

# Briefing

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OCTOBER 2015

*Feature*

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In a more diverse legal workforce everyone needs to feel truly included

*Industry views*

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OCTOBER 2015

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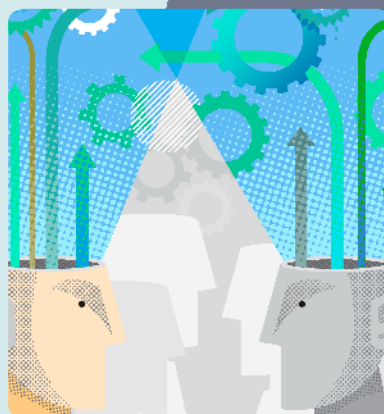
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# Welcome matters



## Letter from the editor

This issue is all about balance. We know that's a good thing – whether in our diet, our minds or up in the boardroom. But achieving it's rather easier said than done. The diversity road for law firms seems to be long and hard – and the percentage of lawyers suffering stress is on the up. According to a Law Society survey this summer, almost a fifth say they have hit 'extreme' levels of the stuff.

Workload and clients are the most commonly cited causes – hardly a surprise. Firms need people to work hard – but both sick days and unhappy presenteeism can undo that hard work. Part of the answer may be to invest in some form of wellbeing management. It could be good for health and wealth alike.

But in the end, better balancing your firm comes down to information. In this issue, for example, **Chris Oglethorpe, HR director at Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co**, discusses how data can pinpoint patterns and drive all manner of behaviour change.

Then, our feature on embracing a more diverse workforce and ensuring it feels welcome includes input from **Ashurst, Mayer Brown, King & Wood Mallesons, Berwin Leighton Paisner, Weightmans, Bird & Bird** and **LOD (Lawyers on Demand)**.

And there's also your traditional intake of our excellent supplier analysis – this time on technology's pivotal part in the people management equation. Please do enjoy!

**Richard Brent, editor, Briefing**  
richardb@lsn.co.uk

## Interview: Chris Oglethorpe, Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co



The new HR director of Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co explains how people management data can be used to pinpoint patterns of behaviour and take engagement to the next level

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## Feature: Something for everyone?



Law firms are taking a variety of steps not just to recruit business talent from a wider range of backgrounds, but to provide more options and an inclusive culture when it arrives

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This month's interview with **Chris Oglethorpe** was transcribed by:

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*"I immediately found a useful article, it would have taken a lifetime under the old regime".*

**Liz Machin**

Head of Knowledge Management  
Mourant Ozannes



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*The Briefing Interview*

# Happier days

*Who doesn't like a little engagement? Chris Oglethorpe, HR director at Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co, however, wants a lot – and says measuring it effectively is also the key to getting much more*

*Words: Richard Brent*

*Photography: Jonathan Goldberg*

**Chris Oglethorpe, the new HR director of Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co (shortly to become Gowling WLG), must be a rather good person to have around in a crisis.**

He joined the firm in January fresh from the banking world – RBS, no less – which he rejoined after the crash in 2009 (he previously held HR director roles at NatWest). As chief operating officer, human resources, global banking and markets, his LinkedIn profile explains he was “appointed at a time when significant restructuring of HR processes, systems and controls was required”.

It's a tenure that must have also seriously put his

change and stakeholder management skills to the test. Later, as head of HR logistics and control, he “brought improved rigour during a period of substantial restructuring, business exits, departures and offshoring”. And as if this wasn't enough of a challenge, he then progressed to take charge of creating the people strategy for a brand new bank from scratch. Under the terms of the 2008 bailout, RBS is building new ‘challenger’ bank Williams & Glyn out of 314 branches as part of its personal contribution toward rebalancing the banking sector. The Competition and Markets Authority is currently deciding whether the enterprise is ready for customers. An IPO is planned for late next year.



*“It’s vital that the employee voice comes through in any firm. It’s those individuals who provide the service to clients.”*

Chris Oglethorpe, HR director,  
Wragge Larwence Graham & Co



There's no big crisis for Oglethorpe to get stuck into at WLG – but there is something rather new, and that's why he got the job.

“After the merger of Wragge & Co and Lawrence Graham, the chief executive [David Fennell] wanted to pull together a new strategy for the combined firm,” he says. There were three core pillars – “first, a new focus on clients, second, international sector growth, and third to really drive some differentiation through the people agenda”.

The third of these, in short, is his brief. And yet, although the banks have been in notable trouble, Oglethorpe argues that law firms could in fact now learn some lessons in stronger people management from the way they do things, rather than the other way around.

“A lot of banks and other corporates have had a sound understanding of the typical service value chain for a number of years now. People who are engaged stay with the company, deliver better service and achieve better financial performance – and financial services firms deliver genuinely deep levels of insight to support that chain through regular surveys and focus groups. It's something that law firms are only now starting to adopt to drive improvement.”

If that's improved process, the other related challenge for law firms is the people themselves, says Oglethorpe. The people doing the managing aren't necessarily sufficiently trained in their interactions with the people they're supposed to be nurturing and developing as part of that engagement value chain.

“All organisations have, at heart, a group of hopefully bright, professional people who want an environment where they can do interesting work, get feedback, develop and grow, and fundamentally be respected,” he says.

“The big difference for law firms is that you have partners – who grow up as lawyers, and then might suddenly become managers or team leaders without going down the professional career-building path you have in a public company. In other businesses you manage teams quite early on and build capabilities over time, but partners often don't get that progression.”

Oglethorpe can also bring his banking and financial services experience to bear in addressing that challenge, he says – “helping senior lawyers to develop themselves, as well as deploying a talent management strategy and

driving tactics for strategic employee engagement”.

## Questioning time

Like many firms, WLG has been ‘doing engagement’ for some time now. Pre-merger Wragge & Co was the only law firm to be listed in the Great Place to Work Institute's Best Workplaces since that survey began back in 2001. The institute has handed it the rather grand-sounding “master status” on the subject – and this year it was ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in the list for organisations with over 500 employees (which also included the likes of Microsoft and Volkswagen). The methodology for this particular survey is also rare among the breed for including not just employee feedback, but also an external audit of HR practice.

For Oglethorpe, however, the purpose of any such poll is not self-congratulation. Instead, it should provide a process for pulling apart engagement data to identify ways of further improving. Employee feedback can certainly provide a measurable benchmark, but it also offers insight to identify possible patterns, pressure points, and possibly specific management actions.

“There are 58 questions on everything from understanding of strategy to career development, reward, diversity and simply how people are treated. People can choose whether or not to take part. But for the first time this year we're taking things a step further to really try to get investigate the main messages coming out, and what we might be able to do as a consequence.

“The survey and audit gives us a league table place, and we can say we have an engagement score of 77% – 77% of our people are ‘highly engaged’ according to the index. We also have a ‘recommendation’ score of 80%. But really great places to work probably aspire to 90%.”

He says the survey provides a “rich vein of data” that can impact future decisions to help push the firm's score even higher. “We set up focus groups with both lawyers and business support services to delve into the results and identify where we can build on good things, do other things better, and in some instances where the executive could do more.”

The forums were independently facilitated, he says, outside the reach of both practice group and HR. “It's vital that the employee voice comes through in

any firm,” says Oglethorpe. “It’s those individuals who provide the service to clients, and if we don’t consider them we won’t manage what we want to achieve in terms of high-performance culture.”

## Data days

So what did those voices have to say? All manner of things, naturally, but four themes to emerge were more recognition, feedback, encouragement of team dynamics and celebration of success, says Oglethorpe.

That has already started to filter down into practice. Since the sounding, the CEO and chairman have already organised a series of strategy roadshows for more obvious transparency around the firm’s aims and direction. “We’ve also launched a strategy microsite – and this autumn we’ll follow up on how people are engaging around their particular contribution to strategy.

