

Briefing

SCALE FAST
Top 100 law firms on how they decide what's ready for the cloud, what the future holds, and what, if anything, is still holding them back



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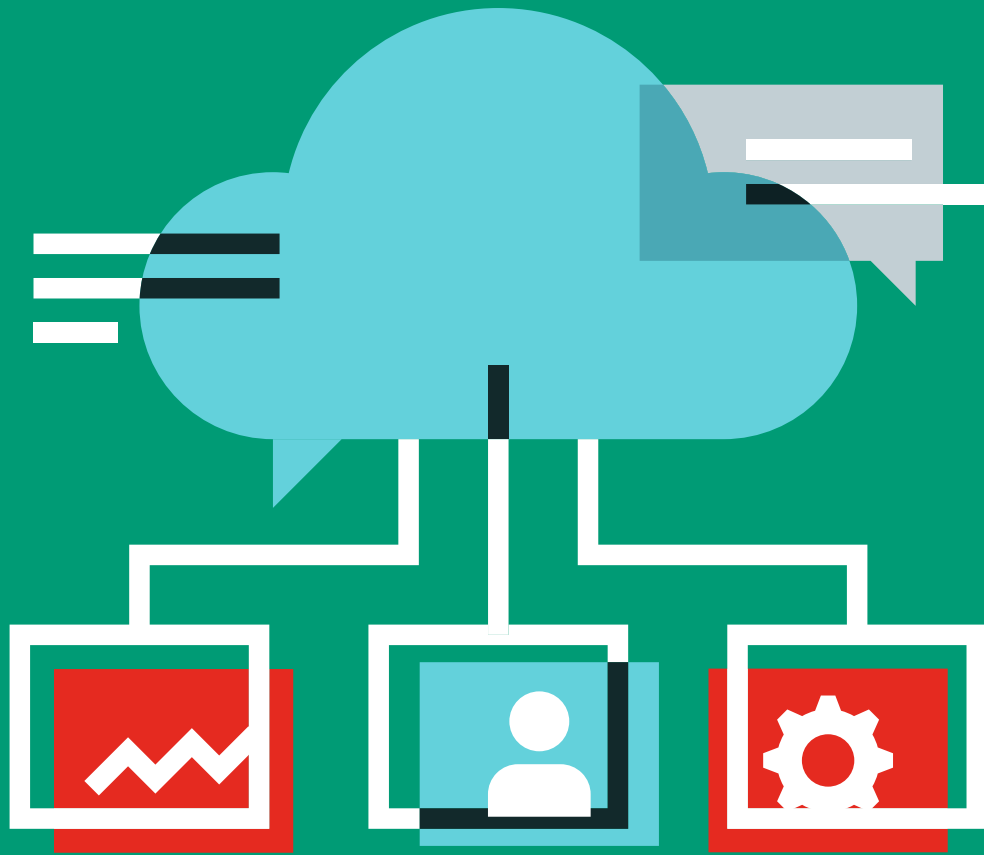


FARRER & Co



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FEATURE

Clearing up cloudy IT

The barriers to cloud-based service are tumbling down.
Kayli Olson reports

UK industry's journey to the cloud finally seems to be taking off, as more businesses prepare to adopt cloud services – the adoption rate stands at 84% today across the country, according to Cloud Industry Forum.

Legal is also getting in gear. In the **Briefing** Legal IT landscapes 2017 report, every respondent agreed that mobility technologies are fundamental to making law firm people more productive.

And what's more, over the next five years firms will be moving most of their systems to the cloud – with only a small percentage responding that they would never move certain systems to the cloud (32% for practice management systems, for example).

For some firms, there may still be uncertainty. Even though security is becoming less of a risk – as firms start to trust suppliers' security over their own – other factors such as Brexit, regulators and partner approval take its place, and getting into the cloud may seem like a daunting task.

Andrew Powell, head of IT at Macfarlanes, says: "Broadly speaking, a third party that runs IT services for a living should be able to make a better job of cloud infrastructure than someone who provides legal advice."

Full strategy ahead

The driving force behind law firms' adoption of cloud will vary depending on size and type of legal work of the firm. But one thing's for sure, legal needs to get to grips with the fact that cloud could be the best way forward.

Karen Jacks, IT director at Bird & Bird, says her firm's strategy is less about moving everything to the cloud and more about choosing wisely. "We carefully consider which systems would be best suited for moving to the cloud," she says.

