

Briefing

February 2016

SMARTER LEGAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

READY TO OPERATE
AI and what buyers want – just two topics on the table at Operational Leaders in Legal 2015

TAKING A STAND
How to make meeting fatigue a thing of the past with regular bursts of management agility

COMMS TOGETHER
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Editor's letter



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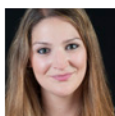
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Surprise! Well, you may have noticed already that we look a bit different this month – and it's my pleasure to confirm that's entirely by design. Loyal readers will know that we love a story on a legal business transformation project. These past few months my team and I have been on quite the transformation journey of our own.

We've known for a while that we needed to take a fresh look at the content mix of this magazine. We've regularly covered how law firms are looking – and need to look harder – outside the legal profession for management and leadership expertise. So we're going to do the same, (we hope) reflecting your roles as all-encompassing managers as much as duty-bound departments.

You'll now find many outside voices alongside those of your peers giving their views on the issues of the day. There'll be some experts in nifty management theory. We'll be reaching out to other industries for their experiences of managing people,

process and change, and of developing new profit streams and product lines, and we'll carefully consider which strategic approaches might be most transferable to the work you do.

For this inaugural issue we have a fantastic interview with business leaders at **CMS** – a firm that has clearly connected with what's going on in the outside world to create a

future-perfect office environment. So we'll still profile people in your business with a brilliant story to tell. But we also want to speak to – and understand – the teams they manage.

Plus, we've spared a special thought for the time-poorest of you. You'll find shorter summaries, best practice guides and 'guru' think-pieces rubbing shoulders with the in-depth good stuff.

Lastly, we'd like to have a little bit more fun. Among other things, I'm going to be finding out what business leaders get up to after (or indeed, before) work.

We're always hearing that legal is a people business – so we want to get to know you properly. Please write, email or tweet us your thoughts – what you think of our plans, and of course if you'd ever like to be involved (but only what you've had for breakfast if you absolutely must).

RICHARD BRENT EDITOR

Briefing

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*Stand up and
be counted*
“The meeting’s
purpose is to
create a team
dynamic where
all team members
feel equally
responsible”



Briefing is the only legal business management title 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.

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OUR VIEW

Looking up?



A

bit of good news to start the new year – and the aspirations of our new-look **Briefing** to be (accurately) predicting a more positive legal business future.

January saw the publication of Stonewall's annual top 100 employers – “the best employers for lesbian, gay and bi staff” in Britain. Legal put in its best collective performance to date, taking 12 spots (up from 10 in January 2015) and two places in the top 10. **Pinsent Masons** picked up fifth place and **Clifford Chance** (a first-time entrant) nabbed ninth. **DWF**, **Reed Smith** and **Dentons** are also newcomers to the table, joining **Baker & McKenzie**, **Freshfields**, **Norton Rose Fulbright**,

27%

Percentage of partners that are female at **Gowlings**, soon to merge with **Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co**

Herbert Smith Freehills, **Hogan Lovells**, **CMS** and **Eversheds**.

What's more, that inclusive dozen puts legal in fourth place by industry area (only behind local government, education and health). Just eight of the 100 companies are in the world of banking and finance, four come from the third sector, and we noisy media types managed – ahem – but one.

Demand for diversity also made the headlines last month courtesy of **Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co** – which has joined several others to speak up and commit to a target for increasing the proportion of female partners. Its goals are 25% by 2021 and the well-known 30% by 2026. The firm used a talent survey run by the 30% Club (set up to

establish that same target for women on FTSE 100 boards by 2015) to work out what to do. A 'More Women programme' has also been in force at the firm since 2011, with streams including uptake and acceptance of being 'agile' with office time (litigation's now actively encouraged to home-work one day a fortnight, for example) and the increasingly popular unconscious bias training.

The firm merges with Canadian-headquartered **Gowlings** very soon – a firm that outperforms on gender diversity in its own market. Gowlings has a 27% female partnership, whereas Canada's average is 20%.

But you could argue that it's unlikely to help anyone's gender diversity aspirations that partners are putting in a shedload more hours overall. The average UK partner's working week has been upped to 55³/₄ hours (from 50¹/₄ in 2013/2014), according to recruiter **Laurence Simons**.

Meanwhile, those pesky millenials (and possibly Gen Yers) are hardly doing themselves any favours with their potential future selves. Associates today clock up just over an extra two hours a week – but their juniors have slacked by the equivalent of more than an episode of *Eastenders* (from 47¹/₂ down to 46³/₄). Quite the shocker.

The survey's compilers suggest it's all indicative of a change of attitudes, as redundancy no longer seems like such a looming thing. Possibly true, but short-termist.

But back to a bit of good news again to close. Those Big Four accountancy folk appear to be doing even less time than your lot. The average accountant manages a feeble 43 office hours a week, against a typical learned lawyer's 48. Competition, you say? ▴

January saw the publication of Stonewall's annual top 100 employers – “the best employers for lesbian, gay and bi staff” in Britain. Legal put in its best collective performance to date, taking 12 spots (up from 10 in January 2015) and two places in the top 10



STUART WHITTLE
IS and operations director – Weightmans

My concern is it's an idea taken from organisations that have a very different culture to law firms. The way Netflix, Virgin and LinkedIn work, for example, is very different. I'd be genuinely interested to see how it works in practice. However, you could be cynical and see a negative situation where it actually results in people taking less holiday. There are practical limitations too.



JACKIE CARTER
Head of business development and client care – Browne Jacobson

Yes, we'd be willing to try this with our team – many of our team already buy extra holiday as part of their overall benefits package without this impacting on what we deliver.



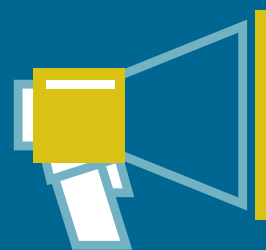
JOHNNY NICHOLS
HR director – Bird & Bird

Yes, flexible holidays could work in my department. Successful relationships are based on trust and a clear understanding of what's expected. I've always advocated success based on outputs, not inputs; what the client values rather than time at the desk. It is also clear that personalised objectives enable people to play to their strengths and enjoy work more. Whether I can manage that is another thing.

LEX POP

We're all going on a jolly long holiday?

Could an 'unlimited holiday' policy – as one firm made permanent late last year – work for your department? Yasmin Abed finds out



ANDREW TELLING
Head of knowledge management – Taylor Wessing

I don't think introducing this would have much impact for our professional support lawyers. We already have a wide variety of working patterns in the team (such as changing to mirror school holidays) and a holiday purchase scheme. And for this sort of policy to be workable, it has to respond to business needs too. With that in mind, I think the team generally feel they have the flexibility they need.



VIRGINIA FARQUHARSON
Director of finance and administration – Payne Hicks Beach

Sadly not, attractive as it sounds. We're a small department, only four accounting staff, and can't afford to have more than one person off at a time. We need to comply with the rigours of the SRA Accounts Rules, which quite rightly require that all work is up to date every day. So we couldn't risk staff all 'liking' to have the same day off!



CHRISTINE SILER
Legal project manager – Hogan Lovells

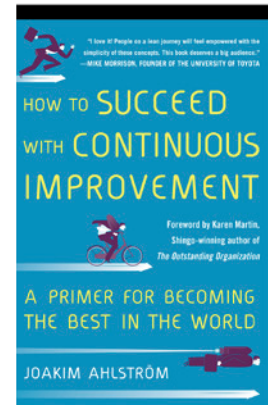
I think a 'holiday when you like' policy would work well in our department. It would be tricky at first to work out how to staff things that crop up unexpectedly, but I trust my people to know when their workflow is such that taking some time out wouldn't impact their deliverables. And if someone is really in need of some time off, they're also best placed to know that, and hopefully act on it to avoid burnout.

Do you have a view? Or indeed news for us to review? Have your say on Lex Pop – tweet us @Briefingmag or email briefing@lsn.co.uk

READING LIST

Lean and evergreen

Law firms could learn about continuous improvement from a book covering its application in a completely different industry, says Oliver Campbell, global head of client service solutions at Clifford Chance



Engaging and practical aren't words that commonly come to mind for books of management theory – so it came as something of a surprise that I not only finished this book in one sitting, but took away at least three ideas for my to-do list.

Its readability is largely down to the fact it isn't a book on management theory at all. Rather it's one on management practice – a journey through a real life case study of introducing a continuous improvement programme and transforming organisational culture.

Continuous improvement is, put simply, an analytical approach for working out a better way of doing things. It's more common sense than rocket science – but it's a topic that's surprisingly easy to overcomplicate (particularly given a propensity to refer to concepts by their Japanese terms). This book avoids that totally. At just over 100 pages, happily it is a very lean book on lean principles. That simplicity may hide the power of the underlying message in places, but it's refreshing to see the basics set out with such clarity.

Many of the more jargonistic texts on continuous improvement overlook the fact it's a mindset as well as a toolset. But the challenges of introducing it to an organisation come across very clearly. It covers not only target setting, root cause analysis and action planning, but also the softer skills required for motivating and coaching. And it makes it clear that continuous improvement is always a

journey, not a quick fix.

The book isn't specific to legal (it refers to an IT company), but that isn't really important, because the approach it describes is transferable between sectors. I suspect that lawyers may not see the immediate application of the book to their daily activities, but I can say that the training session described in the book is reassuringly similar to our firm's 'lean for lawyers' course, which we know works well. It's just that lawyers may need a little more convincing to get started on their first 'fishy' diagram.

The storytelling approach is engaging throughout – although the protagonist is not quite as endearing as, for example, the penguins in Kotter's *Our Iceberg is Melting*. So it can seem a little bit contrived, particularly towards the end.

But I suspect there's something in this book for everyone. For those new to continuous improvement, there's a very simple roadmap for kicking off your work. For those further along the journey, the tools and concepts are unlikely to be new, but the simplicity of the message is likely to be striking.

The three ideas I take away? First, empowering lots of people with a simple tool brings more than empowering a few with a more complicated one. Second is the diagnostic at the end of the book for analysing the challenges of sustaining continuous improvement. And finally, the notion that people may actually be more creative when they're thinking 'inside the box'. ▴

Publisher: McGraw-Hill
Date: December 2014 (hardback)
Price: £14.39

"It came as something of a surprise that I not only finished this book in one sitting, but took away at least three ideas for my to-do list."



WHAT'S ON YOUR RADAR?



