

Briefing



SHAKING SPACE

Law firms explain how and why they're working on improving the working environment

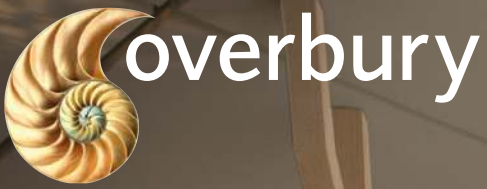
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Well gels

In this year's **Briefing** Legal IT landscapes research we asked a new question – what are the real drivers for strategies aiming to have more people working from home, or otherwise remotely? The biggest response got behind ‘creating different working environments for retention and attraction’. Second was the idea of these firms supporting their people in terms of their ‘wellness’; ahead of even the efficient attraction of needing to buy less carpet.

Even setting specific work-life balance needs to one side, it's hardly a revelation that people might feel better, more ‘at one’, doing their craft from the comfort of their own home. Not to mention avoiding the stressful irritations of the daily commute. The case has frequently been made that satisfaction with such factors can also make people measurably more proactive and productive than having them physically under your ever-watchful eye.

But of course, wellbeing is rather more complicated than the autonomy and relative ease of being at home – after all, it's not the best idea to be stuck there all day, every day. Plenty of people want to see – perhaps even enjoy the company of – their colleagues. That in itself may be beneficial to their wellbeing.

So, as well as allowing employees the agility to work happily from home, law firms are also on a journey of investing in making going to work feel a little more like home ... and then some. Even some of the latest office layout buzzwords tap right into this. Moving away from having your head down at fixed desks and into new open-plan neighbourhoods? The idea is to be part of a – super hardworking, for sure – but relatively comfortable and supportive community.

Pulling up a beanbag to run through your appraisal, transformative time out in the chill-out zone, impromptu project catchups with clients and cake in the ‘coffice’ (that's coffee shop-office, for the unenlightened). Not only do these all sound like jolly pleasant creature comforts, thank you very much – happily, they're also well designed to make for more productive, and ultimately more profitable, business conversations.

RICHARD BRENT EDITOR-IN CHIEF

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FEATURE

Spatial awareness

Collaboration is all the rage, along with the growing awareness that the office environment can play a huge role in driving it. How are law firms reimagining their spaces and processes to promote both positivity and productivity? Jem Sandhu reports

Touchdown areas. Breakout zones. Neighbourhoods. When it comes to office design, such language has now become the norm. It's not just fancy language; there is a commercial interest in these refurbishments – it is claimed these spaces will improve collaboration and productivity. The belief is that certain spaces – and the furniture within those spaces – are more suited to certain tasks and thought processes. The trend is toward activity-based working.

Is it just a fad? After a bit of experimentation, will law firms go back to the 'fixed desk in an office' model?

Casual collisions

Mike Wingrove doesn't think so. As Dentons' UK&ME head of facilities, he will oversee a major refurbishment in 2019, with the ability to collaborate at its core. The firm is particularly keen to enable what Wingrove terms "casual collisions". "We're developing these unplanned moments in project design significantly more than in the past," he says.