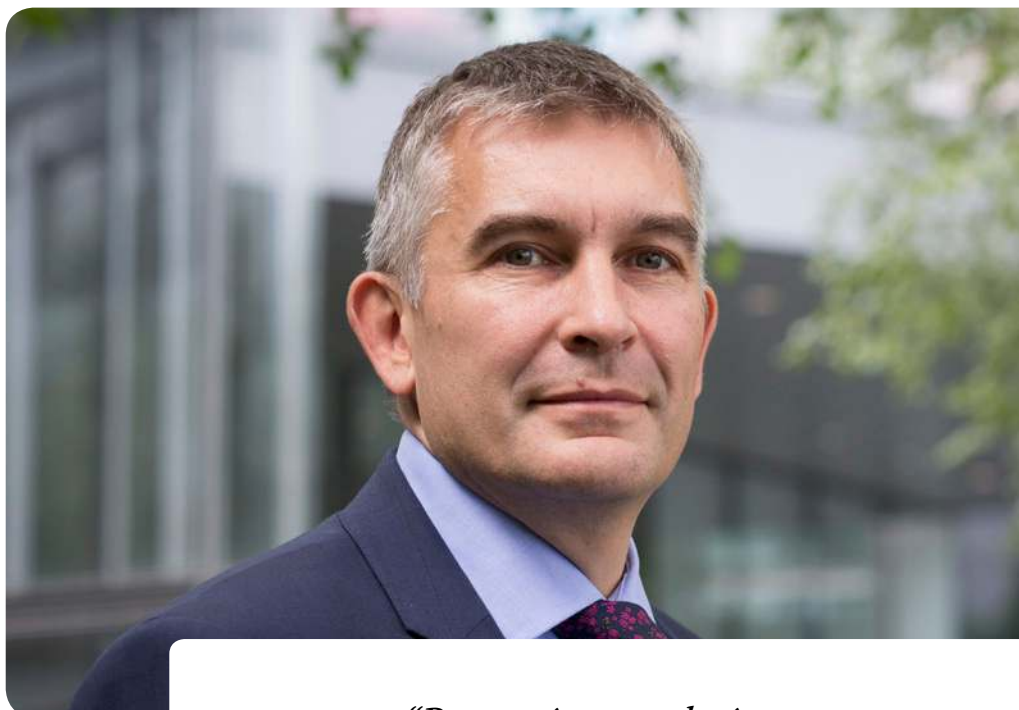
“Around team dynamics, actions have been as straightforward as offering more regular associate meetings. Some of these things are very easy – and seem small – but you forget about them because you’re busy, and that’s the point people start to disengage and question a culture.”

But Oglethorpe speaks particularly passionately about how data exercises such as his feedback forum have the potential to run right through the service value chain to predict how a firm’s human assets will behave in future. Firms can take specific actions to intervene and affect outcomes that have business implications.

“I firmly believe the business support function has to provide insight. I don’t just mean numbers. I mean interpretation of the numbers and what they mean we should do,” he says.

“Regression analysis,” he explains, “can help to

predict what will make a good lawyer leave – and even when they’ll go. History of turnover and retention can be used to create algorithms that show a group of talent tends to move on after X number of years because it believes it has hit a glass ceiling, for example. So you put some extra focus behind career development ideas at that particular stage.



*“Regression analysis can help to predict what will make a good lawyer leave – and even when they’ll go.”*

Chris Oglethorpe, HR director,  
Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co

“It’s something technology and financial services business are already doing a lot. Leaders and senior managers can use organisational data to really learn and take pre-emptive measures to avoid certain outcomes.

“Turning back to our engagement index, we can use it to decide which three things we can influence to get most movement. We can add focus to those areas in the knowledge there’s the greatest likelihood of the greatest improvement.

“Or take it into the client environment. Can we calculate the probability of a given client doing repeat

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Total  
Fees  
Costs

Billed 95%  
Target 94%

46%

90%



Aged Account

Aged Unbilled

HOURLY BUDGET		REMAINING BUDGET	
Hours	Amount	Hours	Amount
216.65	\$108,325	216.65	\$108,325
66.65	\$33,325	66.65	\$33,325
283.30	\$141,662	283.30	\$141,662
66.65	\$33,325	66.65	\$33,325
66.65	\$33,325	66.65	\$33,325
349.95	\$174,975	349.95	\$174,975



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## Opening doors

Accurate data from honest feedback is also important if – as anecdote suggests – younger generations really want radically different things from workplace and working life.

For example, how disruptive could ‘Generation Z’ – just about to join the ranks of recession-scarred millennials – really be? It’s no good relying on assumptions here. If you’re officially going to change things like working patterns, incentives or entire career paths, the business case had better be clear.

But Oglethorpe says the perceived gap between generations in terms of expectations and motivators is undeniable. “There’s no doubt our junior lawyers want something slightly different to the traditional partner of the past – and a multi-generational workforce also means we have different employee groups with different needs in general.”

To find out exactly what, he been working with a group within the 30% Club, he says (launched in 2010 with the goal of achieving 30% of FTSE 100 boardroom seats going to women by the end of 2015) to focus specifically on understanding the millennial mindset.

Any insight on such brainwaves yet? “At the top of the list for people are needs like interesting – and varied – work, the ability to grow a career and more on-the-spot feedback. They want regular conversations about performance, not an annual appraisal,” says Oglethorpe. “And of course the question of balance – recognition there’s a world outside work and that we no longer need to be tied to our desks to do it.

All these exercises must go into the melting pot to arrive at what he calls a compelling “employee value proposition”.

Work environment is a big part. Before his arrival, WLG had already gone open-plan in Birmingham “all the way from chief executive down”, he says. “There are lots of new spaces to encourage teams to get together

and collaborate more, and there’s also a demystifying aspect. It removes hierarchy and potential status barriers for more productive relationships.”

Taking out the doors should certainly be useful for creating fruitful connections across the cultural nuances of even more generations. But inevitably open-plan working also raises the question of desk and work pattern policy. Will Oglethorpe be heading down the hotdesking route, or embracing the modish ‘agile’ working concept – even more flexible than flexible?

“Like many, we have a bit more to do. We do have partners and lawyers who regularly work from home, and it’s something we want to encourage to happen more. It’s typically more difficult for those on live transactions, particularly in the corporate practice, but traditional working has changed. Some of our lawyers don’t have a fixed desk, and will log on in a coffee shop between client meetings. If you have good connectivity to knowledge and matter management, you don’t necessarily need a desk.”

He stresses the firm hasn’t yet made “bold statements” about agile working intentions as some have – but that around 30% of the workforce have a “formally recognised flexible working plan, including several with job shares and compressed hours.”

“Most full-time lawyers here still have a personal desk,” he admits. “But I do wonder if that too might become a thing of the past because of the increasing number who are often out with clients. It’s something for the sector as whole to consider.” At RBS, he says, many teams didn’t have allocated desks. “If companies like investment banks, running price-sensitive data, can manage it – I’m sure we’ll get there.”

Generation Z, meanwhile, is just around the corner to be potential challengers to the status quo. Only last month the firm took on its first four apprentices – alongside the CILEx Law School – into its real estate practice. And Oglethorpe anticipates this pilot rapidly becoming a much larger programme of more efficient resourcing.

“They will work toward becoming qualified paralegals while working on leases,” he explains. “They will boost paralegal resource in a high-volume part of the business – and we and they then have the option to continue to further qualification.

“But as access to the profession changes, to my mind all firms should be thinking about apprentices. We need

different sources of aspiring lawyers to come forward, and apprenticeships help us to begin building stronger relationships with schools and colleges alongside the more traditional links with universities.

“This pilot year we need to learn any lessons from how it works in practice, such as how they are supported and integrated in wider teams, and next year I’m sure we’ll see them start to make a difference in other practices as well.”

## App happy

The right level of integration and ongoing support are, of course, critical factors to the successful engagement of any generation or other employee group. Ultimately, after all, engagement boils down to how happy people are at, and with, work.

