deliver this information in an easily understood format, making 'change' routine and the need for it easy to appreciate and compelling.

It's widely recognised that the most challenging aspect of change is getting the people within the organisation to adopt the change. Today law firms employ people for a variety of roles – from lawyers and paralegals to CFOs, CIOs, COFAs, pricing specialists and support staff. It is vital that firms have the right combination of skills, expertise and competencies at all times to meet business

requirements. Business management systems dovetail HR processes with all other enterprise functions to ensure that evolving business needs are reflected in the skill set of the firm on an ongoing basis.

Technology can make change easier

The advantage of firm-wide business management systems is that they reduce the complexity of enterprise management through organisational alignment – a single P&L, a seamless work environment across multiple locations, visibility of workforce skills, insight into client, matter and department profitability, view of the firm's contacts network, and so on.

This degree of clarity can help firms identify and explore innovative ways of working. They are also easy to adopt. For instance, LexisNexis's enterprise-grade business management system, LexisOne, is based on Microsoft ERP technology. It's familiar in look and feel to other Microsoft software that employees routinely use in law firms. This helps overcome the initial reluctance that firms might face when asking employees to embrace new ways of working.

'Change' is a mentality, a frame of mind, a fluid approach – not a periodic, dramatic event. Technology can help law firms adopt this way of thinking by making transformation a way of life. In so doing, firms will embrace dynamism and innovation unremittingly to always remain in tune with an ever-evolving industry landscape. Managing this change is the key, but the right technology platform can help.

Find out more about
LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions
www.lexisnexis-es.co.uk



*Industry Analysis***Beyond the graduate**

Innovating graduate recruitment transformed how firms hire, says Matthew Broadbent, business development director for AllHires – and now technology adoption in the right areas could be your firm's best step forward

The legal sector has always had an issue with conservatism. Traditionally viewed as 'staid' and 'conventional', law has been seen as a bedrock of establishment respectability and has often behaved as such. Not that this is necessarily a bad thing.

Blindly chasing the latest fad or throwing the baby out with the bathwater are far more negative traits, but a balance must be struck and the legal profession has changed immeasurably in recent years.

But in the area of HR, and particularly in recruitment and attraction, nobody could accuse law of being far ahead of the game. Talk to an HR person who has shuttled between sectors and you will often hear that law is just 'different'.

An excellent example of this can be seen in the movement of recruitment technology, which has been spreading through the profession. I've been working in the law graduate recruitment space for some years, and have observed the growth of this technology from its first halting steps right up to the current rush to embrace a new way of managing and controlling how and when new faces are brought into a business.

This is a story about how innovation in the

graduate recruitment space has eventually translated into recruitment throughout a firm.

In the mid-nineties the realisation had finally dawned (notwithstanding the odd pocket of resistance, which remains to this day) that a CV and covering letter were not the best set of tools for assessing large volumes of candidates for a limited number of positions.

Issues of fairness (who has the best CV doctor) and effectiveness (how do we conspire to receive comparable data) led to a move towards standard application forms just at the point when the internet was pervading life. Sites such as LawCareers.net were gaining traction for attraction, and these new application forms were now available – to print off and write on! Then law firms began adopting applicant tracking software (ATS) for graduates in the late 1990s/early 2000s, and a series of waves of provision began.

First, existing suppliers to other markets hurriedly adapted their offering for law firms. The likes of WCN and GTIOS were quick to market. Easy, expensive deals were done, mainly with very big firms and the ball was rolling. Shortly afterwards, CVMail, from Australia and

with a degree of legal pedigree, entered and became the go-to resource for midmarket firms, again with premium pricing opportunities.

But in law's specialist market, there remained room for sector experts and within a year Apply4Law, built by the publishers of LawCareers.net and the Training Contract and Pupillage Handbook, was in the market. It initially targeted the mass of firms that weren't the most obvious adopters of technology, but often stood to gain the most as their size led to the highest 'application to position' ratios.

By necessity, prices were lower and a smaller, nimbler company was able to innovate, based on customer need. The system was designed from scratch to explicitly serve the particular demand of recruiting future lawyers. Gradually market share built, with firms transferring from competitor suppliers and the number of customers in the market grew overall. Elsewhere, very large law firms were commissioning bespoke solutions, while a number of ambitious law firm IT departments went down the DIY road (usually with disastrous results).

The subsequent decade has seen an economics textbook case of competition at work. Apply4Law's ability to innovate and respond to market demand increased the required level of functionality and reduced market prices. WCN and GTIOS's influence in the market dissipated as the availability of supernormal profits diminished, and the independent CVMail was acquired by the behemoth that is Thomson Reuters. At the time of writing, Apply4Law is the industry standard for law graduate recruitment.

Meanwhile, generalist HR departments responsible for the recruitment of solicitors, support and ancillary staff began to notice the slick operations their graduate peers were running. With an over-reliance on agencies, records often being homemade spreadsheets

and elaborate sets of Outlook folders, and the ever-present spectre of a costly breach of sensitive data, the case for ATS became (or is becoming) ever more attractive. Again, the choices have been to get involved with very large and expensive providers in the HR market such as Taleo, to commission bespoke solutions (Clifford Chance blazed this trail as early as 2005) or to try out the 'bolt-on' recruitment modules on offer (often as an afterthought) by HRM providers.

Law's microclimate has, for a change, fostered innovation. While other suppliers have shoehorned all recruitment into one 'full-spectrum' product, Apply4Law's sister product – AllHires – has been developed from scratch to respond to the specialist needs and concerns of law firms and to reflect the fact that the imperative of qualified recruitment (eg control by HR, consistency across offices and departments, communication among stakeholders, and varied job types and recruitment procedures) are different to those of graduate recruitment (mainly processing lots of applications efficiently). Where the needs do overlap – first-class customer service, sophisticated reporting and a system that continues to evolve based on need – that can be replicated.

The legal market finds itself again with the virtue of having bespoke solutions based on its particular needs. Apply4Law is used now by over 80 firms, while AllHires is on 20 and growing (CVMail's UK share is still in the 20s). The use of a sophisticated system is barely yet the norm but as more firms adopt the technology available, it is only going to get better.

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