Briefing

SMARTER LEGAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

DIGITAL DIVIDER
Derek Southall at Gowling WLG talks assessing IT awareness

APP POTENTIAL
The Taylor Wessing knowledge team taps into innovation

MOBILE'S HOME
Mark Garnish at Tikit says true agility calls for a cloud strategy

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Editor's letter

A t our last **Briefing** editorial breakfast in December, we discussed how much time firms spend considering whether popular management approaches and initiatives are really right for them. Do they just accept that some project or other is indeed universal business 'best practice'? Or should this really depend on what qualities or business goals they regard as core to their brand – perhaps even something that makes them different to others?

I was reminded of this at a recent conference, where a speaker suggested that theories of behavioural economics should really be applied to strategy-guided firms, no less than the crazy consumers that appear to cause economists such headaches. Both are subject to 'bounded rationality'. Both are skewed by peculiar biases.

> **Hard management data must surely hold the key to an agile kingdom, too – however popular your policy.**

For example: 'We've always priced our services this way in the past. We've done well enough to date. Why stop now?'

Or what about: 'Firm X is doing this new thing. We'd like some of their business. So shouldn't we really be doing it too?'

Let's face it – this issue's feature topic of agile working (you can work anywhere, you can work anytime, we trust you, firm saves some more money, people save some more personal time) has rather a lot of followers. And it sounds good – including to me. You can't deny these people are taking up less-pricey office space. But be honest – how much of this is copying competitors? You certainly visit one another's watercoolers to take notes about how it's all going.

It's often said something like agile is a 'no-brainer' – but that's hardly the same as a strategy. And perhaps there is a lot more going on behind scenes than the standard line: 'People are happier and more productive working at home, duh.' Now, I'm not insisting your people can't, in fact, be trusted – but has that been measured, and with different groups of people? What about different sets of personalities? Is there an optimum ratio of office days to home days for any one individual? Is a Friday at home to be avoided at all costs?

And as French employees win a new 'right to disconnect' from digital life to combat national 'info-obesity', is the risk of remote-working burnout on the agile agenda?

If you can't manage what you can't measure, hard management data must surely hold the key to an agile kingdom, too – however popular your policy.

RICHARD BRENT EDITOR

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Inside this month

20
State of the innovation

"We try to encourage constant questioning of how to do things."

Andrew Telling, UK head of knowledge management, Taylor Wessing

Briefing

Let's get flexible

Briefing is the only legal business management title, and is focused exclusively on improving the work and worlds of law firm management leaders. Every issue is packed with relevant insight and lessons from peers and pros.

Loose changes

S o, another year of drama took no time getting going in legal. Scarcely had the leftover party poppers been put away when we heard of the unexpected resignation of the chief executive of the **Law Society** Catherine Dixon – citing concern at the slow progress toward a new main board to make things more efficient. In her departing letter Dixon argued her team had to spend a "disproportionate amount of time" reporting to mutiple boards.

"I want to be part of an organisation with a

18

Number of months Addleshaws has spent piloting its various AI options

board and council which works effectively and collaboratively with its executive," she said.

"I don't see the role of a CEO as merely attending and reporting to a board. If this is how council sees the role of the Law Society CEO, (which the agreed main board structures suggests it does) then unfortunately this is not for me."

Blunt. Meanwhile, at the close of last year another chief exec set out a vision of a brighter, rather less bureaucratic future for how firms could operate at least. After launching an 'Innovation Space' – something it's styling as a "safe space" – the **Solicitors Regulation Authority** is now consulting on changes to its waiver process, whereby firms can apply for specific rules to be set aside. The idea? Quite simply, to let firms try out more ideas of their own – in the public interest as well, of course. The proposals include a "no enforcement tool," which the Civil Aviation Authority uses to allow business to try out drones

without getting into trouble. Chief executive Paul Philip said: "Firms of all types – entrepreneurial sole practitioners through to large firms – want to try different ways of offering the services that people are looking for."

Services delivered by robot, perhaps? As the European Parliament's legal affairs committee votes on whether to press ahead with the first-ever EU rules for robotics and AI, **Addleshaw Goddard** is one of the latest firms to hop aboard the AI train over here. Well, not exactly. Mike Potter, head of the AG transaction services team (TST) – charged with exploring more imaginative resourcing of work – said: "We have been focusing on how to make the best use of AI for a long time. We were determined to ensure we could use it broadly across our business for our clients. We haven't looked at AI in isolation, but have built it into our overall integrated approach to people, process and technology to deliver legal work in a better way." Apprentices and paralegals as well as lawyers and managers, the TST also has its own technology team that spent 18 months testing systems before settling on **Kira Systems**.

And finally, when is change a change too far? Well ... the **City of London Law Society** says the proposed new Solicitors Qualifying Examination is one example. Its response to the SRA consultation says: "We have already expressed reservations about multiple choice testing and yet it is retained as the sole method of testing legal knowledge."

Hm ... could work for magazine editors though. Would you a) agree, or b) disagree, dear reader? ◢

> The Solicitors Regulation Authority is now consulting on changes to its waiver process, whereby firms can apply for specific rules to be set aside. The idea? Quite simply, to let firms try out more ideas of their own.

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Promised brand?

Mandy Reynolds, director of marketing at Stephens Scown, welcomed the chance to focus on how she might best market herself

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION
GROW YOUR PERSONAL BRAND FOR CAREER AND BUSINESS SUCCESS
ROB BROWN
WILEY

This book made me question if there was a magic formula for career progression, and if I had read it at the start of my career, would I have made different decisions and been more successful? But what I liked most was that it wasn't a 'self-improvement' book. Instead it helps you to focus on your career strengths.

It can seem overwhelming. Working on your career in this way is like taking on another job. There is a lot of information here, along with loads of top tips and practical examples. So I really liked that you could easily identify the areas most applicable to you, and focus on one or two key things that would make the biggest difference.

As a marketer, the content soon resonated with me. It takes the essence of how to build a corporate brand and shows how you can apply it to yourself. That sounds easy, but it's like that old adage to 'take a look at a mechanic's car, or a builder's home' – we're too busy doing it for others. The book includes much advice that I give lawyers on a daily basis about promoting expertise.

The second chapter really started to get me thinking. What type of career builder was I – a Hustler, a Fatalist, a Planner or a Pro? Initially I didn't like the fact that it called a career a game, and if you couldn't see this, you've already lost. It sounded a bit shallow – a 'career by numbers'. But reading on, it became more difficult to dispute.

Intrinsic to the book is the message to "be so good they can't ignore you" – and Brown poses good questions such as "What could you be the best at?" and "What stands out most in your skill set?"

Then you need to work out what's in your red box – the things that can only be done by you. Businesses often say it's their great service, values or staff, but this is often no different to their rivals. Perhaps the best advice I've taken from the book is to find your unique value proposition (UVP) – similar to a company's USP. This is your competitive advantage: "What value, what results, what solutions and what relief can you bring to the company, your boss, your team, your department, that they cannot easily get elsewhere?" It recognises that this is difficult to articulate, and suggests asking your team, peers and even clients.

A lot of emphasis is given to the role of that network. I liked the idea of building a dream team of trusted individuals around you, which I suspect many of us do subconsciously. It stresses that this circle can include 'critics' – people that make your life tougher, but for the better – as well as 'promoters' and 'friends.'

So there's no magic bullet, but this book could contain a magic formula for reputation – given a lot of hard work and focus. Brown's online 'reputational vault' is also a big bonus feature. Finally, I reflected that readers may benefit enormously on a personal level from working with a good marketer. ◣

> Initially I didn't like the fact that it called a career a game, and if you couldn't see this, you've already lost. It sounded a bit shallow – a 'career by numbers.' But reading on, it became more difficult to dispute.