"The main advantage here is getting solutions off-premise and reducing overhead on support and maintenance needed by the internal team."

And savings are on the list of benefits for Kingsley Napley. IT director Thereza Snyman explains: "Cloud is part of the roadmap for our firm because investing in physical hardware is just too expensive – and I'm not referring to the cost of the tin. Taking into account the cost of securing, upgrading, maintaining and the sheer opportunity cost of using scarce IT skills to do routine, repetitive work – I would say cloud is very attractive as an alternative to on-premises solutions. Why do yourself what cloud providers can do better and less expensively?"

But cost isn't necessarily the number one driver.





Powell says: “With consumer cloud services it’s usually about cost but for us it’s about agility – being able to do things quickly and take base level infrastructure support away from our organisation, so that we can focus on adding value to the business rather than the nuts and bolts.”

An agile way forward

Cloud may not be the thing driving firms to implement their various agile-working arrangements, but they’re both definitely heading in the same direction.

For Bird & Bird, collaboration and agile working come in many forms from remote access to app-based solutions – the firm has been using collaborative software in the cloud for five years and has recently moved its CRM system to the cloud as well.

“What we will be looking at this year is implementing Office 365 and how we can use that

move further forward, which is really adding more to our agile space,” Jacks says.

“Of course, there are some challenges with that. With various products, particularly on-premises – the more legacy-type products – we need to be very clear about how we can integrate those to work more collaboratively,” she adds.

Kingsley Napley is also looking to improve the agility of its team. Snyman says: “We have rolled out Surface Pros for our fee earners and are working to implement remote access across the firm.” And cloud has a part to play in that.

Macfarlanes is looking to increase its cloud adoption over the next 12 months – much of which is likely to be dedicated (hybrid) cloud to meet client requirements. Powell says: “I’m a big fan of using infrastructure as a service (IaaS) and cloud as a tactic to develop the organisation’s technology. Service provision becomes more fluid that way – allowing you to operate on an annual or

monthly cost model, without the traditional upfront spikes in expenditure, based on what is appropriate for the firm. We are keen to take advantage of that flexibility.”

He adds that it underpins everything the firm has done so far with Skype and agile working. Macfarlanes is also rolling out Surface Pros for its legal teams. “It just makes sense for cloud services to be part of that,” says Powell.

David Aird, IT director at DAC Beachcroft, says the legal industry is changing: “The cloud brings more flexibility, greater agility and better security than the majority of firms can provide on their own. It is likely that procuring services in the cloud where it benefits our clients will be our preferred model in the future.”

Fast to fail

But is cloud necessarily the right way for every firm? Snyman says: “It’s definitely a journey. We already have a test environment to see what works and what doesn’t. It’s about gradually putting more and more into the cloud, a little bit at a time.”

Macfarlanes’ Powell agrees: “One of the benefits is that you can provision something to test very quickly, without having to commit to the ongoing expense of infrastructure. Try it for a month, and see where you get with it. And if it’s no good switch it off. That’s it. And you no longer need a big set of underutilised kit for future growth sat in the basement for three years not doing anything. It’s quite important to be able to allow projects to fail quickly.”

Aird says his firm has a cloud-first strategy: “The big driver for us is agility, allowing us to scale up and down. We can bring on new systems or take them off when needed.”

As for what cloud service law firms should buy, that’s up to the firm itself. Definitions of what cloud actually looks like will be thrown around, but ultimately the cloud is just a scalable infrastructure run by someone else, or the ability to procure services without worrying about location.

But law firms were certainly slow to start – there’s a mantra in the legal sector to “boldly go where someone has just arrived,” Powell laughs.

There’s relatively little reward in being first into

“Each firm has to do its own research to find out what type of cloud, or hybrid cloud, best suits the needs of its practice and clients.”

Thereza Snyman, IT director, Kingsley Napley

some of the new technologies in the legal sector, he adds. “If you happen to get it right first time there’s a killing to be made, but it’s risky. Law firms tend to aspire to being early adopters rather than being bleeding edge or laggards.”

Snyman at Kingsley Napley says: “Legal-specific vendors are beginning to offer cloud as part of their service. It’s only a matter of time before the legal industry moves the majority of systems to the cloud.”

The big players

The cloud is starting to get its head out of just the consumer market, that is to say, the legal industry has some things to learn from the likes of Microsoft and Amazon – which both launched data centres in the UK in 2016.