We ask **Scott Green**, chief operating and financial officer of Hogan Lovells, for first impressions of his new firm and what's on the 2016 to-do list

Q What most differentiates your firm from the rest?

A In my experience it's pretty rare to have both great global capabilities and a great culture. We have the high-quality lawyers of one of the premier law firms in the world, but also a culture of respecting the contributions everyone makes. We also have a particularly strong regulatory practice of course. If you want the global reach and strong regulatory component, this is where you'd come.

Q What's the biggest impact you've had so far?

A Well, the firm has already done a very good job of integrating lawyers. We once had co-heads on either side of the Atlantic, but we now have global practice group leaders. Those individuals have global responsibilities – and they're stationed all over the world. Where I can now have most impact is to do the same with business services. Coming up for six years after our big combination, it's now much more appropriate to have single heads of functions to support lawyers. Not everybody has done that, but it's very important. Otherwise you may only be global on paper.

Q Where else does the firm need to invest?

A I'll now need to work very quickly to get our systems into a condition that can provide appropriate support to our strategy. There'll be a number of initiatives to combine and harmonise, whether that's a single finance system or a stronger network of seamless data centres. Fortunately we've just hired a new global CIO who's done it before. I actually hired him before myself – into my former firm WilmerHale out of EMI Music. Now he's come here to work for me again.

Q What's the most innovative thing you've seen at a firm?

A Well, I'm afraid I am going to cite something I've done myself in the past – and that's a discovery solutions business my team built [partnering with Recommind to reduce the cost of document review with technology]. Nobody had done that before. Now, that was mainly a litigation shop. Hogan Lovells is a different animal. But I will also say that you'll see a number of innovative things coming from us here on the business side this year – and that might mean services for clients that are outside pure legal.

Q What's the best piece of advice you've heard for legal business management?

A No matter how small the issue seems, talk to as many different people about it as you possibly can. You need to know what other people are thinking. There are only so many hours in the day, but this is a job that you really can't do on your own.

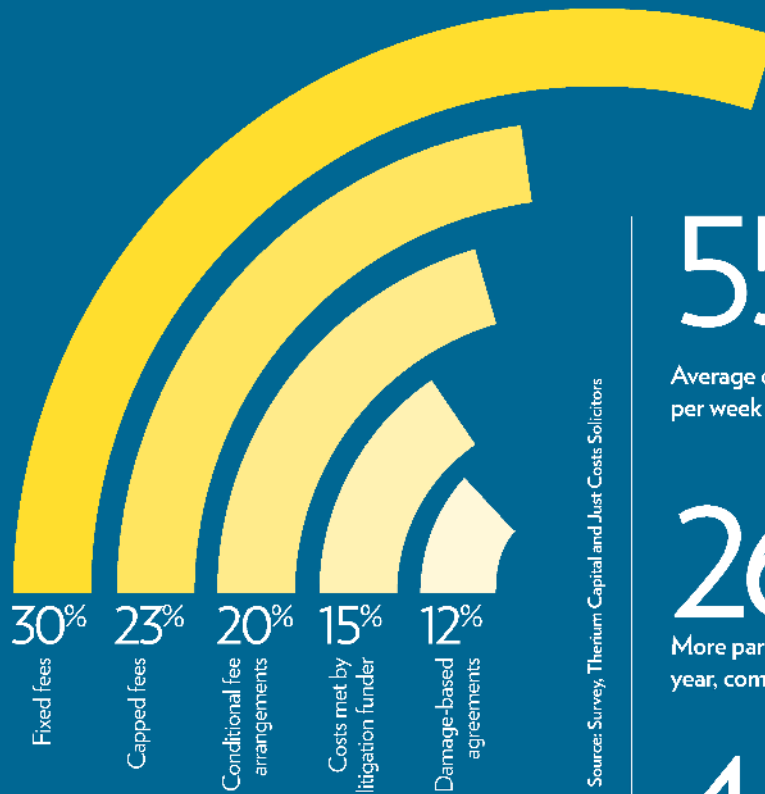
Q What do you think will be the biggest challenge for all firms in 2016?

A The markets are really volatile right now. There's usually quite a clear view of how the year's going to roll in advance, but uncertainty affects your corporate pipeline. We had such strong transactional work last year – and we're off to a very good start in 2016 – but we need to keep a strong focus on our clients' objectives in an uncertain environment. And that's always tough.

Q And do you have a New Year's resolution yourself?

A I'm actually about to publish a document of our 2016 goals and objectives, which will set out our course for this year. It's my resolution to achieve those!

Database



How do litigation partners prefer to get paid?

Source: Survey, Thierium Capital and Just Costs Solicitors

55³/₄

Average office working hours per partner per week in 2015/2016

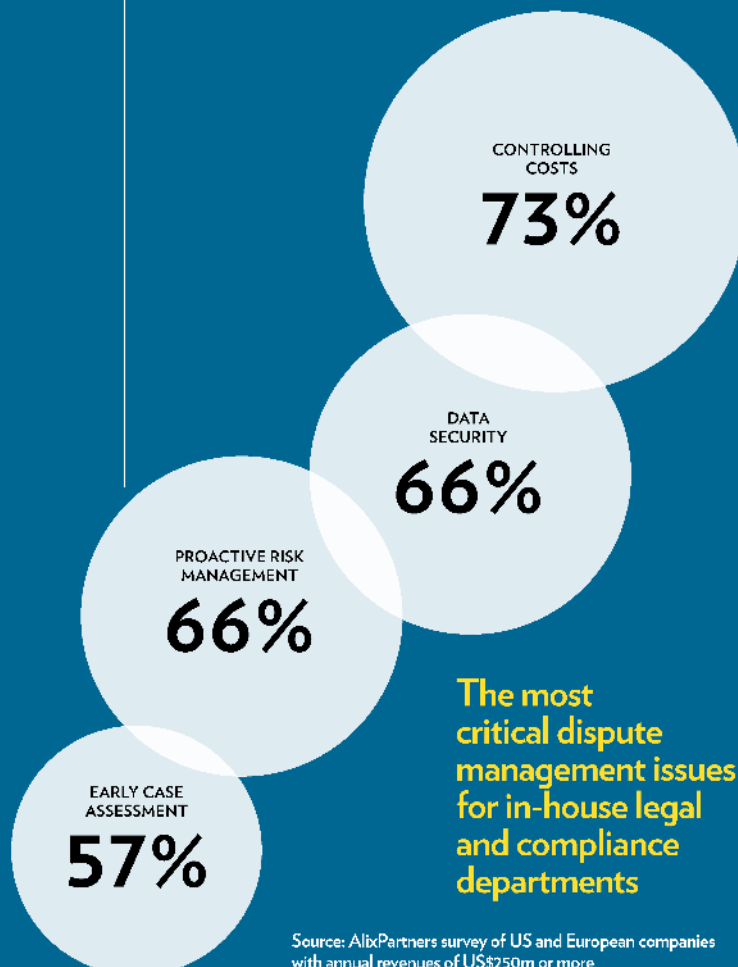
263

More partner hours in the office every year, compared to two years ago

46%

Of lawyers said long hours are essential to rising through the ranks

Source: Laurence Simons, Attitudes toward long hours survey



The most critical dispute management issues for in-house legal and compliance departments

Source: AlixPartners survey of US and European companies with annual revenues of US\$250m or more

Where would people be likely to stay with their business longer if it provided more support to charities and local community?

Environment and agriculture **75.68%**

Charity and voluntary work **75%**

Energy and utilities **69.62%**

Law **48.89%**

Manufacturing, engineering and construction **43.51%**

Accounting, banking and finance **43.14%**

Business, consulting and management **40.91%**

Leisure and hospitality **38.68%**

Media, marketing and advertising **36.36%**

Retail **35.59%**

Educational services **29.95%**

Public sector **24.57%**

Source: Give as you Live survey of employees on attitudes to charitable giving and workplace engagement

SPEAK UP

Learning to let it go

Stephen Allen, director of service delivery and quality at DLA Piper, asks why legal businesses are reticent to let anyone else near their work



There's quite a lot of mud-slinging by wannabe gurus in legal, telling lawyers that they don't know what they're doing or, even worse, they're unfit for purpose. Being a recovered lawyer myself, and having delivered real change from within firms over a number of years, I can tell you that most of the criticism comes from ill-informed consultants looking to grab a gig (a curious marketing technique, I've always thought).

There is one thing however, that our gurus really mention, if at all. Many firms are guilty of NIH syndrome (not invented here). Driven by false pride, superior solutions are generally overlooked in favour of inferior self-produced ones. How many law firms have bespoke IT or reporting solutions that were built in-house, always at a far greater cost than originally budgeted and invariably more expensive than the solution that already exists in the market and works perfectly?

When we look at the legal work firms do, this issue is even tougher to tackle. For example, poor uptake of legal process outsourcers (LPOs) to assist firms in work such as running discovery exercises has led some clients to create their own panels of LPOs and attempt to force their panel law firms to use them.

Why is it so difficult? We see co-contracting or subcontracting as standard models in other industries. What makes it so difficult for legal to do the same?

Recently, we announced a partnership with Lawyers on Demand (LOD) for a

solution that, until now, every other law firm had built their own version of. In a previous life, I built, for Thames Water, a successful single-source solution where BLP partnered with Pannone and Ashford to deliver all Thames Water's legal needs.

It is possible – so why don't we see more of it? These are my observations:

Revenue

Firms reward revenue over profit, so partners will try to keep all the work they can, even if they lose money. Once you look at profit as your core driver, you're forced to look for smarter solutions.

Brand

Yes, this old chestnut – the fear that allowing anyone else to work on matters leads to an inevitable problem and will damage your reputation. But if we ask clients, being inflexible and uncommercial is far more damaging to brand.

Culture

We don't like letting go. Partly because of the fear of the brand damage, but also because we don't trust what we haven't seen with our own eyes. This is where good sourcing, contracting and project management pays. You retain control, you ensure good people work on your matters, and you protect that brand.

Co-operating is a step into the unknown. We are, genuinely, damned if we don't, but with better metrics, and properly managed change – we don't have to be damned if we do. ▀

We see co-contracting or subcontracting as standard models in other industries. What makes it so difficult for legal to do the same?

Can law firms manage to innovate?