Those managing big business through and since the last recession are likely to know only too well how ugly things can get when that happiness falls off too far, too fast. It might not be as a direct result, but many are now investing at least more time, if not much more money, in promoting ‘wellbeing’.

Meanwhile, data suggests the legal profession can all too easily lead to burnout – through huge pressure to deliver for clients in the midst of intense competition even for an alternative career. A Law Society survey in August found that although average solicitor sick days fell by almost a day last year (from 6.6 in 2013 to 5.7 in 2014), four out of ten said they’d gone to work ill and 96% saw symptoms of negative stress (19% describing it as “severe” or “extreme”).

For Oglethorpe this area of HR is all about making information as available as possible for people to act on. The firm has a ‘wellbeing network’ to this effect.

“Wellbeing is linked to performance – inside and outside work,” he says. “We have a campaign to help people develop better understanding of mental health, and ultimately to improve resilience.

“There’s a universe of often free apps for exercise, meditation and sleep, and we will soon be launching a programme of optional workshops.

“What I’m really interested in is how we can proactively help people to help themselves. Busy professionals frequently work long hours for clients, but they can be proactive about what they choose to

eat, when they exercise and how they hydrate. If we can enable them with information they are more likely to avoid some key stress triggers.

“It’s things like a free sleep app on your iPhone that plays music on different wavelengths – scientifically proven to slow the neurological process. It has a practical effect – it helps with power napping.

“More obviously, you change your energy levels by changing your diet.

“And use a programme to block the blue light on your laptop late at night, and it reduces alertness – not so that you can’t work, but so that your brain isn’t on high alert. There are lots of small steps people can take without simply refusing to work a 14-hour day.”

Recently Oglethorpe also hit headlines for the firm’s piloting of a stress-monitoring app developed by its own healthcare tech client Soma Analytics.

“Installed on your phone, it records and monitors things like sleep patterns and voice levels to give an understanding of how you’re doing over time. A pilot group has since reported a measurable improvement in wellbeing against the external population. It also provides more detailed feedback about your activity and tips for wellbeing improvement.”

It isn’t, of course, compulsory – but Enable will be actively encouraging people to hook themselves up and challenge their personal habits.

So hang on a minute – isn’t this an opportunity for another data-driven intervention?

Not quite. People might choose to step away from the desk if stress levels suddenly soar over that key client conversation, but WLG certainly won’t be telling them to. “It isn’t an intrusive process. The firm doesn’t see any data,” says Oglethorpe. “It’s rather like recording your daily steps – and like that technology, it has met with great results and been rated very highly. There is the option to participate openly with others, but you can also use it completely privately.”

He says he isn’t in favour of any future Big Brother form of wellbeing management. He’s clear that everyone involved has been volunteers, and that Enable’s whole programme is about “education”.

The possibilities of all manner of data for a firm’s productivity may be intriguing, but that’s probably right. Orwell’s dystopian leader may have scored well on securing obedience – but you couldn’t really say that of his citizen engagement ranking. ●

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*Feature*

# Something for everyone?

Legal business knows the value of a diverse workforce by all manner of demographic – but getting better isn't just a numbers game. Richard Brent hears how firms are reaching out, and reflecting internally, to create cultures of more productive inclusion

**Earlier this year a Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission report on graduate recruitment into so-called ‘elite’ professional services firms painted a bleakly unprogressive picture.**

Approximately 70% of last year’s job offers, it revealed, were made to young people from selective state or fee-paying schools – compared to the 4% and 7% of the population who receive such an education as a whole. It had also worked out that trainees at some of the biggest law firm brands are over five times as likely to have gone to a fee-paying school as the next person.

Only to be expected, this came with a caveat. Some firms could pride themselves on “making a big commitment to recruit the brightest and best, regardless of background”, said commission chair Alan Milburn. But unveiling the findings he also warned of what could possibly prove, in effect, a “poshness test” creeping into recruitment. “Inevitably that ends up excluding youngsters who have the right sorts of grades and abilities but whose parents do not have the right sort of bank balances,” he said.

Dr Louise Ashley, research project lead from University of London had three suggestions for firms trying to improve their future social mobility results – to adjust attraction strategies to get more applicants from more backgrounds of course, to help all applicants to receive similar levels of support for their ambitions, but also to consider how professional talent is defined in the first place.

## **Context counts**

The report comes as those same firms are – publicly at least – showing more commitment to the cause. This year, for example, several firms have piloted a new plug-in for application systems that automatically considers academic credentials in light of other life circumstances. Applicants tick various boxes that apply to them – and this flags to firms that their achievement of a particular set of grades might represent more about their potential than at first glance. HR departments can give that

application a bit of extra attention.

“Recruitment is an area with particular potential for unconscious bias to creep in and affect processes,” says Deborah Dalglish, head of diversity and inclusion at Ashurst (which helped pilot the Rare contextual recruitment system).

“You see an application – and it might mention the university you went to yourself, or just a university which you know has a very good reputation. But you’re then setting up a scenario for a candidate. Everything you see of them can then serve to back up the conclusions you have already come to.

“That means, of course, that the opposite can be true for schools or universities you don’t know or that don’t have a strong reputation,” she says. “Contextual recruitment helps you to compare like with like – and to recognise that somebody with three Bs from one school may have achieved proportionally far more than someone with three As who has received every possible educational advantage at home and throughout school.”

A lot of information about comparative performance of schools is available anyway, Dalglish explains. But Rare’s technology combines this with a flagging system for indicators of more specific disadvantage. “One good example is candidates who have spent part of their childhood being looked after,” she says. “It’s well documented that children in care struggle to get higher grades, as they have so much more going on outside education.

“You can make a criteria adjustment for people who have been looked after for a percentage of their academic career, assessing what they’ve achieved in the context of those particular circumstances.”

## **Wider reaching**

Rare, of course, runs alongside other efforts to attract more applications from more corners of the education system in the first place.

Andrew Dent, new diversity, inclusion and corporate responsibility manager at King & Wood Mallesons





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(which he joined from Freshfields), says: “It’s really important to our talent strategy that people aren’t put off joining a City law firm because they think their background will be a barrier – but getting that message out is a challenge. Unfortunately, some young people



*“Whether it’s a working mother or an LGBT employee, we must intervene where necessary to support the talent we want to retain.”*

Andrew Dent, diversity, inclusion and corporate responsibility manager, King & Wood Mallesons

don’t get the career advice they need, and with the best will in the world, we can’t get out to every school in the country. By the time they might be on the radar it can already be too late.”

So one of Dent’s first priorities in his role, he says, is to identify and develop the best strategic partnerships with other organisations that can help him promote the firm’s employer brand precisely to those who wouldn’t

be thinking of applying.

“We also keep conversation around any aspects of diversity going inside the business, and with clients. Whether it’s educational background or something else, we want people to talk about their challenges or circumstances openly, in a clearly safe environment, without fear it’ll impact any career aspirations.”

These conversations feed an inclusive culture that fuels the brand for attracting a more diverse workforce in future. But strategic partnerships in the right places can even directly affect inclusion policy, says Dent.

“Some organisations can help you to access information you might not have ordinarily – and this helps build best practice,” he says. KWM, for example, has a relationship with the work-life balance organisation Working Families. Earlier this year it led directly to the launch of the firm’s first shared parental leave offering.

“We send people to lots of events to get more involved generally, but also to increase internal knowledge,” says Dent.

“Working Families gave us some benchmarks for how people might adapt policies, and this started our own discussion. We recognised the generation that we now need to attract highly values time spent at home with children in the very early stages, so we decided – essentially – to match our existing maternity policy. We now have two male associates out on their leave – and when they return we’ll try to persuade them to share their experiences to understand more.

“Firms are trying to manage workforce issues that are still being dictated, to some extent, by society. Attitudes towards LGBT people is one such example. Changes to legislation have helped to change the landscape in the UK, but there is still more City firms can do to encourage applications from the community and show potential applicants that being LGBT simply isn’t an issue. Whether it’s a working mother or an LGBT employee, we must intervene



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## Apprentice incentives

Firms might not be able to change long-established

societal norms and inequalities. But as Dent indicates, part of the inclusivity agenda is to challenge assumptions – whether that’s what makes a candidate attractive to the firm in the first place or how much policy support they need to prove what they can deliver once hired.