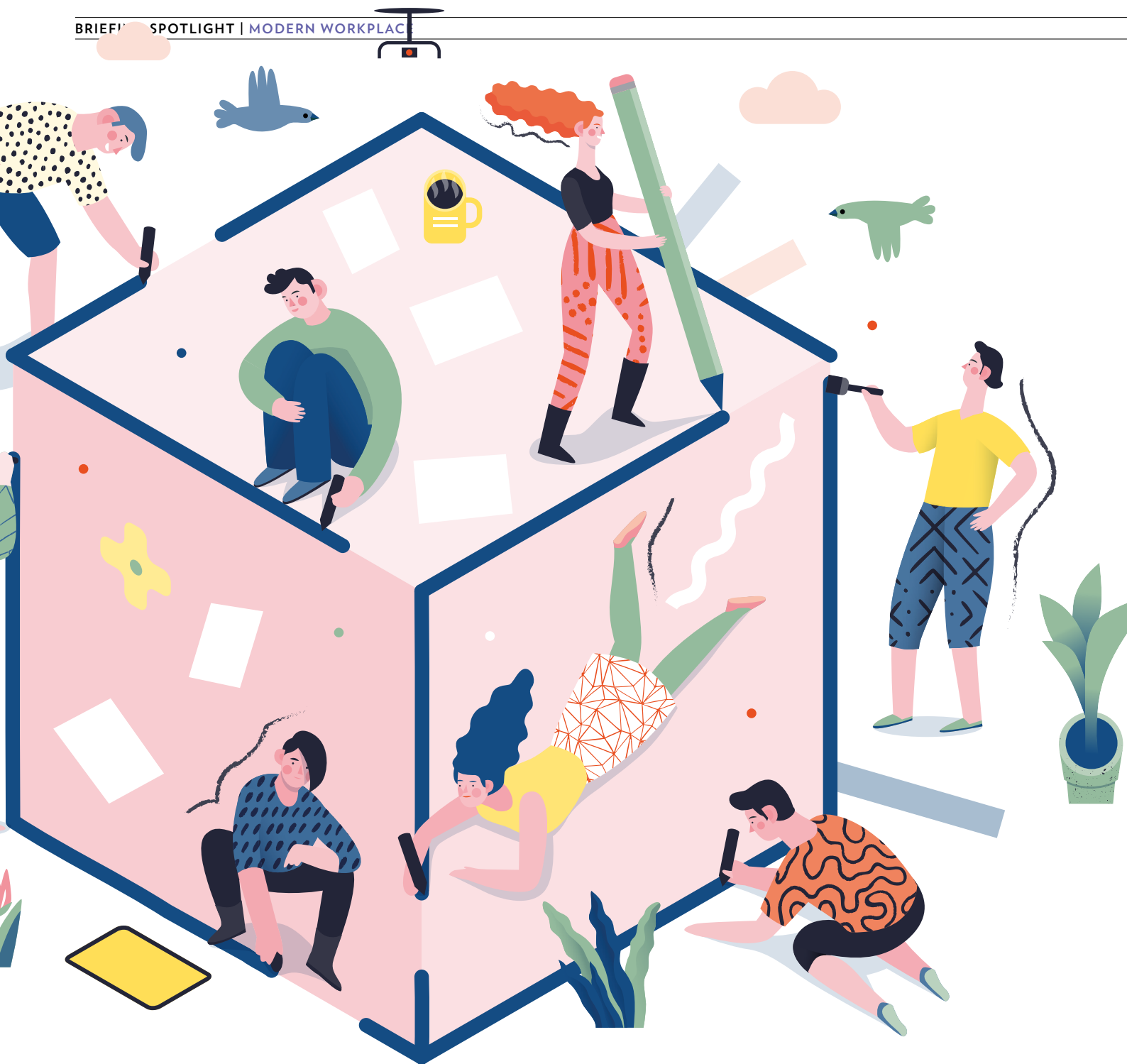
Such collisions depend on getting people out of cellular offices and into open spaces where they can both see and be seen, and – perhaps most importantly – do work. "Historically, we offered a space with four walls and called it a meeting room.

However, there has been growth in providing 'third spaces' such as coffee shops, and letting people use the ones that best suit their activities," he says.

Lawyers do have a reputation for being terrible at collaboration. Hogan Lovells, where fee earners still work predominantly in single and double offices, recently refurbished its London offices. Part of the project saw the introduction of collaboration spaces on all floors to encourage interaction among lawyers. "That's why we put them on every floor – these bump spaces promote the sharing of information," says David Crew, the firm's director of corporate real estate. Given the predominance of cellular offices, "collaboration spaces are a critical facilitator for knowledge sharing," he says.

The firm's business services staff use these areas a lot. The trick, says Crew, is to make the space as attractive as possible – he cites "good-quality coffee" as a factor.

One solution to poor take-up of collaboration spaces is simply not to provide another option. CMS has dedicated collaboration spaces on each floor of its London office, and plans to do away with cellular offices completely in new or refurbished locations, according to Barbara Mandler, the firm's managing director of operations. "We're going towards open-plan, and fun places for people to collaborate," she says.



Smart furniture

Collisions aside, actual collaboration does require working spaces – desks, chairs, and so on. However, as Mark Matthews, EMEA operations director at Reed Smith, notes, the furniture solutions the firm uses are not like their traditional counterparts, but designed with collaboration in mind. “You have the opportunity to work in spaces that are different from your usual office location,” he says. And this can lead to different interactions.