WHAT'S ON YOUR WHITEBOARD?

Derek Southall, head of innovation and digital at Gowling WLG, sets out what's new in store for the transatlantic top 25 firm in 2017 – and beyond

Q So, what's new with you at the firm for 2017?

A We're developing digital analytics strategies for each business group. Things in the world of legal IT used to be fairly centrally driven and scalable across teams – your document management system, say – but all the things that really improve productivity or the client experience today involve working alongside lawyers. And you really have to get under the skin of the legal work to support it. We'll be measuring what we call the 'digital fitness' of each group to monitor how much progress teams are making.

Q How has the Canada merger helped you to deliver services differently?

A In 2016 we won an FT Innovative Lawyers award for a project with our client Dyson – which would be a very good example. A key challenge for a business like that is monitoring counterfeit activity globally. We collaborated with the client to map a matrix of different methodologies, core advisers and specific processes for each core jurisdiction – plus new reporting capability. It's almost as if the individual client designs its perfect management information and working methodologies.

You see lots of firms trying to 'be global', but unless that reach helps you to deliver something greater, in a meaningful way, a global solution doesn't really count for much. We're fully leveraging the best of what we do on both sides of the Atlantic.

Q How do you feel about the apparent rise of AI and other new tech in legal?

A Like a lot of firms, we're looking very closely at applied AI and the systems that are out there. There's no doubt that certain tasks will be delivered differently. I'm also convinced that blockchain – or something that looks like it – will have a huge effect on how we're all working. Broadly, any transferrable asset or transaction will probably be susceptible to that sort of technology. Predictive analytics will be key too.

However, I believe the piece that will be most interesting as we introduce these technologies is what'll happen to the skills mix and contracting models you'll need to run teams in the new dynamics of that law firm. Clue: they won't be the same.

Q Do you need to justify investment in innovation?

A Yes – but much research shows that innovative companies enjoy disproportionate brand loyalty from clients and tend to be more profitable. Most of all, it's about making sure that we can meet clients' genuine needs – not only today but also in the future, and ahead of the competition. That's really my rationale for the whole thing. The research also shows it's the innovative firms that tend to attract top talent.

Q Do you have any advice for talking to a firm's clients about innovation?

A Don't go knocking on people's doors asking to "talk about innovation." Instead, ask clients about their needs and problems. Ask about the things other organisations do well. Explain things you have done well too.

We could, for example, describe our tool that automatically searches eBay to map counterfeit products and initiate their removal. In my experience, clients like to share their challenges – and they're even more impressed when you take potential solutions to them. ◣

Database

IN DECEMBER 2016, THE UK GOVERNMENT AND OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS LAUNCHED ITS ONLINE GENDER PAY GAP TRACKER TOOL. HERE ARE THE GAPS IN AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR SOME KEY LEGAL BUSINESS ROLES WHEN BRIEFING HAD A GO AT IT IN JANUARY. WOMEN WERE ONLY EARNING MORE IN ONE JOB CATEGORY.

Gap	Category
32.4%	Financial managers and directors
23.6%	Financial accounts managers
19%	Company secretaries
15.3%	IT business analysts, architects and systems designers
15.2%	Business and financial project management professionals
15%	IT project and programme managers
14.2%	Chartered and certified accountants
13.6%	Sales accounts and business development managers
11.1%	Buyers and procurement officers
10.5%	Credit controllers
10.4%	Legal professionals
8.9%	HR managers and directors
7.6%	Solicitors
6.5%	Management consultants and business analysts
2.5%	Web design and development professionals
2.2%	PR professionals
Legal secretaries	17.3%

THE TOOL ALSO OFFERS ESTIMATES OF THE % OF WOMEN (AND MEN) EMPLOYED IN EACH CATEGORY

Category	% Women
Business and financial project management professionals	29%
Buyers and procurement officers	45%
Chartered and certified accountants	41%
Company secretaries (split unavailable)	
Credit controllers	70%
Financial accounts managers	52%
Financial managers and directors	36%
HR managers and directors	62%
IT business analysts, architects and systems designers	12%
IT project and programme managers	26%
Legal professionals	49%
Management consultants and business analysts	34%
PR professionals	48%
Sales accounts and business development managers	35%
Solicitors	51%
Web design and development professionals	21%

18.1%

THE OVERALL UK PAY GAP IS AT ITS LOWEST SINCE RECORDS BEGAN

Source: Annual survey of hours and earnings, 2016 provisional. The gap is calculated using median hourly pay rates, excluding overtime. Some data is unavailable due to the small sample size.

Story times

Andrew Woolfson, director of knowledge management and capability at RPC, finds the collaborative arts world an elegant analogy for higher-quality – but minimal – project management in the land of big business

It's against all my instincts to start a piece with an obscure computer operating system definition. But here goes. 'Less' is a program to view the contents of a text file, one screen at a time. It's similar to 'More', but has the extended capability of allowing both forward and backward navigation through the file. Less doesn't need to read the entire file before starting – so, faster load times with large files. There we have it. You can do more with less – it has more impact. No need to write any more.

But the computer geek's quote isn't the whole story. It's a bit like misunderstanding "wherefore art thou, Romeo?" It's not all about tuning the software of transactions – not that that's a bad thing to do. But the less-is-more movement is something that has simplicity and elegance at its heart – the philosopher's sense of form.

A lot of bright business ideas could do with more less-is-more treatment. There's only so much a brain can cope with after transport, weather, social conventions and human errors of the day. Why make it harder than it is already?

I've got used to asking a dumb question of people: 'What's the problem and what needs to be solved?' It's when you get to this really solid piece of information that a project can take shape. But then the 'management skills' kick in. Lurking behind a response is defensiveness, and you overdo the managing down of expectations – so the 'computer says no'. Resist those management models swirling around in your head, and just start listening to people. It's now described as 'socialising your thinking,' but it means actively listening – not putting words into others' mouths, but encouraging them to talk with their stories.

Be like the investigative journalist. Find out what the story is first. Listen. And keep re-checking to frame and validate the reasons for the problem or new opportunity. But here's the rub: not many have this skill. We get carried away with our professional backgrounds – and we want to talk instead. It's only the passionate few who will engage in your language, and give you the same in response. And be warned – they might create a totally new set of issues to revalidate.

It's just as hard to relate the story to all the things that need fixing – optimising, integrating, reprocessing, architecting. These aren't jobs for the amateur. Pay these people. But if money's tight, think about boiling the problem down some more. It's not Grand Designs – we all know what happens to the housebuilder's budget.

Instead, create an early design – like a stage set model. Various groups can look around, see what's on offer and, hopefully, how the solution relates to the problem. It's early, and it can be reworked. But post-pilot – where all development has been baked in – it's hard to change tack. It's easier to do a smoke-and-mirrors job instead.

Architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe – daddy of the less-is-more movement – wanted to "reduce and distil buildings and their components into simple forms in which art and technics – geometry and matter" were integrated. With less to concern you aside from something that works you don't see the joins. Elegance should be aspired to. This brings me to my own personal breakthrough moment working in a professional services firm. I showed Toy Story as an intro to a project for sharing more commercial knowledge across the firm. But the great technology-based animation wasn't seen – just a great story. ◣

Create an early design – like a stage set model. Various groups can look around, see what's on offer and, hopefully, how the solution relates to the problem. It's early, and it can be reworked.