Firms can also make assumptions about how

# Unconscious bias: Unfair disadvantage

Many firms are in the process of building the concept of ‘unconscious bias’ into diversity training – highlighting actions or behaviours that are the result of ingrained assumptions.

“It’s about recognising the initial impressions you form – unconsciously – which can lead to judgments,” explains Sam Airey, HR director at Weightmans. “We’ve taken part in a pilot test on how you associate positive and negative language with different demographic groups. You could find, for example, that it takes you longer to associate positive words with women.”

She stresses: “It’s not about targeting people as racist or sexist. It’s raising awareness of instinctive beliefs and how you act as a result.”

Further exploration then takes place through discussion-based training on potential scenarios. “A real example that came up was walking into a meeting where everyone’s laughing about sport,” says Airey. “That could feel excluding and have an impact.

“Another we discussed is a team that’s just trying to be helpful to someone with childcare needs. Parents might feel overlooked for meetings or evening events

if they aren’t invited. The team is making automatic assumptions about what can and can’t be managed alongside other commitments.”

Deborah Dalglish, head of diversity and inclusion at Ashurst, adds: “There are many interesting things you can highlight. One that springs to mind is where CVs are sent out listing identical skills and qualifications – but where the names suggest different ethnicities. How much more likely are you to be invited for an interview simply because of your name?

“But there are a raft of different behaviours, from whether types of humour are inappropriate, to whether people who shout louder are able to get more done.”

“It’s a real buzzword at the moment, but it’s hugely important,” agrees Claire England, inclusivity manager at BLP. “Our business services managers all had training this summer, and now it’s the turn of the partners.

“We’ve brought in business experts and we’re rolling out an e-module, but cultural change is always a journey. We may later run a series of masterclasses in how unconscious bias can play out in practical situations such as recruitment decisions and building client relationships.”

people want their careers to progress, including the qualifications they need to be useful and engaged. In line with a national push to diversify routes into many careers, however, an increasing number are now hiring apprentices to work as they qualify.

In 2013, for example, Weightmans became the first UK firm to recruit people to follow the Level 4 Higher Apprenticeship in Legal Services.

“We’d had a high level of paralegals for some time already,” says HR director (and partner) Sam Airey. “But a few years ago we found people were leaving when they didn’t later get a training contract. If that’s really all they want there’s little you can do, but with an apprenticeship you can have career progression through our firm without being a solicitor. It’s a good way of recruiting and retaining people at a more junior level. We’re creating both broader routes into the firm and alternative paths once you get here.

“We were also very conscious that young people wanted alternatives to going to university, and we have apprentices working in our business support functions as well – in HR, finance and information services.”

In June, meanwhile, Mayer Brown became the first City law firm to offer the new articulated apprenticeship route to qualification as a solicitor with the University of Law. In September the firm welcomed its first two onto the six-year training course, which will also see them spending time with key business services departments as part of a full induction process.

Global chief HR officer, Annette Sheridan, says: “We created a school leaver’s apprenticeship programme for business services in 2013. Introducing a legal apprenticeship felt like a natural next step. We’re continually reviewing recruitment to ensure we’re selecting from as broad a talent pool as we possibly can.

“This is a route that might attract people who don’t

want to commit to full-time study for any number of personal reasons, including cost. It might also appeal to more mature candidates with other commitments and need for a certain level of income.”

But other employees are also set to benefit from involvement in the welcoming and onboarding of



*“Business services teams gained from the nurturing and development of their apprentices.”*

Annette Sheridan, global chief HR officer,  
Mayer Brown

apprentices, says Sheridan. “Business services teams gained from the nurturing and development of their apprentices – in IT, marketing and learning and development.” Now these same teams will play a part in the induction of the aspiring solicitors.

For example, the legal apprentices will begin work in business intake and the firm’s information centre before moving on to paralegal tasks in practice areas. “They’re good departments to start people off in as they work across the whole office,” explains Sheridan. “They’ll get to know lots of people quickly through library tasks

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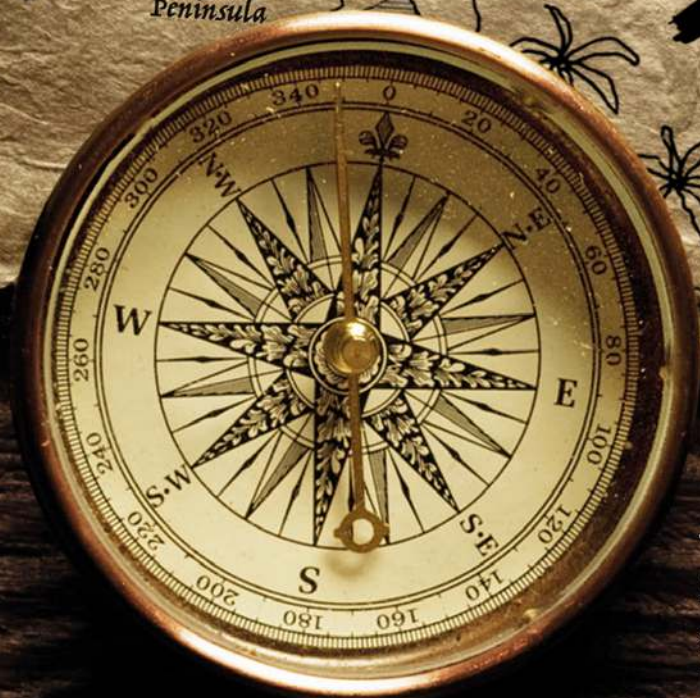
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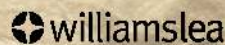
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such as research work and support enquiries – and in business intake they'll have exposure to risk and compliance matters such as client assessment of conflicts and money laundering regulations.

"They'll probably also have a short rotation in business development and marketing to develop a solid understanding of how we respond to pitch opportunities and nurture client relationships."

But otherwise, says Sheridan – just as they have applied and been assessed like any other candidates

*"Today, it's much more likely that somebody will leave, have an experience elsewhere and return. It's no longer appropriate to say they're just not coming back to you."*

Johnny Nichols, HR director, Bird & Bird

– apprentices attend the same new intake sessions as any other trainee to begin building their networks and effectiveness immediately.

"We're also giving guidance, directly and indirectly, to people we haven't been able to offer a place to this year, and hope to maintain contact as they get their careers going. One individual actually decided to go to university after all – and we intend to keep in touch and provide support where we can."

## Stay or go?

The articulated apprenticeship is still six years of traditional hard work for a fortunate few – but Mayer Brown's objective of engagement with others that

it touches is also an example of HR adapting to a whole new breed of career plans and expectations. Globalisation and new business models are two powerful forces that mean legal business professionals are less likely to be wedded to any one firm for life. And in the age of social media, it's a much smaller world. Any employer brand needs to be both conceptually and visibly in touch with a much more mobile pool of highly desirable talent.

As well as people you haven't yet hired, for example, it might be increasingly sensible to extend arms ungrudgingly to those you've lost.

"Today, it's much more likely that somebody will leave, have an experience elsewhere and return," says Johnny Nichols, HR director at Bird & Bird. "It's no longer appropriate – if it ever was – to say they're just not coming back to you. Work is now clearly a two-way exchange.

"I wouldn't say it's impossible to have whole careers with an umbrella employer today, but people will almost certainly play many different roles for that business."

He also points to what he calls the "candidate-led market" in East Asia as something the other offices of international firms might need

to watch. "The digital-native generation there has higher expectations of careers as a series of different experiences – and if they have the right attitude and experience themselves, they're very much in demand."