The firm’s collaboration spaces typically have round desks, says Matthews. They also have high-backed, semi-private circular booths: “It provides a sense of being hidden away, but at the same time you’re not.” His experience has been that, where collaborative spaces

have been provided, lawyers do use them. “That could be getting together around a round table to discuss the finer points of a deal, or something a bit more formal with a booth-type environment.” Jeni Taylor, Reed Smith’s EMEA HR director, thinks that usage depends more on the type of work being undertaken, rather than job role. “People enjoy working in a collaborative space when they’re coming together to focus on a piece of work, when they’re brainstorming, or even if they just want a different group working experience,” she says.

In addition to providing great coffee – necessary fuel for creative thinking – Hogan Lovell’s collaboration areas are designed to make it easy to hold meetings and do presentations. “There are a lot of writable wall surfaces and presentation solutions,” says Crew. In

“People enjoy working in a collaborative space when they’re coming together to focus on a piece of work, when they’re brainstorming, or even if they just want a different group working experience.”

Jeni Taylor, EMEA HR director, Reed Smith



addition, all open-plan areas offer height-adjustable sit-stand desks to promote individual comfort and wellness, he says.

At Dentons, Wingrove is looking for alternatives to the standard monitor-keyboard-computer-desk setup. “Not everybody wants that equipment. If someone has a mobile device, they might want to park at a desk, have a discussion with colleagues, and then move on,” he says. He is wary of labelling work spaces – a practice that tends to pigeonhole them: “We’re trying to design a solution to allow a range of activities to be done rather than just at what we would call a desk.” The firm is looking to get screen-free bench desks that it can group together.

CMS’s collaboration areas have a mix of furniture geared for agile working: “Some booths have screens and docking stations for laptops,” says Nikki Caplin, the firm’s head of change and transformation. There are also high tables for people to cluster around, and small quiet rooms. The spaces have been popular across departments – although use of the private working spaces and quiet rooms can depend on the type of practice, according to Mendler. CMS’s business support services sit in a completely open-plan environment on one floor, in “neighbourhoods”, according to Caplin. There are more people than desks: “Moreover, on any given day, 40% of the desks are not being used. Our risk team tend to be at their desks, but the business development team might be out with the lawyers,” she says. This year, they will introduce more new furniture types to the business support area – including semi-circular, stand-only pods for phone calls.

Collaboration spaces don’t have to be huge, or brand new. Some firms are refurbishing previously overlooked spaces into impromptu meeting areas. CMS has even made use of the ordinary stairwell.

“There’s a kitchenette, and breakout areas with soft furnishings and high tables so people can have a discussion over coffee, or an impromptu meeting,” says Mendler.

Canteen collaborations

Underused canteen areas are also on the radar for many firms. Like any cost-conscious facilities head, Crew wasn’t about to let Hogan Lovells’ restaurant sit idle outside of the 12:00–2:30pm lunch hours. “In managing our real estate, our objective is to sweat the asset as much as possible,” he says. So, they added a range of working spaces – round table booths, banquette seating, Wagamama-style bench seating. “The space is used for a lot of meetings throughout the day now,” he says.

Similarly, Dentons’ restaurant is increasingly used as a project and meeting area outside of breakfast and lunch hours. “It maximises the potential of the space,” says Wingrove. Notably, the area has videoconference booths. Such diner-style booths are a popular way to extend the use of eating areas. “We prefer them,” says Mendler “We can put in electricity or fit them with video screens. We get more take-up for them than for other types of desking. They’re softer and more comfortable because they’re made out of fabric.”

Reed Smith’s canteen is on the 31st floor and has fantastic views over the city. “It’s an open space full of natural light,” says Taylor. The firm’s investment in tech means that people can use their laptops there. “Given the price of real estate today, if it was only used as an eating area, we would not be fully realising the value of the space,” says Matthews. They want to develop the canteen area further. “We want to put in some new furniture solutions to give us the flexibility to fully utilise the area in multiple ways, for example, for informal meetings, town halls or other social functions,” he says.

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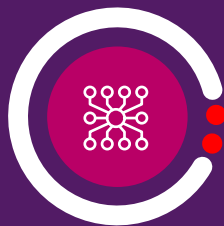
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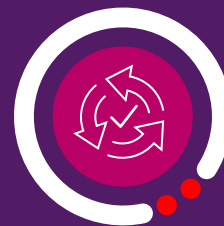
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“Lawyers can sometimes expect to have an office at the end of legal training, or if they reach a certain level such as partner.”