New model law

William Robins, operations director at Keystone Law, says releasing fee earners from relentless oversight may be better for the bottom line than incentivising and managing them

D o you know what your employees are doing right now? You're paying them well, and – at further cost – providing them with all the support they need. But are they fulfilling their end of the bargain?

Above all others, this question occupies the minds of those managing law firms. Software companies spend millions developing software that can track an employee's every move, and dashboards allow managers to slice the data in every conceivable way. Barely a week goes by without some firm announcing draconian measures for employees who do not record enough time. But does this stop the discussions in the boardroom? Does this stop the worry?

Now imagine a firm where this anxiety is a thing of the past. The expensive dashboards have been done away with, and lawyers happily manage themselves. Too good to be true? You'd be with the majority if you think such an idyll unattainable, but it's surprisingly realistic.

The answer is as simple as it is elusive. Indeed, it's elusive precisely because it is so simple, just completely counterintuitive. In order to incentivise lawyers to do a better job and make more money, you don't need to manage them more. You need to manage them less.

Think about it. What's the most common employee incentive? It's the bonus, the bargain that if you do well – work hard and meet targets – you'll receive a reward. Scientists have looked at the efficacy of incentives for as long as there have been incentives. The results of every study says the same thing: incentives work for simple mechanical tasks, but as soon as the desired outcome involves the building of relationships, creative thinking and care, the effect is undesirable. Incentives actively reduce creativity, divide lawyer and client, and create a culture of competition, politics and stress.

But good law firms are full of good employees, from reception desk to the boardroom. And the reason these people work hard, go the extra mile and delight the client isn't for the money. It's because they believe in what they're doing. They feel part of the firm, but also part of the client's project. They invest in the matter.

So, consider now a firm whose management style seeks to bring the interests of client and lawyer into line. Consider a firm that embraces agile working, not because it increases PEP, but because it provides a better client experience. Consider a firm willing to put itself not just behind the interests of its clients, but also, collectively, behind the interests of employees. It's a quantum leap, but it can unlock client engagement, increase productivity and improve the quality of legal advice. And here's the real trick – if that happens, the firm makes more money, with happier lawyers and at reduced (management) cost. What was it they say in that Dr Pepper advert again? ◢

Features

Lots of law firms have launched agile working initiatives, stressing that it simply doesn't matter where employees are located to get legal business done productively. But what's the reality of agility? Briefing's Kayli Olson investigates

Locating advantage

A gile is a word that had been popping up with increasing frequency in law firm management. More flexible than the flexible working of old, the idea envisages a world where managers recognise that their staff can be just as productive wherever they happen to be – at a desk, on the train or sat at home. So, with a few caveats, why shouldn't they choose what and where works best for them? And does that really work for their firm?

In at least one very improtant way, it does – and it's not even at the bottom line. Jonathan Patterson, development director at DWF, points out that what started out as an attempt to overcome the high price of city office space has gone on to enable cultural change. "If you'd asked us why agile was catching on two years ago, the answer would have

been that it's a commercial decision. With more people working out of the office, we need less square footage for those in it. More people can use the same space rather than upgrading.

"But now it's much more about attraction and retention of talent. People crave control over where, when and how they work – in other words, agility – to keep hold of their work-life balance."

DWF currently has just 150 desks for what it calls "central services" in Manchester – for 220 business services employees. This ratio obviously forces them to embrace both home and remote working. But as of summer 2014, businesses are also required by law to give due consideration to anyone requesting a flexible arrangement for whatever reason.

There are lots of different options – job sharing, as well as working from home, compressed hours,

'flexitime' and more. The aim is to diversify the job market, which could improve workplace diversity, as well as improve individual work-life balance.

Patterson says firms should really start from the point of view that any role has agile potential. Unless there's a practical reason it isn't viable – for example, the person doesn't have the equipment needed – there isn't a problem with more agility.

Damien Behan, IT director at Brodies, adds: "Changing work patterns for people to work more flexibly is a good thing – but what's really different about the agile movement is the fact that it isn't a contractual 'HR thing'. Offering agility says: 'We trust you to get the job done in the way that best suits you.' That may be in the office, at home, at midnight on a Thursday night – as long as you get the work done."

All around are familiar faces?

For DWF's Manchester vision of agility to work, it's clear that people will also need to do some hotdesking when they do want, or need, to be in the office.

Brodies also has more people than desks for them to sit at. Behan says: "We first implemented agile working in Glasgow – it has a modern open-plan layout with just the one huge floor plate.

> "People crave control over where, when and how they work – in other words, agility – to keep hold of their work-life balance."
>
> *Jonathan Patterson, development director, DWF*

And people can book onto a desk for the day rather than always sitting in the same place."

There's a booking system that can suggest a desk in the employee's department, or they can opt for it to tell them which desks are free anywhere at all. They can decide whether they want to sit in a different area of the building for a change. The office is zoned by department.

At DWF people can book a table and car park space using the same system. Patterson explains: "It's a tile on our intranet – whatever the device, you can fire up the DWF landing page, press a button and it's done. The other day I booked a room and desk on my way to work by asking Siri."

In 2016, even Clifford Chance invested in an open-plan layout. Agile working began with

business services in London – but the firm's chief operating officer, Caroline Firstbrook, says its Tokyo office has now been very successful in offering an agile arrangement to both business services and fee earners.

"One of the biggest benefits we've seen, certainly across our business services teams in London, is that the functions are much less siloed. We have seen much higher levels of collaboration. Business services people working in open plan and hotdesking means they can see different people in different places on different days."

But of course, it's not just head offices firms might need to reinvent to make agile work. There's also the important question of the shape of the home office – that also needs to bit fit for purpose.

No waste of space

Behan says the vast majority of people at Brodies work on laptops, which are easily portable and enable efficient mobile and home working. And, as at DWF, the firm has an intranet portal, where fee earners and business services can log in to start their day the same way from anywhere.

"Laptops allow employees not only to be flexible within the office but also to work from home, on the train, at a hotel or wherever they may be," says Behan.

Clifford Chance is in the process of rolling out laptops – rather than desktop computers – for all of its fee earners, and quite a few business services people as well. Firstbrook says: "It's being done on an office-by-office basis – and what we can offer people depends on what the role requires. But essentially, more mobile, more agile, less paper, better communications, and better collaboration is what I see in the future," says Firstbrook.

> **"The ability to allow people to use personal computers has actually improved popularity with those who were less on board with the idea at the start."**
>
> *Damien Behan, IT director, Brodies*

Lessons from freelance lawyers

Alternative working is building up steam in legal – from firms' own freelance/contract lawyer divisions through to 'virtual', dispersed firms – where lawyers also work for themselves.

That's partly because certain cost efficiencies are very attractive to clients, of course – but brands stress that an element of agility is also 'easier' on employees with lives outside work, or even who do other work on the side.

Jonathan Brenner, co-founder of LOD, says one of the first lawyers to sign up a decade ago has three separate assignments over just four working days each week. A few clients wanted him for just one or two days each – and the overall arrangement freed up enough time for him to run a film business on the side.

"But there's a lot of human involvement. It's not just tech-driven," says Brenner. "LOD also has a client solutions team and a lawyer care and development team – which we nickname our 'lawyer love' team."

Pinsent Masons recently surveyed the lawyers who work in its freelance division, Vario. "The two most popular reasons for being freelance was the variety and quality of the work and a better work-life balance," says director Matthew Kay. And it found 89% said their quality of life had improved under the Vario model.