Bird & Bird would hope to be able to meet that appetite for worldwide excitement itself, of course. "As a single partner profit pool we need consistent client service across jurisdictions," says Nichols. "We want all seniorities of staff to understand the operational intricacies of other offices. It's not unusual for a trainee to spend up to three months in a different office – and we expect people on the partnership track to have an understanding of business in several locations."

But Nichols will also be competing with new legal business models that offer candidates far more flexibility about where they work – and what they do



– than a partnership. Allen & Overy last year reported half of companies in the Asia-Pacific region planned to use hybrid approaches to resourcing over the next five years – combining traditional panels of firms, for example, with temporary resource for a fixed duration or specific project. And almost two-thirds (63%) of all organisations said they’d used such self-employed ‘contract’ lawyers in the previous two years. It’s a trend that can only increase. The client wants what promises to be a more cost-effective resourcing structure. Lawyers, of course, are potentially drawn to greater freedom to pick and choose their schedules. Several firms have responded to the shifting dynamic by launching freelance wings of their own – hubs that may well include ex-employees that can help present a more seamless extension of the main brand. But they will also be competing for candidates with players for whom freelance is a way of life.

These businesses aren’t without their own challenges. Simon Harper, co-founder of LOD (Lawyers on Demand), says: “It all sounds very Generation Y, but attitudes can bleed up through the working population quickly, and we have to recognise that. However, freelancers can also move on easily, which makes it even more important to create a culture and environment that both keeps them sticky and gets the best from everyone. Performance management needs to be different too – on a gig-by-gig basis rather than the old-school style of a formal, once-a-year review.”

LOD’s freelance lawyers are managed by a central team of full-time employees. “We also have a team specifically charged with coordinating lawyers and clients throughout the assignment and ensuring every match works. That role is as much emotional intelligence as good project management,” says Harper. “There’s a long-established process, which depends

on this team really understanding the needs and preferences of both clients and 300-plus lawyers. We have a technology platform to manage things like availability, rates and workflow – but there’s a real skill in getting the right fit.”

One thing’s for sure – any increased lawyer appetite



*“Attitudes can bleed up through the working population quickly. We have to recognise that.”*

Simon Harper, co-founder,  
LOD (Lawyers on Demand)

for even more flexible work patterns appears to suit clients down to the ground. Over half of a 42% jump in revenue this year came from LOD’s newer On Call service, where assignments aren’t a traditional secondment – usually to a client’s office – on designated days. They could last as little as six weeks, or switch from full-time one week to a few hours the next, the lawyer can work remotely (possibly in a virtual team)

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and the resource can be mobilised in a flash. “Notice might be 24 hours or a number of weeks,” says Harper. “We will work with both, and anything in between.”

He adds: “But if it didn’t work as well as it does for the lawyers it wouldn’t be sustainable. You could say it turns the old model on its head. Unless you put the lawyer first, the client won’t win.”

*“Inclusivity requires developing understanding of what shapes an individual or a generation and the willingness to see things from the other perspective.”*

Claire England, inclusivity manager,  
Berwin Leighton Paisner

## Generation flex

Whether it’s social background, generation or working patterns, all firms need to bridge surface differences – and perhaps unfair assumptions – to engage the full spectrum of what may be a much wider array of people under consistent brand umbrellas that harness diversity for common purpose.

Jamie Bore, group chief operating officer at Ogier, mobilised a firm-wide steering group when the offshore firm decided on a physical brand refresh after last year’s management buyout of its fiduciary business.

“It’s fair to say that having a large fiduciary business – something a number of offshore firms have – can impact both positively and negatively on culture,” he says.

But we saw this as an opportunity to reset. We turned to the whole business for their experiences and

challenges up to this point – and we wanted a broad spread of seniorities, service lines and jurisdictions on the formal steering group.

“After roll-out we also held workshops in small groups for further feedback on better managing the business’s complexity. From IT to effective knowledge management, we now have a long list of things we can focus on in future. The brand has only been successful because it’s

based on feedback from the whole organisation. Otherwise it would just be some new colours on a website.”

At Bird & Bird meanwhile, Nichols is beginning some work on “reverse mentoring” to help dissipate any productivity-dampening effects of generational difference. “We have the younger generations with different attitudes, but we have to expect that people will keep working later in their lives as well. I recently heard mention of ‘Generation U’ – the unretired. It’s a challenging melting pot and the generations need to respect – and learn from – each other.”

Last year BLP’s new inclusivity manager, Claire England, held the firm’s first inclusivity week – and one challenge raised was how the different attitudes of generations can just as easily affect the nuts and bolts

of daily working life as the grander plan of longer-term professional careers and rewards.

“It’s clear that our millennials can get frustrated without feedback and clarity on their performance, and partly they are seeking perfection,” she says. “But for the Generation X partners the mindset is often ‘no news is good news.’ They aren’t keen on being bombarded with constant requests for that feedback.

“Inclusivity requires developing understanding of what shapes an individual or a generation and the willingness to see things from another perspective.”

At the same time, of course, firms must avoid making policy decisions based on assumptions about those perspectives. They need to invest in the emotional intelligence skills and thinking to have managers approach as many conversations as possible with eyes – and ideally minds – wide open. ●



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# Shining searchlights

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*Briefing Industry Analysis*

# Balancing actions

**Paul Tilling, strategic projects manager at LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions, says firms should see patterns in performance management**



**Employee performance management has been considered by many to be an onerous procedure over the years – one that HR managers and employees take part in, but often view with scepticism.**

According to the website TalentManagement360, a poll of over 2,677 respondents found 98% see annual performance reviews as unnecessary. Respondents included 645 HR managers, 232 CEOs and 1,800 other employees. Not much else needs to be said, right?

Not at all. The fault lies in the application of the practice. Annual appraisals have become a ‘paperwork’ exercise for those being appraised and for those conducting the appraisal alike. In many people’s minds,

it’s a standalone process, unconnected to any aspect of business at all. It’s a shame – as for performance management to succeed, it must be tightly aligned with other HR processes, organisational structure and culture. Performance management then becomes aligned with the strategy and goals of the firm as well.

## **Definite data needs**

A key objective of performance management remains the gathering of data, but to collect the right information it’s imperative first to define the data to

be collected. For example, if assessing whether the performance of an individual has improved year-on-year, there must be a clear understanding of what constitutes improvement, high performance – and underperformance. This in turn implies that for every employee and role, there must be a core competency framework that provides the parameters of assessment to a granular level. Usually this includes hard and soft competencies such as qualifications, skills, expected capabilities and a range of behaviours the firm wants to encourage.

The next logical extension is determining patterns. There's the oft-used cliché related to performance management: what gets measured gets done. This may be true, but measurement alone doesn't provide a complete picture. The data must then be analysed for discernible patterns that provide commercially valuable insight. Only then can corrective measures be taken to help the business achieve overarching strategic goals.

To illustrate, a firm might find that every six to eight months employees in the finance department leave the organisation. On further examination, it may emerge that departures typically take place soon after salary reviews, and it's mostly the high performers who look for other opportunities. If such a pattern occurs, it must raise a number of questions. Is the salary structure of the firm not on a par with the industry? Is the firm not offering career prospects? Is the firm not effectively communicating growth opportunities to employees? Are there any wider commercial developments or trends impacting the job market? Answers to these questions will enable the firm to take remedial action to reduce recruitment and ancillary bills – not to mention safeguard the reputation of the firm as an employer.

The knowledge derived from appraisals can be proactively applied to various business issues that may need resolving, as well as pre-empting problems that could arise in future. But the biggest value of such an approach is that it gives the firm the ability to look forward and achieve tangible business objectives.

It holds true for all HR-related interventions – vertical and horizontal. Take recruitment, often considered a horizontal HR activity. A candidate interview can highlight that while the individual doesn't fit the requirement of the current role in question, in six months' time – when the firm's office opens in the Middle East – the applicant's language skills and

experience of that market would be really beneficial. The candidate can be offered the opportunity to apply for an entirely different position.