Powell says: “We see quite a lot of vendors in the legal sector selling the idea of cloud infrastructure while making it physically accessible only to you. Dedicated infrastructure isn’t true ‘cloud’ in my view – it’s very different to something like AWS, where your data is on the same platform as everybody else’s.”

The problem with most true cloud services is that there’s not an appropriate service level agreement (SLA) to cover confidentiality, integrity and availability – meaning for most law firms (and their clients) “consumer-grade cloud is probably not good enough to run core infrastructure, due to regulatory and client commitments,” Powell adds.

Aird at DAC Beachcroft says he doesn’t really see a huge amount of risk in terms of security, although there are some challenges. “Security can never be taken for granted and we are continually vigilant. Security questionnaires from clients are also becoming increasingly robust and detailed. And advisers at Microsoft and elsewhere spend a lot of time analysing these areas, and have information and guidance to hand in case we need further support.”



Powell agrees: “If you take into account the direction of Microsoft’s corporate licensing, the route towards Azure and Office 365 is becoming more viable. Or to put it another way, making it harder for you not to. So, you might as well embrace it.”

Kingsley Napley’s Snyman adds: “Each firm has to do its own research to find out what type of cloud, or hybrid cloud model, best suits the needs of its practice and clients. As long as there’s security, you can focus on improving the delivery of legal services.”

What’s the hold up?

The biggest things holding back the legal sector are the regulatory pressures from the SRA and the regulators of law firms’ clients, but also themselves. Regulators haven’t really been keeping up with the way cloud is being built and managed, and the legal sector is feeling that negligence.

Jacks at Bird & Bird says: “Suppliers need to have an awareness of the regulatory position that law firms are in. Just saying ‘it’s in AWS (Amazon Web Services) or Azure’ is not really enough.”

Law firms have a lot of regulation coming from all angles. Government or financial services regulators are asking for proof that firms are not storing client data in the cloud, or else information security audits make it difficult for them to be compliant.

But this tendency is changing. Powell at Macfarlanes says the more recent audits of that nature help firms embrace IaaS and hybrid cloud

technologies, not least because the clients who are sending them tend to use cloud services themselves. “But I think there’s still a lag of a year or two between what’s possible, and what regulators and clients are comfortable with within our sector.”

On the side of cloud inertia – it’s the law firms standing in the way of themselves, as we’ve heard time and again.

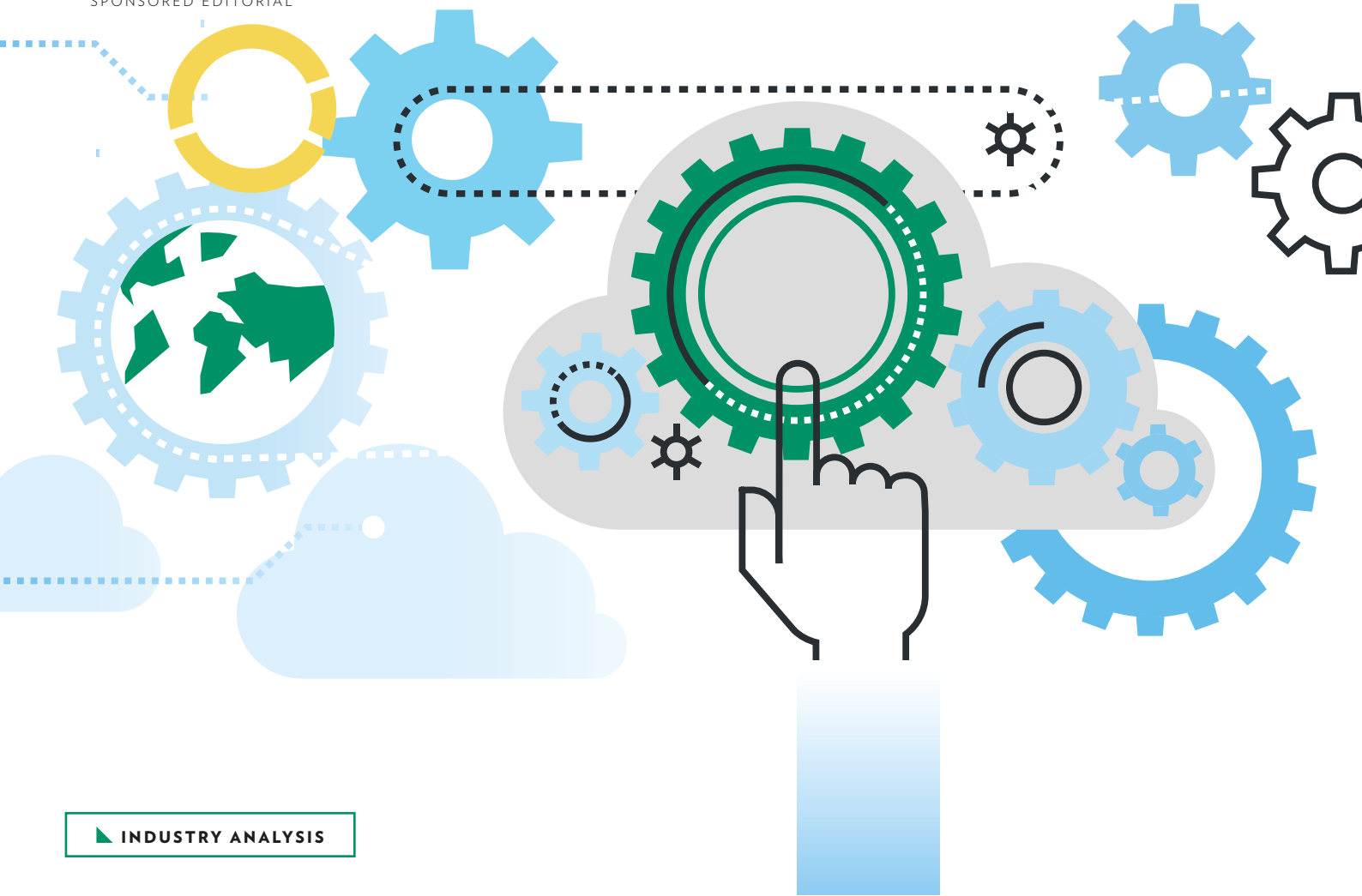
Powell says: “Most law firms have, for many years, run it all themselves on-premises in a basement with their own staff being able to go through a door, see the flashing lights, and touch the hardware – there is some comfort in being able to point at your data.