Peter Hiscocks, senior faculty in management practice at Cambridge Judge Business School, talks about being brave enough to 'drown puppies' – and other key pointers for making the most out of any innovation investment



Speak of innovation, and most people imagine scientists in white coats shaking test tubes, or Steve Jobs at Apple inventing a new electronic device. But innovation can be found in almost every corner of business life – even law.

Law firms don't have central R&D facilities or labs, but there's no denying that all practices need new products, processes and systems from time to time.

However, on being asked about innovation and the ways to encourage or manage it, many senior partners will say things like:

- We don't need innovation in our firm!
- Well, it's all just a question of luck
- We can't afford to spend money on things like that!
- Just get a junior member of staff to deal with it
- It mustn't cost any money or carry any risk!
- And so on.

There's now a lot of evidence pointing to the importance of innovation to firms. It helps growth, and can improve fee rates. But we need a strategy for innovation activities, and to manage them effectively. Otherwise, the activities will be out of control and you'll waste money. Analysis and costing of projects at a large regional law firm recently showed it was spending five times what it thought, while the partners didn't even have a clear understanding of the benefits they expected from the investment. You don't

want this - and I can promise you the situation isn't unique.

So, what do you need to do?

1. First, accept that you will have to manage this thing. You need to spend (a little) time developing an innovation strategy. You (and all your partners) must know what they want from innovation or new technology, and then plan how to get there.
2. Stay engaged with the process – not every day, but regularly, or you'll find costs get out of control.
3. Encourage ideas from everyone. Listen carefully, and select those with real potential. But get back to people whose ideas you've dropped, because you want them to have more (very important!).
4. Focus on a small number of important projects and just stop the rest. We call this 'drowning the puppies' – as every idea is someone's puppy dog. They'll fight to preserve it.
5. Measure the benefits of the ideas you spare as they start producing so you can show the upside.
6. Finally, you need to recognise that sometimes a project will fail. That doesn't mean the project team has failed – so don't punish them.

This may seem a lot of effort – you think you don't have the time. In fact, you don't have the time not to do it. Managing these steps effectively will save you and the firm a great deal of money. But if you stop new ideas and innovation in your business completely, it's true you won't need to worry – you'll have gone bust. ▀

THE DR's EMAIL ORDERS

Does it feel like your inbox is bad for your health? Well, you may be right. And just like wolfing down your five a day, the start of a new year may be the time to get into some better consumption habits. The British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology annual conference in January heard from Dr Richard MacKinnon of the Future Work Centre. "The habits we develop, the emotional reactions we have to messages

and the unwritten organisational etiquette around email combine into a toxic source of stress which could be negatively impacting our productivity and wellbeing," he said.

So what to do? A few of his tips:

- All you early morning/late night checkers – put your phone away!
- Plan your day and prioritise things before others' priorities flood in too
- Turn off push notifications for a period.





Features

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Journeys into space

Moving office offered CMS the opportunity to make mobile working the norm and rethink the office idea

20

Brains of the operation

Briefing Operational Leaders in Legal 2015 asked GCs and law firm leaders how the times are changing

THE BIG IDEA

Journeys into space

No longer is it heads down for the day at the engagingly modern workplace. Barbara Mendler and Razvan Cretu say a London office move inspired CMS to let people move more freely to benefit them, the firm and its clients

Words Richard Brent

S

triding through the entrance of CMS's new London office in Cannon Place – sitting right on top of Cannon Street underground station (and the CBI now a few floors above) – doesn't feel like the usual process of arriving for a **Briefing** interview.

First, you don't approach a desk to speak to a receptionist. Rather, you might be popping in to see some Apple store rival, as someone immediately comes forward to enquire about the nature of your visit. You might then help yourself to a coffee of choice, before taking a seat in the new 'dedicated client space' – where new-age sofa setup meets coffee shop-style small tables. A media wall beams out breaking news footage alongside other data that may assist your morning or simply pass the time. Or instead of leafing through the FT, you might pick up one of five or six iPads – replacements for the traditional round of daily papers.

Or you may be drawn, mothlike, to the 'interactive table' to throw down various chunky tokens (each bearing a business sector) onto the huge touchscreen that spreads before you. Stand back as information boxes leap out to guide you to all manner of areas of informational interest. If, like me, you struggle to sync your iPhone correctly on a good day, you'll possibly feel like you've wandered into the latest Bond film.

However, the changes are naturally designed not to disorientate, but to differentiate – and not just on the shiny new surface. New IT and ways of working penetrate deep into the business nerve centre.

PHOTO CREDIT: SIMON BRANDON



It's the mission that the largest law firms have, of course, been on for some time – particularly since the Legal Services Act threatened the prospect of a cat among the pigeons. What will draw not just clients but also the pipeline of talent to one firm over another? CMS spied its opportunity in a combination of several big changes to working space and IT. They're the two factors needed to create the double win of agile working – serving clients more flexibly and providing more freedom to those doing the serving.

Getting around to it

The firm was set for an office move in any case. But the process of preparing for the go-live last June thrust big ideas brewing away in the background for some time into the spotlight, says Barbara Mendler, managing director, strategic projects and operations.

"We decided quite some time ago that we'd soon need to work differently to meet changing client demands – and to be as cost-effective as possible – but it would've been difficult to achieve what we've done here in our previous building. It was quite old, and just not geared up for it."

Moving office presented the firm with the opportunity to do something really new. One thing that immediately jumped out, for example, was the potential of the far larger space per floor. The move switched seven floors for just three – all open plan – at 50,000 sq ft each.

"Just having much greater visibility of everyone has taken team and individual interaction to an entirely new level."

"It was originally a trading floor," says Mendler. So before doing anything at all with technology there was an impact on day-to-day interactions. "People who trained together now occasionally see one another – perhaps for the first time in five years," she laughs. "Just having much greater visibility of everyone has taken team and individual interaction to an entirely new level."

She's aware that many London businesses were already moving from a more cellular setup to the open-plan end of the spectrum. And with lots of smaller offices, especially in central and eastern Europe, CMS had long wrestled with ideas for "getting groups together". It's woven well into the firm's strategic thinking. "There's no reason at all for open plan to feel like a call centre," says Mendler. "Rather, it's a continuous working environment, and our architects focused us on motivating people around how space could impact them in very positive ways."

There's an emphasis on staircases, for example, rather than the lifts. We all know it's healthier to take the stairs.

People can, of course, also cross and chat on them – and where flights of steps meet, open-plan kitchenettes complement comfy breakout seating.

Architecture firm KKS also stressed to the CMS team that spaces and furnishings needn't be fixed forever. Simply knowing this fact may not only boost interaction as things are reconfigured, but also improve people's mood (and thus their performance.)

"Our architects worked with us a lot on how perception about work environment really affects engagement," says Mendler. Desk areas, for example, are split using dividers that bear movable 'manifestations' – imagery related to that group's work for a sector, which can easily be taken down and switched.

"We have a 25-year lease, but that doesn't mean things always have to look the same," says Mendler. "We can choose to change things around. When a space is designed to be active, it feels more alive."

It's the same theory driving a set of pedestals on wheels that roll around between desks as needed. Rather than moving their own chairs (or extra ones causing a whole lot of clutter), people wheel up a seat to share head and desk space.

"The desks are easily big enough for someone to come and sit next to you to collaborate comfortably," explains Mendler. Indeed, thanks to quite a dramatic cutting in available storage, people even have a little more personal desk space than





before. She estimates that around 10 metres of storage space per person has ultimately been reduced to three. The architect's sums still allow for an additional half metre of personal space to play with after an overall cost saving.

On the Surface

The firm doesn't operate a clear-desk policy as such – but various things are geared to cut the clutter. Large 24" monitors, for example, sit off the desk itself – and on arms that can be pushed away if it's not needed for a task at hand.

But the truly headline change for CMS is what's sitting under these screens (and also on retractable arms). All fee earners now have their own Microsoft Surface Pro 3 – a laptop and tablet computer combo – which people can quickly unplug from

Above left to right: CMS head of IT, Razvan Cretu, and managing director, strategic projects and operations, Barbara Mendler, in the new 'Client Space'.

their desk and take with them wherever they need to go.

With just two cables to disconnect, lawyers can head off to a meeting room or other space and keep right on working on the same job, explains head of IT Razvan Cretu.

"We've implemented the Cisco converged network, so it's a seamless migration from wired to wireless connection. It takes less than a second [for the user]. All applications stay connected. You can keep working exactly as if you were at the desk."

In addition to the fluidity of continuity, the technology provides options.

For example, once in a meeting room, people needn't be restricted to the Surface's 12" display. "They can easily hook into the 55" screen in the room," says Mendler. Others then have a clearer view of the document or

presentation that they're working through and they can collaborate effectively."

And with the power of unified communications on hand, that includes people out of the office, or in another country. Fee earners all also have a Microsoft Lync headset sat alongside their Surface Pro for desktop videoconferencing.

"You can project work from your computer onto the big screen – and literally bring people in from anywhere in the world. Even clients can come in on a call," says Cretu. And with unified comms presence functionality, he adds, you can clearly see who's available to join and who has a conflicting schedule.

"They may not actually be in that other meeting, but there's a heightened awareness of who's reachable to take part in a task.

LIGHT AND SOUND SHOWS

One possible downside of forsaking building depth for breadth is encroaching darkness (this interview took place back in the dark days of December). Sat on top of the tube, most of CMS's new windows must inevitably look out onto adjacent buildings, so the architects and Mender's premises committee were also very focused on maximising the chances of natural light getting through.

"The dividers are glass – so they let through light as well as offering some interest for the eye," she says. "We also deliberately located fee earner desks closer to windows. Most meeting rooms on the working floors are situated around the elevator shafts towards the core."

Cretu adds: "The material for the desks was also selected for

soundproofing – and the desk partitions absorb sound as well as letting in the light. So it's open-plan, but it can still sometimes seem almost eerily quiet."

From automatically turning off lights to the removal of generic bins and less onsite file storage, facilities have also been designed to save energy and waste. And Mender says a print-anywhere solution is already starting to have an impact on lawyers' notorious paper dependency.

"We won't manage completely paperless – but paper-lighter would be rather nice. People are printing less already. And as our Surface Pros are tablets, people can also easily annotate directly onto documents digitally."

You can also see where they are by home office zone, and there is an automatic 'do not disturb' mode if they're in a presentation." The overall objective, of course, is to enable people to work from as many locations as possible – either onsite or (as is increasingly likely) on the move.