Such an approach can also help firms to achieve the right generational balance in the organisation, and even meet its diversity targets – based purely on commercial requirements. All this is only made possible if the interview process is underpinned by a detailed competency framework that is itself aligned with strategic objectives.

## Faster format

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems help to rationalise the complexity of performance management and strategic HR management. The nature of the HR discipline is such that it can't be fully automated. In fact, it shouldn't be – as we're dealing with human beings. Nevertheless, IT can assist with gathering data and facilitating important analysis to allow firms to use the input and insight for competitive advantage. Once stored, data can be sliced and diced in many ways to highlight issues that may otherwise have remained hidden, thereby enabling the firm to react in a manner that is constructive and favourable.

This level of data collection, assimilation and analysis is impossible to undertake manually in a timely fashion. But an ERP system is able to complete the exercise and present the results in easily interpretable formats (such as reports and graphs) in minutes rather than weeks.

These technology systems facilitate integrated performance management, enabling HR teams to comprehensively encompass all elements of the practice – from policy, competency frameworks, skills analysis, feedback mechanisms and salary and reward structures, through to continuous monitoring and evaluation. This is all inextricably linked to the execution of business strategy and realisation of ambitions. Organisations across industry sectors use such systems to optimise their human resource – and law firms should too.

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*Briefing Industry Analysis*

# Ones to watch

**Task management for more efficient resourcing is one of many technologies changing legal business for the better, says Ian Oxman, vice president of marketing at Aderant**

**In spite of its reputation as a slow adopter of change, the legal industry is beginning to implement new technology at an increasing rate.**

During our recent global survey of legal professionals, we found that 98% of firms undertook one or more technology initiatives in 2014. Also uncovered, 37% of mid-sized and 49% of large firms reported increased IT budgets for the year.

In order to further explore how legal professionals are implementing and using these new technologies, we polled a panel of experts in the legal tech field and

asked: 'What are the top legal technology trends so far in 2015?' Here's what we heard:

## **Tools for the trade**

While much has been discussed about legal project management and process improvement, implementation and adoption remains sluggish. However, many experts believe new technology and automation tools will facilitate an increase in the



utilisation of project management tools. What's more, as clients continue to demand increased efficiency, fully adopting the solutions and getting the most out of them becomes even more important.

As external legal budgets shrink and the drive for in-house efficiency rises, you need technology to do more for less, making automation and workflow tools critical for attorneys aiming to remain competitive. Firms are increasingly adopting automation technology in the form of workflow efficiency, compliance tools and the automated drafting of documents.

More sophisticated firms are also starting to move to the next level of project management and explore task management. With the growth of in-house legal departments and alternative service providers, task management is becoming critical to efficiency. Experts noted that benefits of task management include providing assumptions about the length of time needed for various tasks, better communications, and improved resource and deadline management.

In an era of escalating client pressure for top value, more and more firms are also offering alternative fee arrangements and becoming more cognisant of client budgets. As firms are driven to change their thinking – and processes – around managing matters, a new class of legal billing software, process management and pricing is emerging to help them.

And as more firms streamline billing processes in 2015, greater accountability to clients is a natural by-product. By implementing regular key performance indicator measurements against targets, and employing benchmark data, lawyers can make changes to improve overall profitability and increase client value.

Meanwhile, the need for collaboration and integration of products and devices is of the utmost importance. Lawyers want simple solutions, so legal technology companies that encourage and facilitate seamless integration will have the most staying power.

With more and more functionality getting added to our smartphones and desktops, lawyers are expecting everything to work together smoothly. Technologies (not just mobile) that enable a more distributed, offsite way of working will also become hugely important as law firms move away from firm-centric working. As lawyers increasingly work from multiple devices, platforms and apps, it's important for firms to work closely with their IT departments to avoid inherent compatibility and cyber security risks.

Big data, business intelligence and machine learning are

## Trend-getters

**Ryan McClead, legal technology innovation architect, Norton Rose Fulbright:**

“The top three trends in legal technology are artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence and artificial intelligence. AI isn't a monolithic 'thing' that will one day replace lawyers with robots, but multiple simultaneous and disruptive advances fundamentally changing the practice of law.”

**John Yates, chair of technology group, Morris, Manning & Martin:**

“Get ready for lawyers adopting wearable technology starting with the Apple Watch. As a new owner I'm finding ways to increase productivity and efficiency using the device.”

undoubtedly having an increasing impact on the legal market too, and many are exploring how these tools and techniques can help them better serve clients and manage their firms. This is already being evidenced by the growing number of firms implementing business intelligence systems. Proper adoption and utilisation of BI systems will be key to the success of law firms, as actionable intelligence is needed for firms to realise guaranteed benefits.

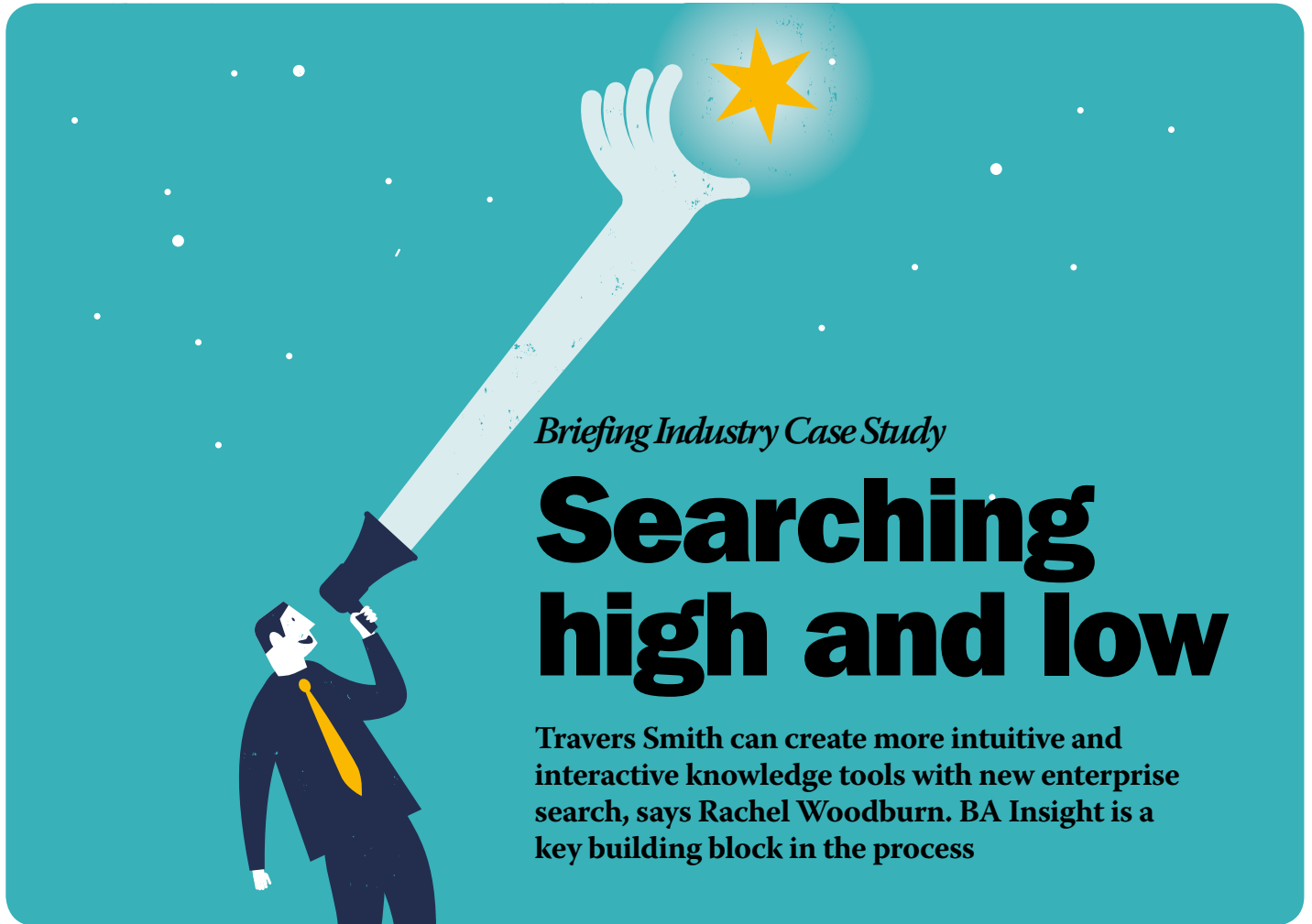
While it's highly unlikely that artificial intelligence will one day replace lawyers with robots, multiple simultaneous and disruptive advances in technology are fundamentally changing the practice of law. Speech recognition, e-discovery and other interactive tools will all other be technologies to watch in the future.