"We have quite a few Varios who run businesses or have extensive hobbies on the side," adds Kay. "One is a keen sailor and runs a sailing business. Another has a wine company."

Brenner concludes: "The idea is to remove the traditional barriers to people being able to work effectively – including the need for lawyers to come to an expensive office just to sit there and do work that they could do just as easily from a home office."

The paper point is pertinent – agile working arrangements are also forcing firms to go more paper-light. People can't rely on paper back at the office when they are working from home. It's a pain to shift it, and documents and data need to be easily accessible no matter where they're working.

"Within the first few months of moving to agile working we were using 70% less paper," estimates Firstbrook.

But Karl Warmbold, facilities director at DWF, says his firm "had to do quite a lot of work to reduce paper, especially as some of the courts still have quite a heavy paper trail. What we have done to combat that, largely in London, is intercept inbound mail, which gets scanned offsite and delivered to people electronically."

DWF is now looking to launch that across the whole of the UK. He says a minimum of 80% of physical inbound mail will become electronic. The philosophy is that anything which can be digitised, should be. There needs to be a really good reason for not doing it.

"It also means less physical storage onsite – which gives us greater flexibility to use office space more effectively. And digitised documents allow for working on the move. There has been greater use of shared documents for mark-ups and easier workflow," he says

There's lots of IT out there to aid the agile or home worker in this regard – such as replicating the experience of working on a hard copy.

Warmbold says: "You can now replicate, mark up, search and send different documents using your tablet. And like how they replicate the experience of reading a book, there are technologies that can improve remote office collaboration – appealing to people's sense of what work has historically involved."

> ### "The way you get people to adopt a new way of working is by finding something that looks and feels similar to their existing habits."
>
> *Jonathan Patterson, development director, DWF*

DWF's Patterson adds: "The way you get people to adopt a new way of working is by finding something that looks and feels similar to their existing habits."

There may be the odd client with a specific service level agreement that means documents need to be held in a very secure building. "But good data protection should be part of your strategy regardless – not on a case by case basis, or just because you're going agile."

Risk management in agile working is perhaps one area where large law firms could learn something from the routine dispersed working patterns of so-called 'virtual' firms – those that dispense with the partnership model and its overheads, including expensive office space. Keystone Law's IT director Maurice Tunney admits: "Cybersecurity is our main challenge, and so of course my top priority. KeyedIn, our bespoke intranet, is secure and encrypted, and our laptops are as well. It's really important, as our lawyers work remotely.

"But I can't control what they do on the internet in general. I can only train them not to click on a link or download attachments. We're armed with education, they're given a manual of the 'dos and don'ts', and we hold regular risk updates."

Top tips for getting moving with agile

DWF's Jonathan Patterson and Karl Warmbold have the following core components for rolling out a policy of agility productively:

1 **Link it to actual business goals.** More people will get on board if there's a clear economic or commercial benefit. But also link to diversity, wellbeing and productivity goals – it's about people, not just finance. And do this in a way that shows agile isn't a 'fad' initiative.

2 **Experiment.** Everything is changing all the time – people's attitudes as well as technology. Your first strategy is never going to be 100% right – and you shouldn't force it to be. As things change, so should it.

3 **Speak plainly.** Use clear and simple language without too much 'lingo', otherwise people will just switch off. If your six-year-old daughter can't understand what you're talking about, you might not have the language right.

4 **Gather the key components.** Attack the strategy through each strand – technology, wellbeing, economic and environmental. You can't pick your favourite strand to run with. You must influence in each area.

Caroline Firstbrook at Clifford Chance offers her own two pointers:

1 **Take a look at how other businesses are implementing agile working.** Talk to leaders, tour offices, sit down and go through their strategies. It's a good way of getting up the learning curve quicker.

2 **Invest lots of time in change management**. Really engage people – especially important when you're rolling out big changes that people need to participate in. Hold seminars, training sessions and workshops to get them thinking. You could even let them pick out the furniture. It's the little things that get people to feel a sense of pride.

Watercool idea

But the open-plan aspect of agile can open up its own can of worms. Will partners willingly part with personal desk space? And perhaps the elephant in the room – can you really trust your talent to work from home under their own steam?

Some managers may struggle to see how to replicate a sense of 'community' without presence in the office. Open-plan layouts are designed to stimulate more 'watercooler' style chat, but if people are often at home or elsewhere, might some of that productive banter not equally disappear?

"Ironically," says Keystone's Tunney, "our online discussion forum is called the 'Water Cooler'. It's broken down by subject – which could be department-specific, for example. You can also create your own topics and subscribe to others." There are even special interest groups – for the golfers, the skiers, and so on.

DWF also has an online space specifically for bouncing around ideas. Patterson says it has been especially useful to keep discussions flowing as the firm has grown internationally.

But there are many ways to simulate company at the office when you're out and about or at home. "It could be as simple as having Skype open." he says. "But it's also good to have one designated day each week where the whole team comes in, even if not for the purposes of having a specific meeting. Being around each other is good to have that opportunity to check in."

Skype for Business has, of course, become a key piece of technology for desktop-to-desktop video communications – although **Briefing**'s recent Legal IT landscapes 2017 report, found that only 27% of respondents used those for communication externally, such as with clients. Almost half (48%) said they now use desktop video internally.

Behan at Brodies says. "It's a very good way to show your availability at home, maintain your presence, or at least display it from home or wherever you happen to be working.

"We trust our people to make the right judgments about how hard they need to work, and we judge them on the quality of their output."

Caroline Firstbrook, chief operating officer, Clifford Chance

"From a management perspective, the ability to have a daily check-in with someone via video chat is very useful. It should be at the top of the list for businesses that want to make the move to more agile working."

Patterson says video communications is an area DWF is also exploring: "We're experimenting with Skype for Business being open permanently across selected teams, which we hope to use in breaking the traditional way work is supervised. You

constantly talk to each other – about work, the weather, or last night's Coronation Street."

Firstbrook at Clifford Chance says: "We're certainly going to continue to invest in video technology so that it can be 90% as good as meeting in person." The quality of the conversation is as important as the frequency, she says.

But rest assured, home worker, if presence alerts and video chat are indeed great for maintaining community – that needn't mean that Big Brother back at base camp is likely to be watching you.

Says Firstbrook: "We don't count the number of hours people are sat at their desk or ask business services people to fill in timesheets. We trust our people to make the right judgments about how hard they need to work, and we judge them on the quality of their output."

Sadly, there's no piece of ultra-high-tech kit to capture the trust agile really needs to become fully embedded – but if better work-life balance doesn't make for more positive and productive people at work, it's hard to see what will. ◢

Innovative linkers

Anyone at Taylor Wessing is welcome to invest their valuable time in innovation – but the knowledge management team is well placed to demonstrate exactly what's involved

Words Richard Brent **Photography** Simon Brandon

Above (left to right): Andrew Telling, UK head of knowledge management; Debbie Cloake, corporate senior professional support lawyer; Saleh Abukmeil, innovation hub product manager; and Colin Godfrey, senior associate, all Taylor Wessing

The year 2016 was a year that legal invested heavily in innovation – or certainly in a wide array of innovation initiatives. That may have involved buying in new IT and process skills, redeploying existing expertise to think outside the usual boxes, or formally building R&D into the budget. But an overarching 2016 objective for innovation was almost certainly to identify ways of enhancing client service and value.

Taylor Wessing's Innovation Hub, for one, has also easily proved its worth to others internally. The hub's tech experts are expected to collaborate closely with other departments to identify new opportunities – and few are likely to be more grateful for this than the knowledge management team. Together, knowledge and innovation have set about identifying the seeds of ideas that are of such persuasive benefit the firm should definitely find a way to build them. Indeed, the knowledge management team recently won an industry award for bringing forward innovation ideas that gave birth to a new breed of apps for time-poor clients.