"We launched a virtual private network in March 2015 – just before the move," says Cretu. "Lawyers access their documents and all other internal resources wherever they go, with absolutely no restrictions. They can work seamlessly while waiting for a meeting with a client perhaps, or print something on the way into the building and release it at a printer when convenient."

Mender adds: "If there's no Wi-Fi they can connect their Surface to their mobile – or work offline and things will

automatically update when coverage returns."

Getting warmer

But although assets have been rationalised to let people pitch up at other offices quite easily, the business has stopped short of pure hotdesking. Lawyers still have a workspace they can call their own. Instead, Mender is preparing to trial badging desk space as either 'hot', 'warm' or 'cold'. A cold desk would be for people who never travel, and the temperature rises if they're out more regularly, growing hot if the space could potentially be a more flexible resource. With project rollouts, and suppliers often popping in – notably the relationship with longstanding outsource partner Integreon – many CMS employees are already 'warmdesking'.

"As business services teams tend to cover more than one location, they'll be first to try out more pure hotdesking," she says.

"We're also planning to change our room booking system. You'll be able to book your desk, parking space, possibly more, all in advance, as well as see whether a particular desk is taken, and for how long."

Anecdotal of course, employees are itching to be away

from their desks and on the go as much as humanly possible – but how easily did CMS workers take to their newfound fluidity and freedom? How much training did they need?

Mender laid out the new desk arrangements in the old office's café before the move. "People could eat their lunch there and try it all out informally," she says. "We also had 3D and flat images of how the space would look and work – and we trialed the Microsoft technology two months before moving. We didn't have the same Wi-Fi setup, so people couldn't just unplug and go, but they got used to working with it."

However, she says the experience has been quite unlike other change programmes. Rather than pushing functionality on to people and trying to persuade them to use it, the scenario is reversed. "We've had people badgering us for the stuff," she laughs. Demand is so high, in fact, they'll be rolling out both the Surface Pros and Lync in Scotland a year ahead of schedule.

Cretu adds: "It's particularly helpful that in many cases people are also using technology they use at home – and throughout we've wanted to

"As business services teams tend to cover more than one location, they'll be first to try out more pure hotdesking."



make IT as seamless an experience for users as possible.

“We’ve rationalised everything, reducing the number of different applications to the minimum necessary. And that simplification means we can easily stay up to date as well.

“Desktop refresh projects typically take a year or two to plan and implement, by which time the new version’s out – but we’ve managed to go through several Windows upgrades in two years.”

And the investment in unified comms de-stresses the art of videoconferencing, he says. “People used to need training on specialist systems, but now they find the same software and experience they have at their desk. Everything’s much more automatically familiar.”

Mendler adds: “Our Windows phones have exactly the same tiles for accessing systems as the Surface Pro. Things are designed

throughout to reduce the numbers of clicks – and time – needed to access anything. A top user complaint in the past was simply how long it would take us to log on.”

Moan no more, lawyers. Thanks to a bunch of back-end and software process automation, people can now be in and ready for daily action in as few as four seconds (and that’s a reduction of 86 secs, apparently).

It’s now a little harder at CMS to justify fetching that extra cup of coffee before getting stuck into the day – but that can wait for the short wired walk to the cafeteria. In the meantime, there’s work to be done. ▀

▀ FIRM FACTS

CMS

Offices: 59
Countries: 33
Global revenue: £753m
Headcount: 5,500
Ratio, business services staff to fee earners: 0.6:1



THE DEBRIEF

The office used to be, simply, the place where you worked – at your desk, during the day. But as busier work schedules and lives are requiring more mobile working, businesses are recognising that the office space can itself play a part in improving productivity and profitability.

Needing to move office in any case, top 10 law firm CMS turned to architects and technologists to help it create a new space designed to enable greater movement, client responsiveness, options for interaction and cost effectiveness.

It’s not quite the end of the personal and paper-weighted desk in favour of a hotdesking policy – but by moving open plan and reducing storage, each employee has a little more personal space, with an associated cost saving for the firm overall. Impermanent ‘manifestations’ adorn transparent (and natural light-enhancing) dividers, grouping teams according to sectors, with spare backless pedestals to pull up as impromptu collaboration requires.

And each lawyer now has a Microsoft Surface Pro and accompanying headset, which means they can move from space to space around the whole office – usual desk, meeting room, library or coffee table – by disconnecting and reconnecting two cables. They can also use their own mobile phones to access everything available through the Surface on the move – with iPads and an interactive table awaiting visitors in the client space.

Microsoft Lync unified comms completes the picture, enabling videoconferencing with clients, invitations to collaborate on documents directly on screen, and an awareness of who may be available to participate.



BRIEFING EVENTS

Brains of the operation

The rise of the machines and business support professionals were high on the agenda at Operational Leaders in Legal 2015

Words Richard Brent

As is now traditional, the **Briefing Operational Leaders in Legal (OLIL)** conference began with a question. When will it be standard for operational leaders to hold partnership-equivalent status in a law firm? Polling the audience using our clever mobile app, just over half (51%) of the room thought it'd be after 2020. But with a dash of New Year glass-half-full thinking, that means 49% think they shouldn't have to wait quite that long. Or it would – if 16% didn't think they'll never achieve it.

And is it ironic that the rise of business expertise comes with the decline of the lawyer as we know it? Naturally, we couldn't resist a cheeky question to gauge how fast the audience thought artificial intelligence might replace the fee earner. Half said up to 25% of lawyers could be out the door by 2025. Another quarter said 25-50% was more likely.

These two notions set the tone for the day. In spite of a global economy that had

– for now at least – averted crisis (according to keynote speaker, Barclays' senior European economist, Francois Cabau), how would firms need to adapt to widespread change, and perhaps the threat of ultimate redundancy?

Changing weighs

First, all business needs to learn to accept a less hierarchical world, said Susan Letterman of Letterman White Consulting: "Leaders have nowhere near as much power as they still think; change is no longer a fixed process." So, as lines blur, change projects can't rely on lines of formal authority. Employees must be empowered to respond to outcomes that are less predictable. "People should develop change competencies by actively participating in them," said Letterman – and "diverse world views are needed in the room" in the first place. Leaders may even need to manufacture the discomfort of change to build up employee resilience in the face of it – then monitor their

ATTEND OLIL 2016

Here's a little (video-tastic) taste of what you missed on the day: lsn.co.uk/GCPanelOLIL2015. Make sure you remember to sign up for this year's leading event for legal business operational leaders.





informal networks of support to see how they fare.

The themes of less fixation and more flexibility flowed on into a GC panel, featuring Sarah Spooner, head of legal at Vodafone, Robin Lince, senior legal counsel at AIG Europe, and Marketa Edwards, director, corporate and investment banking, legal.

Spooner pointed out some firms' reluctance to get involved in lower-margin, more commoditised work alongside the strategic – incompatible with understanding the true operations of a business. "You need to be in the game for both," she said. She and Edwards agreed that automation would grow more common – and hierarchies shouldn't get in the way. Lince, meanwhile, recommended a less fixed definition of client "value". Price is always important, he said, but AIG would place almost equal weight on knowledge of products and markets – and of key risks (see the debate just as it unfolded at lsn.co.uk/GCPanelOLIL2015).

A later panel then gave thought to building more bridges between all talent pools. Danielle Nagler, innovation leader at Berwin Leighton Paisner, suggested divisions between fee earners and 'non' might not only be inefficient, but pose a competitive risk. And lawyers may not need to be technologists, but they couldn't afford to run scared of the subject.

Alastair Mitchell, COO at Holman Fenwick Willan, lamented the lawyer's apparent "need to be involved in

everything". A culture supportive of experimentation when managing change was also singled out. Alex Koelsch, COO for Freshfields in Germany and Australia, perhaps summed up best: "Innovation only really works if you're relentless at failing."

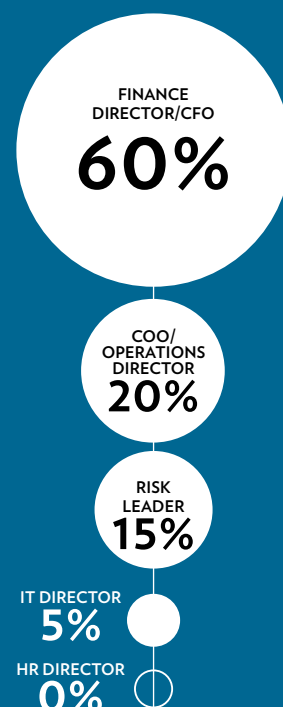
Myles Allison, practice director at Irwin Mitchell, added: "AI offers a range of outcomes – probabilities and the cost-effectiveness of courses of action". Firms, in contrast, are often too worried about making a mistake to deal in options.

Up skills

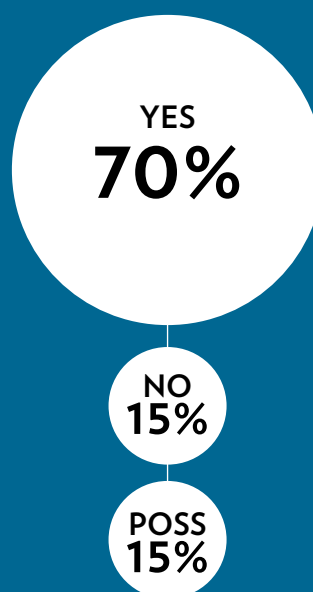
But if AI is one route to change, another is to invest in a broader range of flesh and blood capabilities. Chris Emerson (interviewed by **Briefing** in 2014) developed Bryan Cave's client technology group, before launching the concept of the 'practice economics group' (PEG). Today his PEG has a true hybrid of legal and data gurus (seven computer science engineers, two project managers, an actuary and a statistician, alongside a mere four lawyers.)

At the time of OLIL he was also after a data scientist. Demand's such that his department is growing by roughly three people a year. And Emerson points out that a tangible IT product on the table can make the client relationship that much "stickier". Value in the client's eyes is backing up the business case for investment in more people to crunch up more numbers – rather than a rising number of ever-smarter machines! ▀

Which business leadership expertise do partners prize most highly?



Are silos separating your business functions hindering service delivery improvement?