“The idea that an office block is an appropriate data centre is ridiculous but because people have done it for so long it’s difficult to change mindsets.”

Now the worry is about what cloud means for legal work and data protection. Even if the EU’s new General Data Protection Regulation isn’t directly impacting firms’ use of the cloud, they have to be aware of client data and where it’s held.

Jacks adds: “For every challenge the cloud fixes, it creates a whole new one. You have to carefully consider that potential for complexity across all your jurisdictions for the best of the client.”

As businesses continue to expand globally, and the flow of data keeps changing with them, firms will have to keep up if they want to succeed. Cloud is one step in this process to become more technology-abled and better connected. ▴



INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Reach for the sky

Zia Bhatti, chief architect at iManage, explains how cloud services have developed in the legal industry and what features to watch out for in the modern cloud

In recent years, the cloud has gained traction in the legal world, with many firms opting to purchase solutions that are available as a cloud service rather than a traditional on-premises deployment.

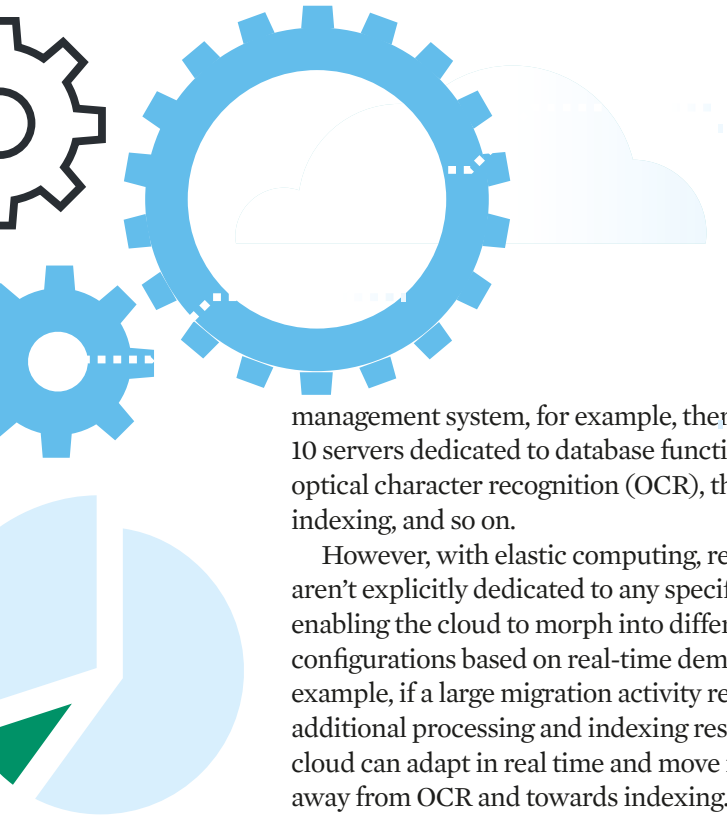
It's important to note, however, that vast technological innovations have taken place in the past decade, driven by leading internet companies such as Twitter, Facebook, Amazon and Google. Modern clouds are built on top of these innovations, and take full advantage of great leaps in scaling, resiliency and intelligent security.