Mike Wingrove, head of facilities, UK&ME, Dentons



She can't pin down specific productivity gains, but Caplin says that people – particularly those in smaller teams – have found it easier to collaborate. “Technology has helped with being mobile. The way that business support is in one place has helped collaboration a lot, which has driven up productivity,” adds Mendler.

Open-plan sceptics

Fee earners can be uneasy about working in undifferentiated, open-plan, spaces. “Lawyers can sometimes expect to have an office at the end of legal training, or if they reach a certain level such as partner,” says Wingrove.

However, they tend to come around once the benefits to their own work are realised – at Dentons these often became apparent within a month. And although CMS, which has been open-plan since its 2017 merger with Nabarro and Olswang, had “two years of convincing the Nabarro joiners that open-plan works”, the feedback has been positive so far, says Mendler.

Noise and lack of privacy can also put people off open environments. Luckily, there is a furniture solution at hand: acoustic booths – sufficiently soundproof enough to be considered a meeting room without walls. They are popular with Hogan Lovells’ people. “We have them in our business lounge and on practice floors,” says Crew.

Reed Smith has installed them in its Leeds office – which is an open-plan environment. “We designed Leeds specifically for activity-based working so have flexible working spaces such as booths, pods and high tables,” says Matthews. And people do tend to find their own ways to deal with noise issues. “They use headphones to blank out noise, or go to a quiet room. And with agile working, they are able to work wherever suits, such as the shared mezzanine area,” adds Taylor.

Stress-free spaces

Making different types of work spaces available can also improve wellbeing – the most immediate benefit is not needing to spend the whole day at one desk. Then there's the furniture itself. Sit-stand desks, for example. “The ability to vary your stance makes a big difference,” says Matthews. “When considering the layout of the office, and the wellbeing of our people, we review work activity and the natural flow of people – how they move around the office – and which desks, standing or non-standing, would be appropriate,” adds Taylor.

Other creative uses of space can enhance wellbeing. Hogan Lovells “worked through the various wellbeing accreditations and identified areas that benefited our people,” says Crew. One example: photocopiers are in dedicated areas so that people are not exposed to the noise and pollutants. Dentons is even planning to create an “escape location: a space where the environment – whether it's the decoration, lighting or natural light – all contribute to the reduction of stress,” says Wingrove. The firm also plans to add more home-like furniture in general. “We're going to develop further soft seating, with sofas beyond the waiting or reception area. A space with a more domestic look, for example, can reduce stress levels,” he says.

Technology is the key

Given that open and informal drop-in spaces result in people dispersed all over the building, plug-and-play mobile technology is essential. For example, at Reed Smith everyone has, or has access to, a Surface Pro laptop – enabling people to log on pretty much anywhere. “If I went to the Paris office, my laptop would pick up the Reed Smith network. You could work as normal, so we're completely agile in that respect,” says Matthews.

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Creating explosive growth

“Traditionally, a client came up to reception, was squirrelled into a room, and you never saw them again.”

David Crew, director of corporate real estate, Hogan Lovells



“You can also use your phone for videoconferences and Skype calls so you can easily stay connected wherever you are,” adds Taylor.

At Hogan Lovells, all fee earners and most business services staff already work on laptops, says Crew. Speaking to, or meeting, colleagues is apparently not much of an issue for the firms we spoke to. VoIP technology allows people to log into their number anywhere there is a VoIP phone; desktop videoconferencing such as BlueJeans is common. Skype for Business seems to be standard: “It’s heavily used here compared to other firms I have worked,” observes Crew.

At CMS, working spaces are designed to work seamlessly with the Surface devices given to all staff. People can, for example, plug into a screen in a meeting room, or book meeting rooms from the device. Plus, Skype’s instant messaging facilities are also on people’s phones. “There’s no way for us to say that we’re not reachable,” remarks Caplin. But connectivity can always be improved. In 2019 the firm will roll out Microsoft Teams – a group chat software and collaboration tool.

What if you need to know exactly where your colleagues are? Dentons is in the process of developing an internal ‘locator’ app. “Anyone in the building will have booked and connected to a space. They will disconnect when they leave and connect elsewhere, so their location is updated and can be known by others,” says Wingrove.