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*Briefing Industry Case Study*

# Searching high and low

**Travers Smith can create more intuitive and interactive knowledge tools with new enterprise search, says Rachel Woodburn. BA Insight is a key building block in the process**

**As the number of knowledge stores at a firm increases, capability to search across repositories as seamlessly as possible always needs to keep pace.**

But Travers Smith had reached a point in its development where it needed something really new, says head of professional support Rachel Woodburn.

“A software upgrade meant that our search functionality had basically stopped working as it should,” she says. However, this seemingly dramatic situation also handed the firm the perfect opportunity to improve what was business as usual on the knowledge-filtering front.

“Over the years we had built up a very large number of different sites and siloes across different document libraries. People were already finding it increasingly hard to find what they were looking for when they needed it.

“We realised that people today are much more agile with knowledge. It’s contained in our client matter-related documents, in the intranet and also in emails.”

Fee earners had particular trouble locating important emails, she says. “We all know those ‘where did I put that email?’ moments well. And thousands and thousands all went through bulk filing automatically. Trying to retrieve just one was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

“What we needed was to be able to filter by creator, client matter, date and topic – and with the search engine pointed not just at traditional knowledge, but also at client matter-related documents and emails.”

## **Total effect**

The solution was therefore to move from standard document search to enterprise search – and the firm turned to BA Insight for the necessary knowhow to make it happen. The concept and end-result is known as TotalSearch internally, says Woodburn.

This is a search system built on SharePoint

combined with BA Insight technologies – a one-stop search system available to any person at the firm. Anyone can search across all the document management systems, including knowledge, precedents and client matter documents. TotalSearch also includes file shares, emails, the firm’s intranet content, and external online systems such as Practical Law.

Finding an email that was sent to ‘John at client X,’ say six months ago, and with the term “liability” in the subject line becomes a point-and-click operation, explains Woodburn.

But it’s also just the first phase of a much bigger project. Now Travers is set to carry the search on to its new SharePoint intranet. TotalSearch has merely made people more efficient by saving them time. The intranet functionality has the potential to change how they work, she says.

“By creating new portals we will be able to present information to our people in different ways. TotalSearch will be able to pull information from various document libraries – accounts, client relationship management and document management system – out onto a single intranet page.

“Creating a dashboard for everything relevant to particular legal topics and practices is especially exciting for the knowledge managers at the firm. We could use TotalSearch to pull in knowhow on the Bribery Act, for example – rather than manually uploading each item.

“In the case of a client we could pull in information from the CRM and accounts systems to interrogate their key documents, or the total number of open and closed matters, and who’s working on what.

“There are definitely going to be some big gains. We’re not there yet, but we couldn’t do it at all without TotalSearch in place.”

## Searches with a smile

Woodburn says it was BA Insight’s potential to pave the way to this more interactive future that gave it the ultimate edge over others.

“We carried out quite an extensive internal trial of two vendors’ systems with a sample of associates, trainees and partners. They road-tested both for a few

weeks, but it was the potential for future development available with the BA Insight tools that really decided things for us.”

But she stresses that TotalSearch was more than an IT project. It was developed collaboratively with a team of legal professionals and IT implementers working alongside each other. Together, they decided on the details that would make the difference. “For example, do we want to see the precedent document keywords in

*“By creating new portals we will be able to present information to our people in different ways.”*

Rachel Woodburn, head of professional support,  
Travers Smith

the search results? Should those keywords be weighted higher?”

In addition to the system of more segmented internal portals, she says the future may also involve opening carefully chosen content up to clients.

“We already have a few SharePoint client extranets – and being able to link all these ideas together is probably closer to the way we’ll all be working in future.”

Until that day the daily grind of searching for “stuff” is simply simpler – which mostly means a lot more smiles all round.

“The efficiency gains are impossible to quantify in a meaningful way at the moment,” says Woodburn, “but I can say we have definitive thumbs up from associates – for finding their things that much faster, and even things they just couldn’t find at all before.”

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# Collection pointers

**Joanna Goodman, writing for Thomson Reuters, charts firms' changing needs when turning knowledge to action**

**Legal advice is applied knowledge. Lawyers apply their legal knowledge to commercial and contractual agreements and disputes. Specialist knowledge and expertise is what differentiates them from others in the legal services marketplace.**

Actionable knowledge management (KM) is therefore a critical success factor for every law firm and in-house legal department.

What is KM? A 2014 report from Linklaters defines KM as “a toolkit of different methods, techniques, approaches, ways of working and behaviours that are all designed to enable and increase organisational efficiency. It is about the knowhow and the ‘know who’ and how you put these to work more diligently.” This underlines the importance of making knowledge and KM actionable, positioning it at the heart of the business by developing dynamic systems, processes and behaviours that maximise the contribution of a firm’s (or corporate legal department’s) collective knowledge and expertise to its business and clients. Clients want

lawyers who understand their business. This means applying external knowledge such as sector knowledge and relevant cases alongside internal knowledge, including past deals handled for that client as well as identifying who has worked with the same client or on similar assignments.

That commercial knowledge may include aspects of organisational knowledge. Client data, professional networks and lessons learned from previous experience involve collaboration and may transcend project, departmental and geographical boundaries. And there is also an array of situational knowledge – legal and regulatory developments, guidance and articles, organisational processes and best practice.

Dr Viktor Dörfler, senior lecturer in information and knowledge management at Strathclyde Business School, told the Janders Dean Legal Knowledge Management and Innovation conference that actionable knowledge requires experience and expertise and integrates the various knowledge types.

## Knowledge technology tips

However, making KM actionable depends on, among other factors, deploying the right IT tools. Some tips can be drawn from practical experience in major law firms.

First, actionable KM needs to be aligned to the firm's and their clients' business objectives. It's about knowing your business, understanding your clients' businesses and identifying their requirements.

This means establishing a KM strategy connected to the firm's strategy to provide the knowledge resources lawyers require. It means setting goals and priorities and measuring the results. It means facilitating information flow, communication and collaboration.

Making KM central to the firm's activities means deploying KM tools, introducing activities and embedding behaviours to ensure everyone can contribute to, access and utilise collective knowledge.

However, knowledge isn't just information, such as precedents, opinions and insights. It also includes best practices. Sophisticated search software is the glue that brings this together to deliver relevant, timely information and knowhow to lawyers across the firm, enabling them to work together to deliver prompt advice that is relevant to the client's legal and business requirements. Law firms generally have multiple data repositories and subscribe to numerous information resources, including subscription services like Practical Law, Westlaw UK and government websites.

Solcara Legal Search from Thomson Reuters uses federated search technology to cover all a firm's internal and external resources. Searching for a particular topic could, for example, identify an important internal paper along with links to related internal precedents and external resources and information such as new legal developments and recent cases.

But lawyers also need relevant, up-to-date information – and quickly. Federated search technology helps them to pluck actionable insights from a growing and constantly shifting mass of information. Changing content sources, and connecting new ones, needs to be straightforward.

User experience is a critical success factor here. A straightforward intuitive user interface that requires minimal training and IT involvement makes Solcara Legal Search a go-to resource – even for lawyers who

are less tech-savvy. A single login enables users to access password-protected subscription sites as well as public sites without having to remember multiple passwords. Searches can be embedded into internal systems, and search results tagged by practice area and resource.