Consider the following a quick checklist of some of the key characteristics of a modern cloud.

Elastic computing – scaling without hindrance

Elastic computing is the new dominant paradigm, allowing a modern cloud to keep its site performing efficiently.

In a traditional cloud scenario, you have a fixed number of servers that need to be 'assigned' to specific functions. With a cloud document



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management system, for example, there might be 10 servers dedicated to database functions, five to optical character recognition (OCR), three to indexing, and so on.

However, with elastic computing, resources aren't explicitly dedicated to any specific task, enabling the cloud to morph into different configurations based on real-time demands. For example, if a large migration activity requires additional processing and indexing resources, the cloud can adapt in real time and move resources away from OCR and towards indexing.

This elasticity translates into much higher performance than a legacy cloud with fixed and 'assigned' resources could deliver, because resources are always being intelligently allocated to the area of greatest need.

For end users, this means a fast and responsive system where performance does not degrade when load or demand increases — allowing users to carry out their key daily tasks and get their work done without any of the sluggishness that can accompany legacy cloud offerings.

Resiliency and availability – uninterrupted uptime

A modern approach to the cloud also recognises that components can and will fail – and the application is designed to automatically route itself around these inevitable component failures.

Additionally, a modern cloud will maintain multiple data copies in active systems to ensure fast recoveries if an entire data centre becomes unavailable due to an outage. This type of availability stands in contrast to cloud vendors whose data availability approach simply consists of taking data snapshots and replicating them to a secondary data centre.

The resilience of the modern cloud extends to code releases: a modern cloud can stay online during code updates, so there's no longer any outage window or service interruptions when pushing out patches, bug fixes, or new releases.

With elastic computing, resources aren't explicitly dedicated towards any specific task, enabling the cloud to morph into different configurations based on real-time demands.

Eliminating this downtime ensures that legal professionals don't have to miss a single billable hour in their day.

Intelligent security – advanced protection of sensitive data

Encryption for stored and in-motion data is a base expectation for a cloud service. A modern cloud takes a more sophisticated approach to managing system and application security. It recognises that traditional defences — like firewall and antivirus — are no longer enough, especially in an era of sophisticated social engineering techniques like phishing.

A modern cloud incorporates threat-monitoring systems for network intrusion detection (external threats) as well as application usage (internal threats). Analytics with machine-learning/AI on application usage help to detect abnormal behavioural patterns — allowing modern clouds to proactively identify and defeat malicious activity. For firms, this means a better way to protect client data — as well as the firm's own reputation.

Capitalise on cloud

If a cloud service doesn't capitalise on the spectacular technological innovation that has taken place in the past decade, it's not a modern cloud. A modern cloud is smart, secure, fast, agile and always up.

By looking for a cloud offering with elasticity, resilience and availability, and intelligent security, customers will be well on their way to enjoying these benefits immediately and gaining a platform for transformative change in the future. ▴



INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

First light of service

Paul Lovegrove, IT service delivery manager at Farrer & Co, says implementing a new IT service management system with Sunrise has supported the firm's service improvement programme

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or Farrer & Co, the end of 2016 meant the sunset for outdated IT service management software – and its start with Sunrise.

Good IT service management (ITSM) software is vital to the stability of daily work in any business – and for big law firms, with a large volume of people, projects and information, that's even more the case.

Paul Lovegrove, IT service delivery manager at Farrer & Co, says: "We knew we wanted to be more transparent with the business, get the customer more involved and ultimately deliver a better service – when we saw Sunrise ITSM we instantly knew that it would help us reach our goals.

"Selecting the cloud-based offering means we are always on the latest version of the software and security – one less thing to worry about." But, he adds, the biggest thing for the firm is that it's fully customisable and that no customisations are lost during an upgrade.