Client collaboration spaces

“Traditionally, a client came up to reception, was squirrelled into a room, and you never saw them again,” says Crew. Keen to get away from this approach, Hogan Lovells included in its refurbishment programme what Crew sees as one of the most successful parts of the project – a client ‘business lounge’ right next to reception.

There’s definitely no hiding clients away from

colleagues in this multipurpose space – a mix of different styles, including drop-in rooms and open booth seating. “Our clients can pop in anytime, either to speak with our people, or to meet their own clients,” says Crew. It also represents the brand: “It’s our shop window to Hogan Lovells from the street.” And it’s the serendipitous encounters – which happen a lot – that really maximise the potential of the space. “Having a space to informally meet our clients led to new business introductions,” says Crew.

Similarly, Reed Smith’s ‘Innovation Hub’ for clients is the kind of space that can’t help but inspire creative approaches through collaboration: colourful, tech-enabled, with writable walls. Configurable in many different ways, the firm also uses it for internal workshops. “Usage varies, from clients asking us to facilitate a brainstorming workshop, through to all-day events,” says Matthews. The importance of the area is reflected in the fact that it occupies “prime space” within the building, near reception.

Dentons’ proposed design solutions for its London office also aims to create opportunities for the firm to engage with clients in different ways. “It’s no longer about a client coming in and having a meeting with us around the table in a formal room,” says Wingrove. “In one design, we’re creating a coffee shop environment close to the entrance so that clients can have the opportunity to engage there.”

With open-plan spaces and other new office formats here to stay, maximising their potential for collaboration and productivity will depend on an increasingly close integration of the space, the furniture and technology – particularly technology designed to connect a dispersed workforce. Law firms are willing to invest in such spaces, furniture and technology – the collaboration and productivity gains are certainly clear. ▀

INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

Grow with the flow

Devinder Bhogal, head of workplace strategy at Deloitte, explains why the firm's new London HQ, created in collaboration with Overbury, is a model for where and how its people wish to work in future

What do the Landing, the Loft, the Bridge, the Retreat, the Mix and the Greenhouse all have in common? Answer: they're all new working spaces for employees of Deloitte in London, since an extension of its 'campus' into 1 New Street Square in July 2018.

With the help of fit-out specialist Overbury, the 270,000 sq ft building – within easy reach of the firm's other London spaces – has achieved a record 94% for refurbishment and fit-out sustainability, as measured by green-building certifier BREEAM. It's also the largest project in the world to be certified 'gold' by the WELL Building Institute, which considers factors affecting people's physical and mental health in a space.

It was time for a change of scene in any case – one lease ending and another with a lease break. But Devinder Bhogal, head of workplace strategy at Deloitte UK, says the biggest driver for this transformation journey was what the firm had already gleaned of how people's working patterns were changing.

"Our people were working from home a lot more; there was already a lot more choice about whether to come to the campus at all. And when they did choose to be in the office, they were working in more locations. People are no longer at desks all day – they're collaborating in project teams or choosing the coffee shop for meetings."

Adding to this was some hard data about occupancy, she says. "Some departments were only in 60% of the time – even with headcount growing – so the status quo just wasn't efficient."

Seeing movement

Following consultation to back this up, Overbury, interior designer ID:SR and mechanical, electrical

and plumbing (MEP) consultant/sustainability assessor Hoare Lea, worked to ensure that the spaces available for work in the new building would therefore prioritise much greater fluidity between them.

Bhogal explains: "One service line was already moving to work a lot more across different industries. We decided this space had to support decisions like that – new teams forming and then reforming." So, groups can decide to move into one of a number of office "neighbourhoods" for a time. These contain multipurpose rooms, team tables out on the floor and phone booths, some of which can simply be booked and utilised on the day.

"Two entire floors are not assigned to any part of the business at all. Anyone can pre-book a space for one week – or by tapping a screen on the day – and are equipped with tables, whiteboards and collaboration tools. You can bring a team together quickly, and get away from your regular work space."

And the experience for Deloitte's clients onsite has also changed. "There's a lot more informality, through co-working and business-lounge-feel spaces. We've kept some more formal rooms for when we need them, but you can easily turn up with a client spontaneously for a coffee – which is also a natural opportunity to introduce others."

Health management

And more movement between spaces doesn't only facilitate collaboration. Less time sitting at a desk is also just one of the WELL design factors.