Findings from our poll of all delegates at the Briefing Operational Leaders in Legal 2015 conference

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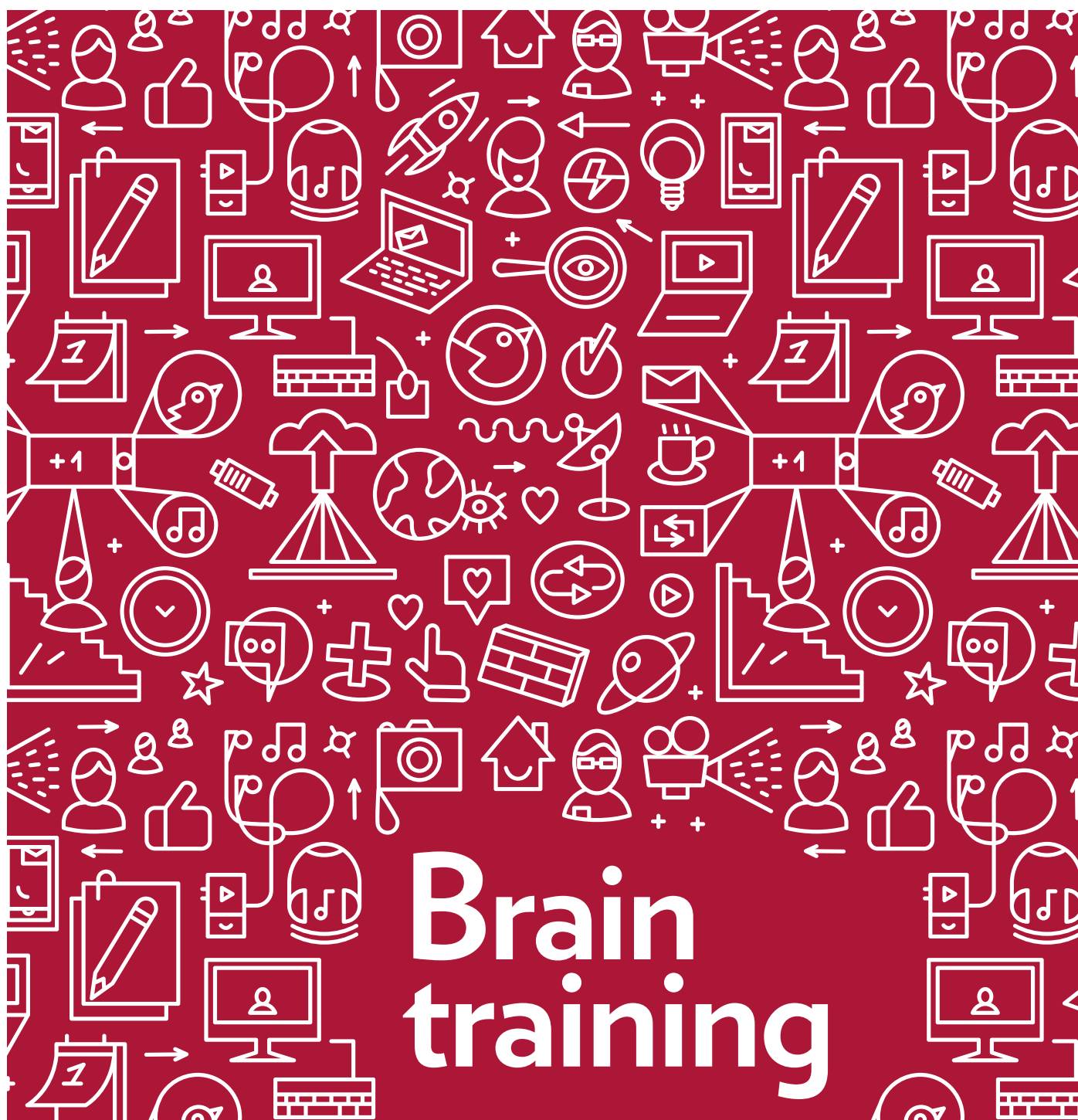
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Brain training

12

Stand up and be counted

Poorly managed internal meetings can waste precious time and sap energy. But what, asks SeyfarthLean's Kim Craig, if you only met as long as you could, quite literally, stand it?



BEST PRACTICE

Stand up and be counted

Kim Craig, global director of legal process improvement at SeyfarthLean Consulting, outlines how holding a 'standup' meeting not only saves wasted time, but offers opportunity to build tighter teams that are more resilient to change



top me if you've heard this one.

A chicken and a pig want to open a restaurant. "What kind of restaurant?" the pig asks.

"Breakfast spot," the chicken replies. "We'll specialise in ham and eggs." The pig laughs. "No thanks," he says. "You'll be involved – but I'll be committed."

It's a story, or a variation, commonly used to describe scenarios in which one side of a potential partnership has more 'skin in the game' than the other. And so we come to the 'agile' standup meeting, known as the 'scrum'.

The scrum meeting takes its name from rugby – where players press themselves together, arm in arm, and wedge against the opposing team in the same formation, both sides attempting to gain control of the ball. It creates, as you can imagine, a strong sense of unity, cooperation and communication.

The members of the scrum are the pigs. They aren't chickens. They use their collective strength and abilities to advance the goals of the team. And if you've ever watched rugby, you know that the players in the scrum incur the greatest risk of

injury. At times, they literally have skin in the game.

What the scrum is, and what it is not

But in a business setting, the scrum is a brief, focused team meeting, often held daily, ideally held in the same location. The brevity and focus comes in part from all participants standing up for the duration – hence the alternative name ‘standup meeting’ – and it’s typically capped at 15 minutes. Some teams will allow the scrum to last a bit longer – perhaps up to 20 minutes – but no longer!

The meeting’s purpose is to create a team dynamic where all members feel equally responsible for the success of the mission and can self-organise without the assistance of a designated team leader.

This is not a technical meeting, nor a planning meeting, nor is it a status report where team members update the single team leader. Instead, the scrum is meant for peer-to-peer communication, with daily updates that bind everyone equally to a complex mission. These team members’ fates are determined by the success or failure of the product in question. The pigs are, in other words, ‘committed’.

Considering the variability and unpredictability in most complex legal matters, employing flexible approaches and techniques like this is vital. Frequent and purposeful communication is important to move in sync with the changing demands of the engagements. The scrum meeting is part of the agile methodology, which values:

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools



THE DEBRIEF

The standup, or ‘scrum’, meeting, of course derives its appealing nomenclature from the rough and tumble of the rugby world. But the name signifies not just robust informality – it’s also that everyone’s equally involved in the effort.

The meetings have no leader – members self-organise – so to maintain focus they should be held standing up, in a circle or around any visual displays (such as Kanban boards) that can help demonstrate project progress. As people can’t sit down, contributions are

helped to be short and snappy. It’s all typically over in 15 minutes a day. It’s about updating on what matters most – progress made to date and the obstacles preventing goals from being achieved. For example, people might relate what they achieved yesterday, tasks lined up for the day ahead, and the obstacles either in place or on the horizon that are frustrating efforts.

The standup meeting is part of the apparatus of ‘agile’ working, where models of communication see change as inevitable. It values individual interactions over processes, working drafts over comprehensive documentation and collaboration with customers over the negotiation of contracts.

- Working drafts over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over project plan/contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan.

That last is especially crucial. The agile methodology first arose out of the software development world – where developers really must be able to react to changes as they occur during development. But the same can be said for transactional work. In M&A, for example, new needs will arise throughout the process due to shifting circumstances both on the client side and involving external forces. The lawyers working on the matter must be able to react, adjust and adapt.

Quickfire questions

The scrum approach expects and anticipates this change. By meeting each morning for a short, pre-determined length of time, team members can update each other on their respective processes, both what is happen-

ing personally in their work and how that applies to the whole.

To do so, participants must answer three questions. At Seyfarth, we phrase them thus:

- What did you accomplish yesterday?
- What will you accomplish today?
- What’s in your way? (What are the impediments to your goals?)

Some standups are also conducted beside a ‘Kanban’ board – a workflow visualisation tool that captures work in progress alongside completed tasks and backlog.

But in the end, each participant takes a turn to report back on the above three questions. Speaking order can be determined in a number of ways, from passing a physical object to drawing numbered cards, to simply going around the circle.

The point is for the meeting to move swiftly from one participant to the next, thus fostering self-organisation and keeping the entire team focused on what really matters as



“Adopting scrum meetings is about reframing a team’s collective mindset toward teamwork.”

opposed either to tangents or outright distractions.

So what’s with the chickens?

To create that self-organisation, the scrum is a pigs-only meeting. Chickens – such as managers and other company stakeholders – may attend the meeting if they wish. But they do not participate except as spectators.

To return to the proposed breakfast spot, if the chicken and pig collaborated on a restaurant and the chicken took the lead, the chicken might underestimate the strain upon the pig in their arrangement – that is, the commitment of becoming ham as opposed to the involvement of providing eggs.

Thus, a large part of the purpose of scrum meetings is to empower team members and increase communication and unity.

One of our Chicago partners learned the power of these meetings recently when he employed them during the run-up to an M&A deal.

His goals, he explains, had nothing to do with better client service and “other lofty objectives”. He had a specific problem he needed to solve: a conflict between micro-management (overseeing “a huge amount of detail critical to

the deal”) and macro-management, where he never felt he had mastery over the details.

Prior to employing scrum meetings, he struggled to find a proper balance of work within his team. They created many collateral documents that didn’t add clarity to the process – and they all spent a significant amount of time in inconsequential or distracting meetings. His challenge, therefore, was to empower his team – the experts on the details – to communicate on their own terms and in their own language, while also overseeing that communication to ensure forward motion and success.

He used scrum in part because one of agile’s guiding principles is simplicity, which he knew would benefit the process. He did a one-day agile training session at the firm with a trainer brought in from outside – and he learned to be the ‘ScrumMaster’ (the scrum facilitator, who is a pig, but a quieter one). Instead of managing his team’s content exchanges, he merely had to manage their interactions. By his own estimation, talking time in the scrum was 80% the team, just 20% him.

The result? A successful US\$150m deal and improved

team functioning. He described the scrums as “very focused”, with no bragging, canned speeches or deflection.

From an internal perspective, that is the scrum’s ultimate purpose: to acknowledge that the team members (the pigs) will live and die with the success of a given product, while senior management and other company stakeholders (the chickens) will be affected, but ultimately live above the fray – the day-to-day consequences of the product’s success.

Adopting scrum meetings is about reframing a team’s collective mindset toward teamwork and changing the nature of interactions between leadership and the team. This takes time, and cannot simply be handed down from above. It must be built from the bottom, with each team member understanding the needs and goals of the whole group and knowing instinctively how their own work ripples out and affects the end product.