"There's a big push for innovation right across this firm, from the board down," says UK head of knowledge management Andrew Telling. "We try to encourage constant questioning of how to do things, and of course that includes how technology can help."

But he says he'll often describe the dynamic

> ## "IT specialises in researching and developing lots of solutions – and the lawyers are often best placed to spot the problems that need solving. The best way to bring the two together is with lots and lots of dialogue."
>
> *Andrew Telling, UK head of knowledge management, Taylor Wessing*

between innovation and those on the front line of client service at the firm as one of those classic "chicken and egg" scenarios.

"IT specialises in researching and developing lots of solutions – and the lawyers are often best placed to spot the problems that need solving. The best way to bring the two together is with lots and lots of dialogue."

Who's in control?
For that reason, there's no rulebook for who initiates a new project under the heading of innovation, or when they might do so. "Some will start with conversations between different fee earners, some from wider market research and some from external sources," Telling says. But collaboration is highly likely to be a key ingredient whatever the route.

A case in point was the TW:navigate app, which helps clients to identify exposure to new people with significant control (PSC) rules that came into force in April 2016, complete with a set of criminal sanctions. Clients can answer a set of key questions in their own time, leading not only to the firm's view on what needs to be done (no email needed), but in some cases also to a fixed fee arrangement for that work. IT provides the IT – and the lawyer, of course, comes up with the right questions.

Innovation team product manager Saleh Abukmeil says: "My role is to monitor IT trends and solutions in the market all the time." But he says it was only when corporate senior professional support lawyer Debbie Cloake, and her fee-earning team, "took a step back to consider the change in law in the context of how things can now be delivered" that the dots got joined. "So it wouldn't work at all if I wasn't sufficiently visible across the business, facilitating an environment

where I can have lots of ideas coming at me," Abukmeil says.

Cloake adds: "As Saleh already had a working relationship on the software side, I could approach speculatively – but after that we could plug the parts of our expertise together at speed."

And, says Abukmeil, "having relationships with third parties already developing can also make for a more cost-effective pilot."

Competition time
The innovation team's work on the app then got a particularly big boost. There was a firm-wide competition to identify what might be next for TW:navigate.

Says Abukmeil: "Ideas came in from HR and finance as well as partners and associates, and now the driver is to 'industrialise' what we've managed to produce."

Telling continues: "There were presentations – and plenty of posters up – to get the message across that coming up with an idea like this could be a completely normal part of your work." Management and innovation then put heads together to work through suggestions for the possible runners.

"We shouldn't underestimate the need to embed tech-savvy skills in all parts of the firm. Talent, for example, already uses document automation to generate correspondence for recruits, executed with e-signatures," adds Telling.

But by this point, the firm had already identified the Modern Slavery Act 2015 as another good candidate for TW:navigate's 'online triage' model of classifying (and costing) a client's legal complexities. Senior associate Colin Godfrey – who worked closely with the technical team on the Modern Slavery Act release – explains: "The app

can kickstart clients' consideration of whether they need to publish a statement to comply with the law."

It could also be used for other core areas of corporate governance in future, adds Telling.

Employment senior professional support lawyer Kathryn Clapp (not pictured) explains: "Trying to elicit the right responses from a client in an initial conversation can be very time-consuming. They also might not have all the necessary numbers or subsidiary information to hand. And the lawyer may then need more time for analysis. This successfully circumvents that part of the process.

"And it was especially useful to attend IT-focused meetings with the innovation team and their suppliers to understand how the technology process would take the questions that I created and turn them into a finished document."

Of course, this team also pursues internal knowledge-sharing and knowledge-structuring projects. Notably, there's the recent automation of due diligence data collection (TW:diligence) for greater reporting efficiency and consistency, as

> **"It was especially useful to attend IT-focused meetings with the innovation team and their suppliers to understand how the technology process would take the questions that I created and turn them into a finished document."**
>
> *Kathryn Clapp, employment senior professional support lawyer, Taylor Wessing*

well as a push on automating precedents (TW:create). Several years ago the firm also moved to offer some preliminary documents for startup tech companies completely free of charge, and more recently it has added some automated documents to these.

Part bought in or built from scratch, Taylor Wessing's push for innovation has knowledge management's time and team effort. But the collaborative closeness of this business services partnership is ultimately focused on passing the benefit on to their clients. ◢

Brain training

24

Are you worth it?
Dr George Beaton and Ben Farrow at
Beaton discuss the key ingredients of a
culture of cost consciousness

Are you worth it?

Dr George Beaton, founder of Beaton and author of Remaking Law Firms: Why & How, and Ben Farrow, an analyst at Beaton, say firms should follow Australia's example and prioritise improving their cost consciousness

A couple of years ago we published a blog post titled 'Cost consciousness is a missing link for professional services firms'. We made three observations. The first was about how the concept of cost consciousness plays a major part in how clients perceive the value delivered to them by legal and other professional services firms. The second was the extent to which well-executed cost consciousness reduces client sensitivity to price. And the third was that, in spite of the stated importance of cost consciousness to both firms and clients, industry-wide performance on the issue was poor.

Nearly three years on we have revisited the trends in a robustly quantitative study, attracting more than 3,000 respondents from corporate and commercial clients, rating the 35 largest firms in

Figure 1: How clients score Australian firms on cost

the Australian legal services market.

The result? These firms do seem to be getting the message and lifting their games on the matter. While average client scores were stagnant from 2011 to 2013, they have since been steadily increasing (Figure 1). This is good news for clients as well as the improving firms. They should be able to rest a little more easily knowing firms are spending their money prudently, as the following analysis will highlight.

What cost consciousness means to clients

What exactly is cost consciousness? To explain, let's look at the types of lawyer behaviours that demonstrate either its presence or absence.

Our most recent survey reveals the most important elements of cost consciousness from the perspective of clients. Here respondents were asked to describe what cost conscious-ness 'means to them'. Their verbatim responses were analysed and categorised, and
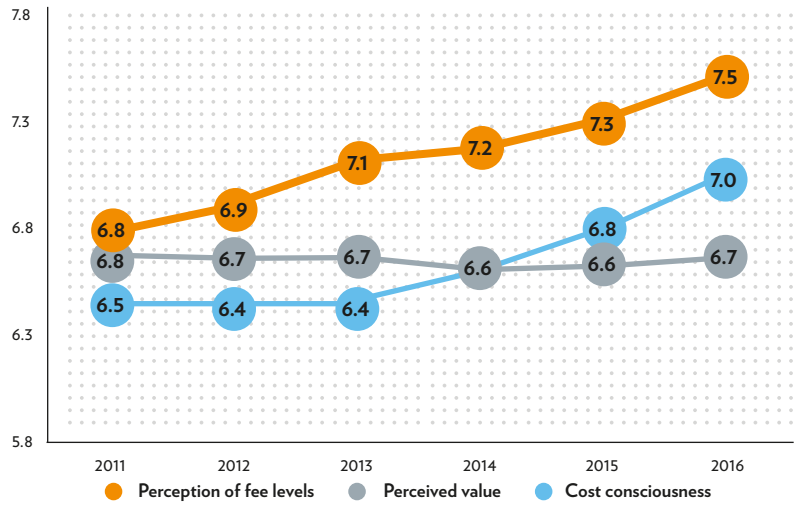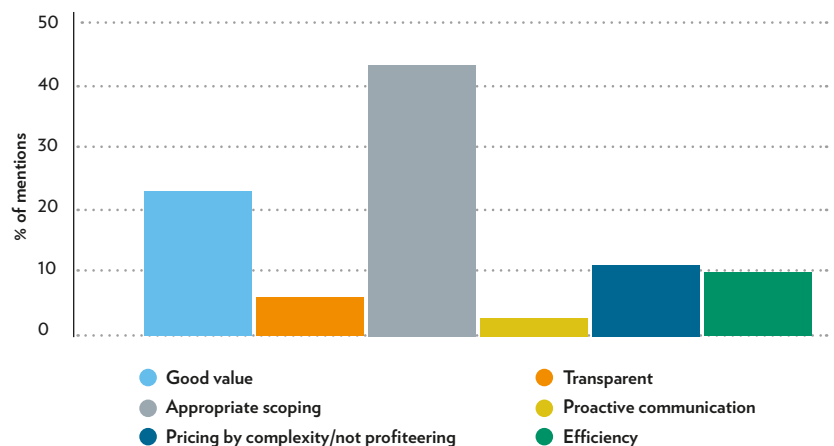
Figure 2 shows the elements most mentioned.