"Everything you see, you can edit in some way – change labels, add or remove options, even change the underlying ITIL-based workflows and introduce new services. It was made so that it worked for you rather than you having to fit in to work with it."

Dawn of a new age

Before the firm went to market with the new system

it was essential to set a standard for its service desk team to meet – and the software in turn needed to be able to aid the team in upholding its mission statement.

As a part of its ongoing service improvement drive, it was important the firm selected a solution that had out-of-the-box best practice reports that could be benchmarked against from its inception.

One of the key differentiators of Sunrise ITSM was the inclusion of the Service Desk Institute (SDI) accredited report suite. The firm also looked at the SDI's guidelines for SLAs and worked them into the software.

For the time-sensitive work of a fee earner, answering queries and dealing with incidents quickly is a huge priority, Lovegrove says. "Logging incidents is straightforward and almost every single field can be customised. The ease of logging calls is not to be overlooked – it is so simple to create a new incident and it means that our analysts can log more calls rather than getting bogged down with other issues."

The product gives the service desk team the flexibility it needs in order to hit targets and continue to exceed the expectations of its customers – and it's easy to use.

"It's two-fold, the reporting is excellent and the ease in the software makes a big difference.



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Ultimately it works for our customer as we can provide them with a more timely service.”

And that’s not all. Lovegrove says: “Sunrise’s level of service is second to none. We get a really friendly and helpful service and they’re on top of any issues, instantly – it really adds to our satisfaction with the product.”

Friendly competition

Sunrise enables Farrer to monitor its KPIs constantly through live data and weekly and monthly reports. “Our monitoring is much better than before. Next to my desk I’ve got a big screen on the wall that shows the ‘Wallboard’ – which basically cycles through different screens of KPIs and work in real-time,” Lovegrove says.

“It’s more proactive than reactive and it really makes a difference to our service delivery. I can see what the analysts are doing and if there are any pinch points – it highlights something as it’s happening rather than me having to wait until someone tells me something is being done or I see the report at the end of the week.” The KPIs are constantly being refined as part of a continuous improvement programme.

There are lots of different reporting options in Sunrise – any existing or new field within the software can be filtered and reported on. But Lovegrove says what really makes the software stand out is the gamification aspect.

“There are different badges you can win. For example, when you log an incident you get a badge and it counts as points to your total score. Your score goes up each day as you hit different badge markers. Then, at the end of the month we show the leader boards across a few categories – who logged the most incidents, best customer satisfaction ratings, largest number of calls resolved and so on,” he explains.

“We can chart all of that. Of course this is purely internal, but it creates some good-natured competition. You can also ‘level up’ – it’s all a bit of fun and gives the analysts something to aim for, especially for those analysts that are gamers in their spare time.

“It was something quite unique to the software, it wasn’t something we looked at doing but it adds

“It’s two-fold, the reporting is excellent and the ease in the software makes a big difference. Ultimately it works for our customer as we can provide them with a more timely service.”

another dimension to the application,” he says.

Flexible future

The next step for Farrer & Co is to implement the Sunrise self-service portal. Users can log in to a dedicated webpage and view and update their current calls, see any announcements that the service team communicates on the system and access knowledge-based articles so that they can answer their own questions or solve their own issues.

“It will also give them the ability to log a new incident, which they can then monitor through the process of assignment and prioritisation – all part of the process of getting the customer more involved,” Lovegrove says.

Other products on the market simply didn’t do this as well, Lovegrove points out – which was a big driver for Farrer & Co adopting a new IT service management system in the first place.

Lovegrove says: “Our primary aim is to deliver outstanding customer service – so having flexible software which supports that goal and allows us to customise and grow the product within the business is invaluable.

“It’s not just about being happy with the product now but looking at how we can shape it for the future of the firm, and with Sunrise ITSM we saw that we could do that.” ▲

Winning performance points

Flexibility in Sunrise’s product means that the firm can define its KPIs and keep its analysts on target, says Lovegrove. For example:

- 90% of calls are answered in six seconds or less
- 75% of calls are logged, the other 25% may be pass-overs or updates to existing incidents
- 80% of calls are resolved at first contact – this means that the call stays within the support team rather than going across to ‘applications’ or infrastructure teams to resolve
- All emails are prioritised within 15 minutes
- 90% of incidents are resolved within the SLA
- 80% of customer surveys receive 5/5.



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