In the end, scrum meetings help you to deliver a better end product due to increased communication and problem solving of self-organised teams. Scrum meetings between empowered pigs will help teams bring home the bacon. ▴

Unifying force

Unified communications should be a clear crowd pleaser, and it offers great opportunity for law firms to grow in a more flexible way, says Andrew Pearce at Arkadin, an NTT Communications company

Businesses are investing in unified communications – the likes of meetings on-the-go, videoconferencing on the desktop and presence functionality to signal availability to ‘chat’, or more – to increase their customer responsiveness. In today’s notoriously ‘always on’ business world, they must anticipate, trouble-shoot and deliver on those customers’ needs as immediately as possible – and that demands ever more flexibility about when, where, how, and by whom work gets done.

The final bill

But there is also a more selfish – and highly logical – reason that law firms ought to give such communications transformation very serious consideration, says Andrew Pearce, vice president for Northern Europe at Arkadin.

“Law is a complex topic – but its objectives are really very clear. Specifically, the goal is to employ the best expertise available, and then to make that expertise as available as possible to maximise revenue.” It stands to reason then, he points out, that any technology increasing potential touch points with clients throughout the working day contributes directly to total profitability.

“Depending on the remuneration arrangement in force, billings can, of course, affect the income of the individual as well as the profitability of the firm as a whole.

“Presence gives you the power to see where people are, how easily they can be reached, and the best method of contacting them – and instant messaging simply means you can take such action faster.”

Firms are more accessible to their clients when they need them. But similarly, clients can be more accessible to lawyers, as are the various business support teams that help to convert client interactions into revenue, says Pearce.

However, as well as taking productivity to a new level, this flexibility can benefit a firm’s people on a personal level – underpinning increasingly inventive flexible working patterns as part of the employer value proposition. This is no longer just ‘one day working from home each week as an extra perk’. UC enables businesses to offer employees as much autonomy over how they work as suits everyone involved.

“Both lawyers and support departments can now perform their tasks almost entirely remotely,” says Pearce.

“In addition to the space and real estate



PHOTO CREDIT: JONATHAN GOLDBERG

savings with a hot-desking setup, and reduction of travel costs through video meetings, they're likely to see longer-term savings in lower employee churn."

Why? Because, in general, people with a bit more freedom – or fewer restrictions – are happier people. Again, entirely logical – the lawyers ought to love it.

Changing challenges

It might seem strange, therefore, that Arkadin's research has found the user to be a common sticking point for the businesses that do go down the UC route. People, it appears, can be reluctant to use their newfound freedom and release those benefits – even when it ups their earnings.

Again though, there's an underlying logic at work. Potential for improvement is all too often trumped by the age-old fear of failure that things will go wrong.

"Employers and employees can be resistant to embracing new technology if it appears too complex, inconvenient or potentially unreliable," says Pearce.

"The good news is that UC reliability today

really is commercial quality – and that's from your desk, home or smartphone."

Convenience is covered off too, then. "One of the barriers to the growth of videoconferencing was actually the burden of needing to move to a different room," he continues. "It was understandably seen as a pain. Now, everything can be done through a single piece of kit that sits right there on the desk.

"The quality of videoconferencing via a laptop or desktop PC is also very high today. The inbuilt webcam is perfectly fit for purpose – or you can choose to enhance it with an add-on for a small additional cost."

So this just leaves fear of complexity. It shouldn't surprise that this is also a misconception.

"When you arrived at a meeting room for your videoconference, you realised you hadn't been there for a month and couldn't remember how to use it," laughs Pearce. "But UC solutions now available are very intuitive to use."

Technology has also managed to tackle environmental noise if, for example, you're working from home – those "barking dogs and crying babies in the background", Pearce says.

"Employers and employees can be resistant to embracing new technology if it appears too complex, inconvenient or potentially unreliable."



Find out more about Arkadin
and NTT: www.arkadin.co.uk

Headsets with multiple microphones can boost the speaker's voice and effectively mask such distractions. "You profile how and where someone's working in advance and provide them with the IT that's appropriate to the setting."

Creating comfort

But making unified communication features part of everyday working life – whether at the desk or on the move – results in the familiarity for it to thrive.

It takes a little upfront investment in good training, of course – but also simple confidence-building. Working with UC calls for an additional layer of transparency with which some might be initially uncomfortable.

"I suspect one reason audio conferencing has enjoyed such a great run is that people can easily be doing other things at the same time," says Pearce. "They could multi-task, perhaps, and clearly didn't need to worry about others seeing that – or anything else!"

"But videoconferences tend to be both fewer and shorter. They're really just replacing some face-to-face meetings in business areas where that face time is still critical to trust in service. You're likely to have a better relationship with someone you've recently seen."

In order to generate employee buy-in to the technology quickly, however, it also makes sense to be strategic and quantify these benefits, building the case for the change from the outset.

"The impact on both collective and individual billings should be clear," says Pearce. "Firms can also talk with their customers for feedback. With easier access to lawyers, and opportunity for document collaboration, there'll be a direct positive impact on satisfaction and the relationship. This provides an opportunity for greater client retention."

Instead of forcing new technology on people, he says that a better idea is first to evidence how it can enable and enhance cooperation that benefits all parties (cross-selling of services among practices, for example), creating a more collaborative culture.

"The technology will then be adopted quite intuitively as an appropriate channel for the work to be done."

And now, he stresses, is the time to do it. "Legal businesses that don't exploit new technology today risk getting left behind. Before long they'll find it much harder to attract the necessary talent to thrive – and if they can't keep pace, they'll lose clients to the competition making those clients' lives that bit easier."

Health and wealth

The legal sector is picking up on all this, Pearce says – but firms could also look to the advantages being gained from UC in other sectors. Indeed, there's an especially interesting parallel with the web of productivity pressures at play in what might seem the different world of healthcare.

Doctors can't work from home – but, very like lawyers, their days are sharply divided up, with huge time pressure in a high-risk environment. Pearce says many pharmaceutical companies have therefore turned to UC video meetings for pitching drugs and solutions – managing to squeeze into those very rare gaps in the doctor's working day.

"It's quick and easy to set up – and the company can get the best experts available to present the benefits most persuasively. They don't need to be in the room."

"A salesperson operating more traditionally might be sat in that waiting room for hours before the doctor had a few minutes to see them – not to mention forever travelling between surgeries."

Arkadin is now a subsidiary of NTT Communications, enabling access to additional options for those now convinced that such communication could transform their competitiveness. This includes access to Microsoft Skype for Business and Cisco technologies – and means that businesses can also choose to implement solutions either on premise or as hosted systems.

"The market is now definitely moving towards hosted – and our business is driven to ensure our own clients maximise their investment," says Pearce. "There can be a lot of wastage in IT, and hosting offers greater flexibility."

You aren't investing in anything that you aren't using – and you aren't left with obsolete equipment that needs to be replaced as the technology to power productivity and profit inevitably evolves further. ▀



Credit where credit's due

Collections management is a cornerstone of a firm's growth – and with an upgrade from Minisoft, DLA Piper can make some big differences, explains Ashley Hamblin

A strategy of international expansion has clearly served DLA Piper rather well – securing the firm steady and balanced growth by globally meeting diverse client needs. But it also comes at a perhaps surprising cost. With so many time zones covered, there is just no night time anymore – and that means backroom processes run the risk of eating into productivity.

“The firm has offices all the way from the UK to Australia – and very few gaps between them. There's a maximum of a couple of hours of 'overnight,’” explains Ashley Hamblin, head of finance systems development.

DLA wants, he says, to create batches of automatic tasks, statements and letters for accounts receivable when people aren't using the system – when they're asleep. “It's perfectly possible to run things during the work day – but it's more efficient for everyone involved if you don't.”

That, in a nutshell, is why the firm decided to upgrade collections management to Minisoft's ARCS 2G system. Since the switch, Hamblin says, the time to complete a UK monthly statement run has been quartered – from four hours to just one.

Nothing to lose

Another advantage is that Minisoft collaborated closely with DLA to develop a solution specifically better suited to phased international rollout. Different regions can be moved to the new system as necessary without causing any confusion. Currently the UK, Belgium and the Middle East are enjoying the benefit – with Germany and Australia soon set to follow.

“Each of our regions has its own credit control department but, of course they also need to work together,” explains Hamblin.

“They need visibility of one another's work. We couldn't allow a situation where we don't have a



"We couldn't allow a situation where we don't have a truly global system."

truly global system." And Minisoft's development of a dual-extract system bespoke to this requirement means the firm can temporarily have two systems simultaneously performing one global function, he says.

"This 'mirroring' allows people on the new system to see work any other jurisdiction is still doing on the legacy one. Work never needs to be reconverted when a jurisdiction gets the switch. It has been constantly flowing into the new system all along."

Meanwhile, once a jurisdiction has moved across, the system has the flexibility to tailor credit control processes such as escalation rules.

"We can redistribute work from one set of people in a team to another based on the age of debt, for example," Hamblin says. "It may be preferable for a different part of the workforce to be chasing notably old debt – perhaps a specialist in that area."

The legacy system (6.8) has managers assessing and reassigning such things manually. In future, it could be automatic. "We'll be alerted to changing scenarios faster and there's a smaller margin for error, as well as the efficiency gains."

Production of reports for partners can also be improved, because auto-burst functionality will send out automatic emails with separate slices of the full report.

Even before those changes are implemented, there's no need for credit controllers to run and save multiple reports to compare versions of the

same job. "Previously, there was no back button – no tabs at all," says Hamblin. "Now controllers can flip back and forth and never need to lose sight of anything. The content of each tab is also completely interactive. If there are too many fields, or they need to add a new one, such as the matter number, they can just drag and drop and the screen reshapes itself before the eyes."

The latter functionality aids client responsiveness as well as internal efficiency, he explains. Client questions about the current picture of outstanding debt don't need a new report – new sums can be totted up whenever they come in.

With so many potential impacts on the working day, Hamblin says focused training for both system testers and credit control teams was essential. Minisoft was happy to provide this as part of the package – and indeed twice flew a specialist from the US to the UK for the purpose.

"He was highly knowledgeable, as well as understanding how our firm works, and has now trained our own trainer to move it out internationally.

"We also had project team training earlier in the process. Minisoft understands our unique needs as a business very well, which was extremely useful."