The y-axis is the percentage of total verbatim mentions – but some respondents mention several elements, others only one. While an imperfect proxy for importance, a high proportion of mentions still indicates that, when thinking about cost consciousness, certain elements are top of mind for most respondents.

Figure 2 clearly shows that buyers of corporate and commercial legal services most often think about whether or not their work was scoped

appropriately. Essentially, clients reflect on whether the initial fee estimate provided by the law firm was an accurate representation of the size of their invoice at the end of the matter. Appropriate scoping received 43% of all mentions in response to this point.

The second most mentioned element of cost consciousness was whether or not a firm's services represent 'good value' (23%). And to some extent, this reflects the correlation in Figure 1 – between improving cost consciousness and greater perceived value – in recent years.

> The upshot of this analysis is that there's nothing arcane at all about cost consciousness. As far as clients are concerned, it simply means that firms set fee expectations and stick to them.

Figure 2: What clients expect of cost consciousness

Conceptually, it's also related to pricing by complexity/not profiteering (12%), and work being performed with 'efficiency' (10%). Transparent costing (7%) and proactive communication from firms (4%) round out the most significant elements in achieving a higher overall score for cost consciousness.

The upshot of this analysis is that there's nothing arcane at all about cost consciousness. As far as clients are concerned, it simply means that firms set fee expectations and stick to them, that they provide value for money, and don't engage in profiteering behaviour. Clients want to know – and understand – how responsibly legal advisers are spending their money.

So it's little wonder that cost consciousness and perceived value are positively correlated – and it's therefore surprising that more firms don't focus on cost consciousness as a key performance metric.

What's in it for me?

So far our analysis has focused mainly on benefits to clients. But cost consciousness also benefits the firms that practise it.

Simply having a high score for 'perceived value' doesn't necessarily add to a firm's profitability. Firms with low prices (and low margins) may have excellent ratings from clients for perceived value – but these same firms may not be maximising their profitability.

The real value of high cost consciousness to firms is when they can also achieve high perceived value ratings, without having to engage in price discounting. It's a finding that has been repeatedly demonstrated in our large quantitative studies over many years. There's an old saying – the easiest way to sell something is to give it away. That's not literally of course. It's through deep discounting of the price – which isn't smart practice. For the majority of clients, a very low price signals that the product is deficient in some way. They might feel the need to ask: 'Have you really understood my brief?', or 'Do you really sense how important this matter is to me?' On the other hand, many solicitors find it hard to focus on communicating the benefits of the work to those clients who push back on price. They take the path of least resistance.

But competently (and confidently) explaining what's needed to do a client's work, the various options, how long they'll take, who would be involved, a cost estimate and the (probable) outcome, goes a very long way to demonstrating cost consciousness and alleviating concerns about price – and therefore about the perceived value of your service.

What we've found here is that there's a heuristic role for price in legal services. It's similar to something very well known in the retail industry. Even the most rational economic consumer (or in this case, client) is prone to using price as an indicator of quality. It's one of the reasons that so many of us will buy Colgate toothpaste or iPhones instead of some cheaper substitutes. And it allows the companies that manufacture these products to command high margins without compromising their market share.

The same is true for corporate and commercial law firms – but only provided cost consciousness and performance are both high. Winning a reputation for being 'expensive, but worth it', has clear benefits, and it's still achievable for firms that can demonstrate they're appropriately cost conscious.

This is why Australian law firms – at least – have been pursuing excellence in cost consciousness. It's one of the reasons the perceived value of legal services has been steadily improving in surveys on the matter – and while cost consciousness isn't the only driver of success, given its close relationship to pricing it makes very good business sense to focus on it properly. ◤

> **Winning a reputation for being 'expensive, but worth it,' has clear benefits, and it's still achievable to firms that can demonstrate they're appropriately cost conscious.**

Industry views

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◤ INDUSTRY INTERVIEW

Ahead in the cloud

Firms are failing to grasp the reality of agile working, but accessing more systems that contribute directly to productivity via the cloud is a clear direction of travel, says Tikit development director Mark Garnish

In October 2016, the 25th anniversary of the PwC annual law firms survey found firms struggling with an issue of "spare capacity." They had confidently been on something of a hiring spree the year before (fee earner headcount in the top 50 was up by an average 7.6%). But all those extra brains on the books weren't being turned into chargeable (and more importantly, profitable) new business. With Brexit simmering in the background for much of the year, supply in the legal market now outstripped demand. As the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recently diagnosed for the economy as a whole, legal had a productivity problem.

The ONS refers to this situation as a "productivity puzzle" – but is it a puzzle for those doing legal business? After all, this was also the year – heeding the call of cost-cutting clients – that firms told people they could all work from home quite a bit more to save on expensive desk space. Depending on the new agile working policy in question, this might involve a regular half a week from home, or ad hoc days supported by hotdesking and unified mobile and video comms. There are plenty of studies showing how greater autonomy and sense of a good work-life balance makes for happier, more engaged employees. So why aren't these big business transformations also turning firms' fortunes into profit?

Mark Garnish, development director at Tikit, says that the real problem "may be that CIOs don't know what they really mean by enabling agile working." Fee earners could be working perfectly diligently from home – just not on the tasks that'll truly give the firm the productivity boost it badly needs.

"Office 365 is the elephant in this room," says Garnish. "It's certainly available for remote working by desktop, mobile or tablet, but the other legal software that fee earners need isn't compliant with all of those platforms at one and the same time.

"When we say agile working, we're envisaging a situation where a user can pick up any connected device, enter the appropriate security, and get straight on with pressing work. But in truth that's still very difficult to do. Can I grab hold of my tablet, edit away in the document management system, check some contacts, then create a new matter and time record that fact? In most cases, the answer is still no."

"When we say agile working, we're envisaging a situation where a user can pick up any connected device, enter the appropriate security, and get straight on with pressing work."

"Many firms are really bad at supporting fee earners to think about the work they'll be doing in the future. One common problem for those lawyers is the need to move over to another third party product."

Forecasting in future

Tikit's strategy, says Garnish, is geared toward facilitating a world of work – at home or on the move – where specific tasks are as seamlessly feasible across different devices as today's consumer would expect (the iPhone, let's reflect, turned 10 in January). In short, that means a world of work prepared to connect people to the cloud.