Actionable KM also requires technology to connect people and enable them to share knowledge in a simple way. It provides the ability to locate expertise across the firm and cross-sell services across practice areas and locations. Streamlining information access helps to minimise duplication and the risk of something important 'falling through the cracks' between systems. Straightforward firm-wide systems drive consistency, avoid information asymmetry and facilitate collaboration. Solcara Legal Search's configurable software enables cross-practice project groups, working on specific matters, to search only the resources they need – and organises results into shareable virtual folders that can be uploaded to the firm's intranet.

Finally, you need key performance indicators (KPIs). Management guru Peter Drucker famously said: "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it." Establishing KPIs helps to drive KM activities. Solcara's reporting functionality identifies the applications that are popular with users, and highlights the practice areas using them successfully to increase productivity. It also highlights under-utilised resources and gaps in awareness or training that can then be addressed.

## Actionable KM adds value

Actionable KM – dynamic systems, processes and behaviours that actively turn information and knowhow into knowledge, and in turn, turn knowledge into real results – is bringing KM out of the law firm libraries and onto the balance sheets. It's no longer all about searching for information. It's about identifying, accessing and applying the right knowledge resources and developing the best processes for delivering quicker, more effective legal services that create value for law

Learn more about

**Solcara Legal Search**

[www.solcara.com](http://www.solcara.com)



*Briefing Industry Interview*

# Changing faces

**Have law firms learned to emulate other businesses at long-term planning and efficient resourcing? Ask David Aird, new IT director at DAC Beachcroft**

**David Aird is brand new to legal. He comes across from the FTSE 250-listed strategic outsourcing and energy services giant Mitie. And he entirely understands the note of surprise in the inevitable question – why?**

“When I started looking I wasn’t really interested in a law firm at all,” he admits. “I was full of all the usual negative connotations – it sounded a bit boring and grey.” The thing that swung it for him, he says, was when his new managing partner told him that he wanted to “run a business that happens to sell law”.

And in the mere two years he has been at DAC Beachcroft he has already seen change for the better across the industry, he says. “There’s much more focus on cash, the bottom line and overall profitability. Perhaps it’s just my impression, but those things seem to have taken second place to the profession in the past.”

## Happy, and you know it

Aird has two big priorities. He has put in place processes to empower IT internally – and raised internal customer satisfaction scores from 70% to 91% as a result. However, a commitment to back-office continuous improvement is also financing more fundamental change that adds additional lefficiency.

“We can’t throw £20m to make everything amazing tomorrow – but project improvement after project improvement means that each day looks better than the day before,” he says.

But the really big investment at DAC Beachcroft at the moment is in agility – for lawyers and business

services, both for today and for making the firm attractive to the next generation of lawyers. In Leeds, for example, a new office has fewer workstations than people. Employees don’t have a nominated desk, but instead teams share a ‘home zone’ and work around the office with new laptops. “We’re taking up 25% less space and as it’s a great environment, people are happier too.”

It’s hard to argue with that. Space saving and more mobility are key outcomes of agile working. The DAC Beachcroft team visited a hub of such collaborative office space at one of their strategic IT partners, Vodafone, for some early inspiration. Since implementing some innovations he saw, he now regards flexibility as a better future for firms in various forms.

“We’re probably still a bit old-fashioned even here. Take me – I’m not a morning person. Don’t call me for a meeting at 8am – but I’m happy to be there at 8pm; or I might need to run off for an hour and a half. The work still gets done – and it makes me more productive to be able to work when it suits me.

“It’s difficult to measure happiness – but there’s definitely a different atmosphere at work in Leeds. Now while teams have different home zones, they will bump into each other at coffee points. It’s deliberately designed to create contact and connection.”

And are the clients happy? The new office setup needs to be supported by technology to make sure lawyers can be clearly responsive, however and wherever they work, says Aird. “Give me some flexibility, and the flip side of that is that I don’t mind jumping onto a quick videoconference call on holiday as I happen to have my tablet with me.

“But when you work this way you are much more



Photography: Jonathan Goldberg

reliant on your tech. Vodafone takes away a lot of the pain, and looks after everything from our international network, internet and security to mobile device management, voice and videoconferencing.”

And Aird says he’s confident he receives the same level of service and attention from the company as he did at the much larger Mitie.

“Legal is great – and there are lots of helpful niche providers to support you, but larger partners are capable of managing a wider range of things – for any size business. They’re in a position to be more strategic partner than straightforward provider.”

But even with the operational efficiencies released by a scalable partnership, greater agility and improved process, he says there’s still at least one missing piece – and one that really isn’t a puzzle. That’s cloud.

“I’ve still got 400-odd servers sitting behind my desk – and that’s just madness. It means a lot of our focus is still on running our servers and infrastructure. That means it’s not on the client, cash collection or profit margin. I want someone else to do the infrastructure

stuff so that we can make more of a difference to our clients. At Mitie we managed to deliver great things with a hybrid cloud solution from Vodafone, so I’d like to see a similar solution here. Obviously we need to manage the expectations and security needs of our clients, but getting this right can really change the focus of our future.”

Aird arrived at the firm for a change of focus – not to mention breath of fresh air – himself. With strategic partnership on his side he’s now in the process of delivering one.

Find out more about

**Vodafone**

[www.vodafone.co.uk/business](http://www.vodafone.co.uk/business)



*Briefing Opinion*

## The capital of business success

Barry Talbot, managing director of Qlik solution provider Informance, says cultivate happy staff to grow happy clients

**Most of us in management positions live by the mantra that ‘the customer is king’ and if they say jump, we ask ‘how high?’ This appears to be a widely accepted practice in business today. It’s certainly something I acknowledge, as the happier our clients are, the more likely they are to continue to use us.**

However, Richard Branson has a different take on ‘the customer is king’. He says that “if you look after your staff, they in turn, will look after your customers”. Which in effect, is asking your staff to do the leg work.

Every single person who works for a living, be it for themselves or employed by a company or law firm, all want the same thing. They want to be treated with respect, to feel valued, want to be paid a decent salary for the work they do, and hopefully to have some fun along the way.

So no matter how you go about making your clients happy, the one inescapable fact is that your staff, or ‘human capital’, need to be managed effectively and enjoy working for you. It’s natural that your clients will feel they receive a top service from you if your staff are happy. In turn, they’ll be happy about paying your bill as they’ll feel they’ve had great value for money.

Excellent customer relationship management and creating a happy workforce go hand in hand. Good customer relationships are built up by many people within a firm – from the person who answers the phone to the senior partner who manages the client. But behind all the processes in place to ensure happy customers are in abundance, it’s your firm’s data that tells the true story and validates all the good work that your staff are doing, so maintaining visibility and

tracking performance is vital. Analysis of pure financial data will tell you why certain clients are not as profitable as others, but you also need to look at what your non-financial data is telling you.

For example, in most firms today there is a sizable gender disparity when it comes to salaries, which has a negative impact on happiness. Do you know what impact this issue is having on the happiness of your staff? Do you know why staff leave your firm? Do you have standards in place for staff retention – particularly

trainees? Do you know if any of your top performers are responsible for new business within other departments? Do you even know how many fee earners are based in a certain office? Do you know how many of your fee earners are seconded to your clients? Does your management team

regularly ask such questions?

There are, no doubt, many more that could be asked, but suffice it to say, a modern law firm should also be able to get the answers instantly using technology. If your firm has a human resources management system in place, the data stored in it, along with the financial data from your practice management system, should provide new insights into profitability. You should be able to ask different questions as you start to understand the impact that people have on the wellbeing of both your firm and your staff. So the answer is, keep everyone happy and reap the rewards.

*“It’s your firm’s data that tells the true story and validates all the good work that your staff are doing.”*

Find out more about  
**Informance**  
[www.informance.co.uk](http://www.informance.co.uk)

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