Revamped, the business-critical cash collection department should keep DLA happily growing for many years to come – even when it briefly gets the chance to sleep. ▀

Find out more about Minisoft:
www.minisoftinc.com



PHOTO CREDIT: JONATHAN GOLDBERG

Agility and ability

The digital office needs data that is both safe and sound – and an investment strategy to match, says David Cotterill at Konica Minolta

The future workplace is one with far fewer barriers – where the walls are literally coming down. The move to an empowered open-plan layout threatens the long-established authority of the manager's corner office – and the trend toward hotdesking on the hop sees employees without a workspace (or pile of 'important' papers) they can even truly call their own.

But growing demand for flexible working patterns highlights that people don't want to be a permanent presence in the office in any case. They want to share. So the office needs to be set up for them to do just that, whether it's the hours they work, the desks they sit at or the knowledge in their heads.

"If resources are more flexible and people can expand or contract their working days, it's clear that everyone working for the business needs one

To find out more visit:
www.konicaminolta.co.uk

“If resources are more flexible and people can expand or contract their working days, it’s clear that everyone working for the business needs one and the same access to the latest client information to deliver consistent service.”

and the same access to the latest client information to deliver consistent service,” says David Cotterill, marketing director at Konica Minolta Business Solutions. “Retrieval of the right information at the right time, and in the most efficient way, is paramount.”

Signs of the times

But just as important is protecting data. As information infrastructure evolves – access controls loosen, for example – any increase in the availability of data must not be at the expense of its tight security.

“That’s one area where you definitely don’t want to dismantle traditional barriers,” explains Cotterill. “We might not have the same locked filing cabinets or sealed rooms, but we need to propagate those same standards in the domain of digital working.

“Currency and certainty are essential – and for both reasons it’s simply not acceptable to say that you can’t find something. So IT should help you to share efficiently and safely, regardless of the working pattern or practice.”

As less formal comms and collaboration grow more commonplace – instant messaging colleagues, or perhaps even clients, for example – Cotterill says an important aspect of the solution

is effective digital signposting of where things are.

“A digital signpost can pull all the information related to a particular client together in a single location. That’s the case file and related documents, as well as all forms of contact.” This, he says, is the beating heart of enterprise content management (ECM).

However, there should also be digital signage for those turning up at the office to work with business data.

“People should find online directions about where to go, which desks and resources to use and whether meeting rooms are busy,” says Cotterill.

“As well as keeping track of people’s whereabouts, it’s easier to maximise utilisation of the organisation’s footprint. If there’s free resource – people haven’t turned up or have cancelled an appointment – you have the ability to re-book that space and use it cost effectively.”

Out with the old?

Of course, the process of digital refurbishment may still seem expensive. So as part of its managed content services – taking its ECM offering to market – Konica Minolta is in the process of helping firms to optimise investments in the office of old at the same time as they embrace the new.

“Photocopiers, printers and multi-functional devices can be configured to maximise input while transitioning to a more digital workplace,” explains Cotterill.

The multi-functional device, for example, provides value as a scanner as well as a printer.

“These assets don’t always need to be discarded for the apparent latest and greatest. They can be used more efficiently – and we’re busy demonstrating the barriers to overcome in managing such moves.

“Konica Minolta has been serving the office world – through the first printers and first image processing devices – for over 100 years. We can bring that long legacy to bear as businesses build the smarter, more flexible office environments they need to thrive in future.”



Feeling the benefit?

Salaries are rising, but Sarah Broad says other aspects of the employer value proposition may need care and attention, according to Totum's 2015 business services benchmarking survey

Business support salaries and bonuses are on the rise. But money alone won't attract the best talent, according to Totum's 10th annual business services salary benchmarking survey.

The survey of over 100 law firms, ranging from those with a turnover of over £1bn to smaller firms with turnover of less than £10m, is our most comprehensive yet. It covers the attitudes and approaches to reward across all business services functions. These are the highlights.

Salaries on the up

Improvement in the UK's economic outlook and increased optimism in the legal profession has led to firms rewarding staff accordingly.

Nearly all (99%) of firms increased business support salaries last year (with 82% predicting salary increases of 2% or more in 2016). In keeping with this positive outlook, the number of firms offering bonus schemes has increased to 90% – and nearly two-thirds of firms anticipate awarding the same bonuses, or higher, to employees in 2016.

Bonus time

Other statistics are also telling. Directors are receiving the greatest percentage bonus awards, increasing from 4-9% in 2015/2016. The maximum bonus awarded to marketing and business development directors was 30%. In HR, finance and IT the maximum was 20-23%.

At the other end of the scale, junior roles received bonuses of 3-4%, with marketing and BD once again leading the way (maximums of 14-15%). Is this perhaps because performance in marketing and BD functions is more easily linked to business returns?

Salaries by function

Finance continues to pay the most overall (in London), particularly at director level (£183,350 on average). HR and marketing directors in London are paid £141,391 and £148,834 respectively, and IT falls behind at £110,368. This may link to the fact that finance also has the highest number of equity (8%) and salaried partners (12%) of all the functions – although other business services functions



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coaching, from 3% in 2013/14 to 22% this year.

This marries up with other data from the report showing that directors and executives are being rewarded with both financial and non-financial incentives. It may also link to an increase in the number of employees recruited for their comparable (but different) skillsets from outside the legal profession – people who may need additional support to adapt to cultural change.

Flexibility working?

But there are also signs of cost cutting, as overtime drops by 20% (to 48%), its lowest level in three years. Instead, there is a marked rise in the after-hours travel allowance (43%, up from 25%). Organisations are, perhaps, trying to manage resources and productivity while also keeping costs down.

But it may also lead to questions raised about how far law firms are really addressing employee needs. Flexitime, for instance, remains highly popular. More than half (57%) of staff are taking it up this year, compared to 34% in 2013/14. But that's only among firms that offer it. Most firms (75%) still don't.

The survey data doesn't cover the many informal flexible working arrangements that may be in place with individual managers. But some might, perhaps, wonder whether more stress management tools are really adequate compensation for cutting overtime and not implementing formal and firm-wide flexible working arrangements.

Nevertheless, there's a mood of optimism among firms, as well as new developments. There are more equity and salaried partners leading business services functions, and firms are investing more in emerging and specialist roles.

But the survey also suggests firms need to be careful. Competitive salaries have always enabled law firms to attract and retain employees. It is good, therefore, to see them on the rise. But firms are also now competing for more, and newer, skills, with other industries, some of which have long put employee wellbeing and engagement higher as a priority.

Firms that prove their willingness to understand and address changing employee requirements may well be the ones that are most successful in attracting the breadth of business talent they now need to thrive. ▀

aren't very far behind in reaching these highest levels of seniority.

And firms are recognising the huge value of business services generally. We've seen law firms seeking out business professionals with more specialist skills, spanning roles such as project management, business intelligence and process improvement. The survey collected data on these emerging roles for the first time this year. It found average salaries from £120,000 to £200,000, which is comparable with those across the more established business services functions. In addition, we see significant investment in stand-alone senior roles that don't fit neatly into a functional silo.

Other benefits

Salary sacrifice (87%) and flexible benefits (44%) continue to be widely offered to employees – both in isolation and in combination. The number of firms offering only flexible benefits has increased from 38% to 44%, and a further 20% are planning to introduce them in the future. There are clearly benefits (including cost) to giving employees greater choice.

Meanwhile, the survey shows the number of firms offering stress management, including yoga and massage, has doubled (to 34%). Most also offer private healthcare (83%) and permanent health insurance, which has increased 5% (to 70%). And firms continue to support the cost of professional qualifications (87%). There has been a very marked increase in firms offering executive

Funding the right path

Manage key risks to make the most of a challenging market, say Andrea Delay and John Aldred from Barclays

Law firms are facing a range of financial pressures as they strive to take on both accountancy firms and other alternative providers making impressive inroads into the profession.

“We are seeing steady growth in line with the economy. But law firms are still challenged to be innovative and cost effective at meeting robust client demands to deliver more for less,” says head of professional services at Barclays, Andrea Delay. “However, there’s also some aggressive momentum behind financial incentives for partners to move on from their current firm. The downward pressure on margins from clients, and upward pressure on cashflow to pay for funding future growth in the form of talent, feed in to quite a mix of cash requirements.”

Of course, firms also need to maintain levels of profitability to attract new talent – and these forces combined demand a cautiously balanced investment strategy for people, process and premises. “There may be opportunities to use technology to serve clients and add value in new ways, or to move certain activities to lower-cost locations in the UK or overseas,” adds industry director John Aldred. “As clients continue to move their own operations on cost grounds, it’s a good opportunity for law firms to review what they occupy – and how. They could either reduce that space altogether, or replace traditional offices with increasingly popular open-plan alternatives.”

Investing in the apparatus of agile working, for




example – helping fee earners to work away from the desk, but round the clock – might pay for itself through a combination of space savings and more flexible client service.

Risk and reward

The possibilities of lower overheads is something the so-called NewLaw players on the prowl are sure to have picked over already – so if firms find they can’t compete along an alternative lower-cost path, they may instead need to join forces to pass some of these savings on to clients that are being more proactive around cost reduction.

“Alternative providers don’t necessarily need to be visible to the client,” says Aldred. “They’re ideally equipped to manage more commoditised elements of work for traditional firms – and we’re seeing more firms willing to partner up in such arrangements.”

Either way, firms must ensure they’re fully talent-ready to compete – including with the



“Cybercriminals are becoming much better organised – posing as senior management, or even the bank.”

Find out more about Barclays:
www.barclayscorporate.com

accountancy firms clearly focused on finding more revenue in legal. “It’s not just about operations behind the scenes,” says Delay. “Firms need partners in all the right places to offer a joined-up global service that matches the client’s own footprint.” She says there has also been an increase in non-executive board appointments to focus more attention on any skills or awareness gaps, including digital capability and its link to risk management.

“Although there’s always room for improvement on risk management, experiencing the recession has seen most firms get their basic financial hygiene under control,” says Delay. “They’re cutting costs, managing working capital and cooperating with the regulators as they should.”

Other risk factors may need more work. “Larger firms working in multiple jurisdictions need to think really carefully about new client acceptance,” says Aldred. “Clearly, firms try to

retain business to meet their profit targets. However, they also need to bring on brand new clients to grow – and that needs accurate understanding of who they’re bringing on.”