"People want to be able to work with office information in the same way they handle information in their personal lives – without having to jump through huge hoops, including for security," continues Garnish. "Cloud's common interface means a firm's fee earners can truly take actions from any place they happen to be, and on any appropriate device they happen to have to hand at the time."

For example, as of February 2017, Tikit's new cloud-based version of its Carpe Diem Next Generation technology means firms have that level of agility – not only to record their billable time on

the move, but also to check back on past activity for billable time that may have been missed, as well as measure and report back on time-recording productivity and track actual billing performance and resulting cashflow.

"We've also added expense management within the same interface," says Garnish. That's another recurring basic task that it makes more sense to do at the time, not wait to be back in the office.

"Employees can capture their train fare or other expense at the point of purchase, charge it to the client as appropriate there and then, or just claim back the cash on personal expenses. That's not new in itself – but the real winner for fee earners should be the ability to use the same interface they're already comfortable using elsewhere."

Another example of something legal professionals could profitably be doing anywhere, anytime, is taking time to understand the mix of factors surrounding chances of winning –and profitably resourcing – future work. "That helps

For more information, visit:
www.tikit.com

them to calculate the amount of time new jobs are likely to take, and therefore their cost and preferred price," says Garnish.

"Regardless of individual views on whether or not the hourly rate is dead, lawyers will all still need to work in line with the basic unit of how long a particular job is likely to take them to complete," he says.

"But many firms are really bad at supporting fee earners to think about the work they'll be doing in the future. One common problem for those lawyers is the need to move over to another third party product. If they're finally familiar with a time-recording interface, it seems ludicrous that they'd then need to move to a separate program for some timely forecasting activity because the two systems don't marry up."

It's another challenge that has been addressed in the newest version of Carpe Diem (out this summer), he says. The system is configurable to assume that any minutes recorded ahead of time are actually forecast time (which is consumed as it's reached) – while at a management level, the module can be used to allocate and reallocate resources across international offices as higher-priority work comes in, as well as to challenge set forecasts and analyse individuals' forecasting capability over time.

"Of course, it's hard enough to persuade lawyers to properly record time that's past," laughs Garnish. "I'd imagine there'll be trials of various carrot-and-stick arrangements to get traction, but if improved forecasting lies in a firm's future, it certainly makes sense for it to work using a common interface."

Finally, all users of both the Tikit Partner for Windows (P4W) practice and case management system and Carpe Diem can now benefit from a "more general enquiry facility" for timely checking on case progress, key financials and contacts. "Combined, the system effectively becomes a fully cloud-based mobile portal," says Garnish.

Templates' turn
So it's a clear cloud-first strategy at Tikit as the case for change in that direction stacks up. In 2016, for example, the business also became the first global partner for cloud-based document and email management provider NetDocuments.

Cloud is a common driver for both companies' customers, they said.

And Tikit's Template Management System will also sit in the cloud to make it easier for teams to adjust document styles.

"Template management at a law firm is a much bigger job than selecting from standard templates," explains Garnish. "There is variation by jurisdiction, office, language and even specific department or team. As a highly simplified example, a firm with five branch offices that also works in five languages may need to create 25 versions of a single letter."

That's something else that should be doable on either desktop or tablet as location demands – but until now, it has always needed a piece of code to be kept on the local machine, he says.

"There's not much point in happily having all your documents stored in the cloud if the templates creating those documents are still stuck on-premises."

Off and on – options open
However, it can't be denied that **Briefing**'s Legal IT landscapes 2017 report found a legal market still defiantly divided on the question of cloud-readiness. Around a quarter of respondents, for example, predicted their firms would move client relationship management to the cloud inside of two years (and a tenth said they were there already). But almost two-fifths considered that would simply never happen – rising to a quarter and a third for case management and practice management respectively. In general, sentiment peaked at cloud adoption for such systems within a five-year window.

Garnish is certainly under no illusion that cloud will be the norm in legal any quicker than that. "That's precisely why absolutely everything we do is available either in the cloud or on-premises," he says. "The greater flexibility of cloud access is there for the firms that are ready and want it – it's as simple as that."

"There's a growing groundswell of firms that are converted and ready, though – and you need to remember that you can't retrofit cloud. You have to start from scratch. That's why we've invested millions in the research and development to make it possible today." ◤
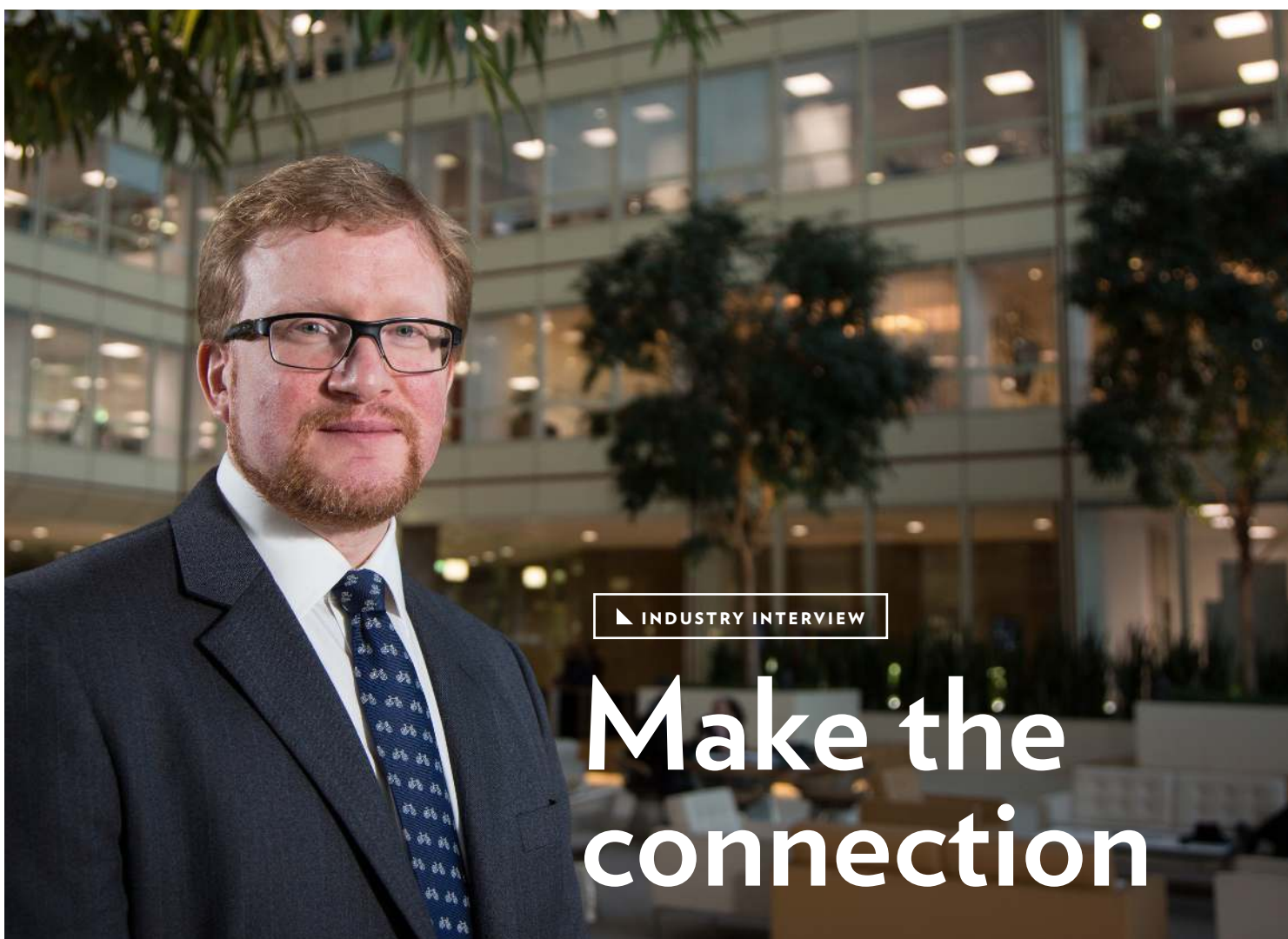
▲ **INDUSTRY INTERVIEW**

Make the connection

Don't miss out on the power of digital transformation. Ready or not, innovation is on its way to a workplace near you, says Mitie's James Gilding

M any firms are embracing innovation and digital transformation with gusto. Some, however, are not – perhaps with some fear of what such changes would really mean for business on the ground. Whether it's procrastination or flat refusal that's the problem, a reason often given for failure to move forward is that the owners of law firms are inherently resistant to change.