But firms are focused on international expansion as a means of spreading their exposure to risks as well. “Overseas markets are one clearly unifying opportunity for firms of all sizes,” he says.

Delay says one of the biggest risks facing professional services is fraud – also borderless, and in a mobile-first world, in the form of well-disguised cybercrime. “Law firms hold a lot of confidential information, so they tend to be targeted more than other sectors. Cybercriminals are becoming much better organised – posing as senior management, or even the bank, for phishing attacks. They send malware embedded in links to obtain details, and can even make changes to invoices so that payments go astray.

“A lot of professional indemnity claims concern fraud on client monies, so of course the firm’s premium will go up as well – another major risk when it’s protecting profitability at all costs.”

Aldred explains Barclays has therefore decided to take a lead in driving more cyber fraud awareness – something that may otherwise be lacking in the sector. “It’s understandable that businesses don’t want to hold themselves up as examples of attempted fraud attacks – but they do need to understand how fraudsters are operating,” he says. “We’ve been running monthly seminars outlining examples of best practice in prevention, such as cascading the right types of information down to change behaviour.”

In the fierce contest for competitive edge and brand recognition, no firm wants to find a chink in its armour that could prove financially fatal. ▀

The views expressed in this article are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of Barclays Bank, nor should they be taken as statements of policy or intent of Barclays Bank.

Bringing the changes

Law firms are making strategic investments in technology to transform operations – creating opportunities for more flexible collaboration and efficiency gains. A pioneering office move from CMS is a prime example, says Katherine Ainley, CEO of Tikit, which supported the transition

Moving office is an opportunity for a business to change much more than its address. By working with outside experts – architects and technologists – it may be possible to overhaul both the physical working environment and the efficiency of the people who work in it.

Law firms are taking note of a trend to transform how employees use office space. “It’s now often out with the fixed computers, phones and individual desks, and in with a much more fluid – sometimes even virtual – environment,” says Tikit CEO Katherine Ainley. “Businesses find they perform better when people are freed to work from more parts of their office in a truly seamless fashion.”

Mobile technology, tools for collaboration and unified communications (UC) facilitate this movement away from desks, including mobile applications for tasks such as document collaboration and time recording.

“There’s no reason that you can’t be online wherever you need to be working at any point in time,” says Ainley. “And with videoconferencing, presence and instant messaging, you’re also always easier to reach. In a meeting room or break-out area, on a laptop, mobile or tablet device, technology is helping people to work in ways that are both more personally satisfying and more productive for the business.”

“Meanwhile, applications such as Tikit’s Carpe Diem Next Generation timekeeping, for example, allow fee earners to work much more efficiently across devices.”

Interaction with the platforms needs to be harmonised into a consistently intuitive user experience. But it also falls to Tikit, she explains, to ensure that the correct level of infrastructural investment can support the new activity (and mobility). “The local area network often needs an upgrade to enable the right level of Wi-Fi, and data centre options must be aligned with business strategy – onsite, in the cloud or cloud-ready.”

Customer satisfaction?

Appropriate software and hardware investment also brings user-friendliness and reliability together to create a better client experience. In today’s fiercely competitive market, that serves to differentiate a firm, says Ainley.

“It isn’t just firms and fee earners wanting to work differently. Clients are pushing them in that direction. Perhaps they want a video call on the way home, or an instant message in response to something urgent. Technology is the enabler to working both faster and more effectively.”

Tikit worked with CMS on transition to their new, more fluid, open-plan office space and flexible IT systems last year (see p14). The scope included the LAN and Wi-Fi and Microsoft Surface Pro tablets, which accompanied the earlier installation of Carpe Diem for more efficient time capture and Worksite document management for improved access to client data.

However, Ainley says that the success of this transformation didn’t rest solely on the new technology supplied.



“A strong vision of what you want change to achieve is key. The most successful develop their business and technology strategies hand in hand.”

“A strong vision of what you want change to achieve is key. The most successful develop their business and technology strategies hand in hand, including clear measurements and timescales.”

That, in turn, helps to change people’s behaviour with the new IT available. “If the two aren’t aligned, it’s much harder to drive adoption – and it’s the level of adoption that gets you a good level of return on your investment.”

Ainley suggests that firms could make a similarly strategic investment in understanding how other business sectors connect IT and the end customer experience. She herself worked for Lloyds bank before joining BT.

“The way retail banking interacts with its customers has changed completely in 15 years of the internet – and the wider retail sector also has good habits of understanding consumer preferences. The user base is different, but there are similar forces at work – a customer desire to interact with the business from different places,

and access to useful information wherever and whenever it’s needed.”

But if the legal sector lags behind in customer responsiveness, Ainley identifies a parallel trend that could soon make all the difference. Both sides of the relationship – lawyer and client – are increasingly familiar with IT-based problem solving from an ever-earlier age.

“The youngest generation in the workforce is much more inherently comfortable with technology and online collaboration – and more than that, they expect to have it. It’s a group that will often have a smartphone in hand from their formative years.”

It’s a big shift, she says. And law firms have perhaps caught on a little later than others – but the evidence of Tikit is that many are preparing the ground for big changes that now catch them up rapidly, in one go. If that’s the case, CMS will be pleased it got in there first. ▴

Find out more about Tikit:
bit.ly/tikit-cms-lsn

OUT OF OFFICE

Peak timing

Foot Anstey's Sarah Welsh brings the same rigour to business services as the mountains she climbs in her free time

Six years ago I arrived at Foot Anstey as a bid manager. I'd wanted to get back to working for a larger organisation, and it was a new role for the firm.

"Fast forward four years, and another new role – business manager – was being created. It was a happy accident, really. They'd decided they needed somebody with an accounting background, but I'd shown evidence of the right skillset in scoping and pricing work for tenders. And I could bring a rigour from my product development and engineering background.

"Things are changing so much as the firm grows. No two of my days, nor financial years, are ever the same. That's why a business manager is really necessary. Colleagues were performing some parts of this role before, but with the pace of growth it was becoming too difficult to manage that way. I've had the opportunity to build on something embryonic – particularly exciting!

"There's straightforward financial management and recovery – but I've instigated sitting down with every partner for 45 minutes a quarter to

quiz them on client relationships. There's the WIP and accounts payable, but we also go through the list of live matters to gauge potential risk.

"There's a recurring joke that they're about to get a grilling at the meetings – but they acknowledge it's a good thing to do. Unless they know they've got to have that meeting they find it hard to justify the non-billable time – and you can also bring some perspective through understanding what others are up to. There are calls for more, such as talking to junior lawyers as well. It's also about building a fuller client story from lots of different conversations. Partners might be so busy they don't appreciate the impact of one matter on another aspect of client business.

"Coming from manufacturing, I found differences, but also similarities. It's now beginning to catch on that you do need to scope for different

"If you always try to be efficient, you've no reason for feeling guilty for getting away on time."

scenarios, much as in engineering.

"It's an exciting time. Decisions sometimes need to be made within tight timescales. Leadership needs to hold its nerve. But it's also recognised that people will come back better to the job if they have a good life outside.

We're very lucky with nature on our doorstep here in Devon. You can leave the office and sail away. I head for the hills. We have a weekly 'lifestyle hour' – one hour off a week for anything at all – and I use that to go climbing.

"It's the weekends, of course, for proper mountaineering. It helps that I can choose to work out of our several offices around the West Country – and I think you also just need to be focused. Perhaps it's the engineering discipline again, but if you always try to be efficient you've no reason for feeling guilty for getting away on time.

"I can claim to have climbed El Capitan [mile-high, granite] in Yosemite National Park – really a rock-climbing mecca – and the summer before last I did some amazing 4,000m peaks in the Alps. And I can confirm I was allowed to leave the Blackberry at home!"

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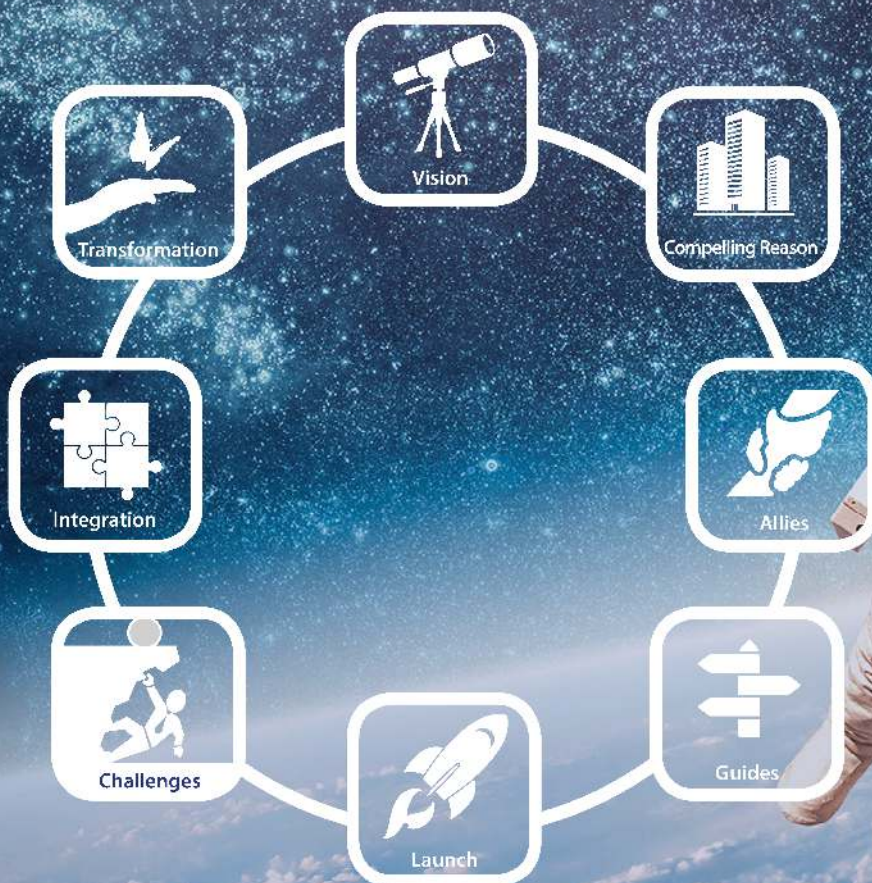
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80%

of law firms believe the way they work will be very different in 3 years' time in terms of where they work and how they communicate internally and with clients.*

*Our Unified Future, Briefing Research, December 2015



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