But James Gilding, managing director of Mitie Connect, is a bit more forgiving.

"The sheer scale of larger businesses can also be a blocker. Firms may feel overloaded with change management even day to day – and they're thinking of the impact of another change layer on their customers, as much as on themselves. It can feel easier to push back and postpone discussion of bigger, bolder changes to a later date, when there's 'more time'. So we need to find ways of demonstrating that soaking up some short-term pain leads to slicker service down the line."

But this type of service disruption also needs support from the very top to highlight why it's so worthwhile, he stresses. Where the senior leadership tier empowers management teams to be proactive and drive innovation to improve the business, a less fearful culture takes shape. "The leadership team sets the cultural direction, and by doing so, 'gives permission' to the business to be better," says Gilding.

Making the most of IT

A common misconception, he says, is that innovation means putting in place something brand new – often a piece of new technology. But the reality can be much simpler.

"An existing software package might only be used to around 20% of its capability. The win here

is around more innovative ways of working with what you have already – for example, designing new processes for more efficient utilisation of staff and technology.

For example, Mitie has recently turned to the consumer electronics world, picking up applications like the Amazon Echo to improve the flow of tasks such as getting rooms meeting-ready via a simple message to a smart watch – plus, connecting that operation seamlessly to the reception area for a better client experience.

"There's no phone call. It's voice-activated. You just ask a question, and the technology kicks in to create a new workflow," says Gilding. "It's familiar technology that people already use in their personal lives – Siri, Cortana, Alexa, and so on – and firms are trialling it for us to identify how consumer innovation can filter into the business world and further enhance value to their clients. You need to connect whatever you have to maximise value – data, people or other assets."

But Gilding adds that IT will enhance, rather than replace, the human element of the service.

"As a facilities management outsourcer, we see our job as ensuring the connected workplace happens automatically through a combination of technology and workflows, all of which must have a real benefit – a mission that also touches the law firms' own clients, all the time. That means we also predict the steps firms will need to take in the years to come, and arrive with a proposition – tried and tested – when the time comes. We anticipate what clients and their stakeholders will need in the future, evolving our offering to meet those needs."

Creating space
One example is 'hybrid mail' models, he says: "It has taken time for this to become market-ready and for businesses to see the benefit." Mitie Connect worked with Essex County Council to implement hybrid mail after identifying substantial cost savings for them, which also supported the council to enable a more agile workforce and

"We need to find ways of demonstrating that soaking up some short-term pain leads to slicker service down the line."

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rationalise its property portfolio. "It now manages around 70% of correspondence via the hybrid mail solution – which is more cost-effective than clicking on the office printer, and frees up daily mail-run time for more client-focused activity. It also allows greater control of spend and oversight within the organisation," says Gilding.

Another innovation in the field of agile working is the development of connected sensors, which can ensure the right space is there for workers that need it. Ideally, that'll be a space that no longer competes for priority with boxes of hard copy documents. "Addiction to paper – already expensive – will become unsustainable for some of the larger law firms quite quickly," says Gilding. "Bear in mind that storage is solely a cost – that data can't be analysed for any efficiency gains until it's digitised." So it's a lost opportunity, and wholly avoidable. "Documents are born digitally. We just need to help people to see the value in that and maintain them in that state," he says.

Feeling connected
In any case, fear of not doing something ought to outweigh resistance to change. The EU's General Data Protection Regulation, for example, demands a methodology to demonstrate new levels of data process transparency – and depending on risk exposure, a failure could cost a business up to 4% of its global revenues.

So perhaps it's time to communicate that a digital journey, which challenges incumbent processes, can even be where some fun starts at work. That's certainly the theory behind the recent rebranding of Mitie's document management business as Mitie Connect, says Gilding.

"Relentless demand for data at the touch of a button drives innovation. Having operated in document management for 17 years, we're dedicated to delivering that benefit back to our clients, giving them greater control over information. We take the fragments of document management and join them up, adding technology to automate and support where it really works."

It's a brand refresh to mirror the appeal of the more innovative new breed of office, where people can better thrive if given spaces to connect. ◣

Transform the day

Owen Bishop, head of transformation at Bevan Brittan, discusses the ever-changing daily agenda – before it's back to more exciting stakeholder management at home

I started at the firm in June 2015. It was a new role for Bevan Brittan and for me. My remit as head of transformation is to take a firm-wide look at efficiency and productivity and to devise and implement a programme of change to help achieve the firm's strategic goals. It's also been about establishing and developing this new role for the firm.

The role is very diverse with an enjoyable mix of developing new ideas, working with the great teams we have here to create new products and services, and also supporting those teams in making change actually happen.

I engage with the business at every level to encourage and support change and lead specific strategic projects.

Of course, every day is pretty varied. I could be running or attending meetings, writing reports or recommendations, contributing to pitches, developing communications, or travelling to other offices. I go where the work is needed.

But if I'm here in our Bristol office, I start the day trying to persuade the kids out of bed. I usually drive in to work and I listen to podcasts – at the moment it's NPR: TED Radio Hour, and a current favourite is 'The Meaning of Work'. I grab a coffee and plan the day ahead.

There are always lots of competing priorities and the usual mix of dealing with sudden unexpected issues and longer-term projects. I manage a small team, and we plan on a weekly basis in line with our objectives for the year.

Broadly, I spend half my day in meetings – that could be one-to-ones or in a group, and that's inevitable given my focus on influencing others. The rest is roughly split between forms of writing. It could be actions, plans, recommendations, process diagrams, reports, status updates – and of course emails.

In 2017 we have some big projects coming up – we're supporting several teams on service delivery innovation reviews to evaluate and improve how we deliver services to our clients. We have an ongoing programme of reviews across the firm. I find that teams are really supportive of the idea of review and improvement.

There are always lots of competing priorities and the usual mix of dealing with sudden unexpected issues and longer-term projects.

The challenge to find ways of making improvements is part of the day job – and I try to deliver simple, practical and effective guidance on how to improve things quickly.

We're also helping teams to develop new products and services with their clients. It can be really creative and a lot of fun to see ideas take shape and see a positive response from clients. And we're making a really significant investment in new practice and case management software. This is a really important project for the firm. Like any big change project, the key is to take people with you and help them adapt to the new ways of working.

This year we'll also continue work exploring other new technology that can help us be more efficient and productive and deliver better service to clients. We're continuing to review how we work to see whether we can work in more flexible and agile ways.

Once I've left the office and get home, my kids kindly take away any work worries with a near constant stream of questions (such, as what is transformation and does it involve Transformers?) as well as disagreements, about anything and on any subject. ▲

As told to Kayli Olson

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