"A central, open plan staircase connects all floors in the building, encouraging people to move more, and half of desks are adjustable to standing height," says Bhogal. Half of meeting spaces are also designed for standing rather than sitting.



“Two entire floors are not assigned to any part of the business at all. You can bring a team together quickly, and get away from your regular work space.”

Devinder Bhogal, head of workplace strategy, Deloitte

There’s a terrace for a spontaneous breath of fresh air, social areas where people can pull up a beanbag, and a tech-free ‘retreat’ for time out from everything. In fact, WELL certification depends on meeting criteria in seven categories – air, water, lighting, nourishment, fitness, comfort and mental health. “People are entitled to a break, and it’s important to provide the space for it,” says Bhogal.

Deloitte worked with Overbury on the thinking behind the design and features that would meet both these objectives and improvements in environmental sustainability. For example, a move to 100% renewable electricity supply has reduced emissions by 72% per full-time employee. Waste per person is down 25% and overall energy consumption by 27%/m².

Another important decision here, says Bhogal, was the choice and finish of materials – right down to the paint or wall covering outside a meeting room. “Suppliers managed by Overbury had to meet certain criteria before we saw the products, and it was especially helpful that we could test them in situ to see how things worked, as well as how they looked.” In addition to sustainability, for

For more information, visit:
www.overbury.com

example, processes of maintenance and cleaning and risk of damage were up for consideration.

Better behaviours

The firm isn’t directly measuring post-move productivity or retention of people, as it’s hard to make the causal connection. Instead, the key to demonstrating return on this investment so far is positive employee feedback.

But some information is monitored to help keep certain things running as optimally as possible. For example, sensors are measuring the occupancy of spaces to build a better understanding of how they’re being used. Large floor-plan screens show the current population in near real-time. And printing/storage reduction goes further than a strict clear-desk policy and larger screen estate to reduce the urge. The building has introduced “connected lockers”, which can only be accessed with your pass. “Data will highlight if one hasn’t been used for a period, and we can challenge whether the user really needs the space,” explains Bhogal. “Printing is reduced in any case, as there’s nowhere to put it apart from a small locker overnight.” In this way, as well as accommodating the ways people want to work today, some design and facilities choices are helping them to modify their ways.

Softening skills

Change is usually a challenge – perhaps even when it’s to something new and exciting. As well as carrying out the fit-out, therefore, Overbury also played a key role in the change management effort to help produce a “soft landing”.

Bhogal says: “We tried to think very hard about testing everything from the point of view of user experience. For example, furniture was physically mocked up in the new building, as well as elsewhere on the campus, so people could start to use it well before it was officially available.

“It’s all well and good to have an interactive floor plan, but Overbury worked with us to programme activities and ensure our people understood how they could make maximum and efficient use of their new space as soon as it was open to them.” ▾

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Powerful combination

Kerry Carroll, chief marketing officer at DocsCorp, says the pdf has transformed legal processes and workflows more than any other document format

The dream of the paperless office has been around for almost 45 years. The phrase was coined in a 1975 Business Week article, which concluded that the personal computer and the advent of the digital age would make paper redundant for routine tasks – saving money, boosting productivity, making the sharing of information much faster, and protecting the environment. While it's safe to say we still haven't achieved the paperless office, we have inched closer to the dream with a less-paper approach, thanks in large measure to the humble portable document format (pdf).

What has a pdf ever done for us?

For too many a pdf is a document you create, view, or print. And much like the Romans in Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, it doesn't always get the credit it deserves. 'What has the pdf ever done for us?' Don't be surprised to learn it has done a lot.

At its core, a pdf enables lawyers to share content with others, irrespective of applications, fonts, or system settings, which means it can be read on screen or printed from any machine, anywhere. It also has a number of other attributes that make it the perfect file format:

- **Portability.** Pdfs are usually smaller than the original, making it easy to share with others.
- **Fidelity.** A pdf document is an exact copy, image or replica of the original. This cannot be said of Microsoft Word documents.
- **Reliability.** You can open a pdf on any system, and it will display exactly the same on each machine.
- **Security.** You can encrypt pdf documents to prevent users from editing, changing or manipulating the document.

There is so much more to the pdf than printing

and viewing, leading to reduced costs, increased efficiency and optimised business workflows.

A digital workflow transformation

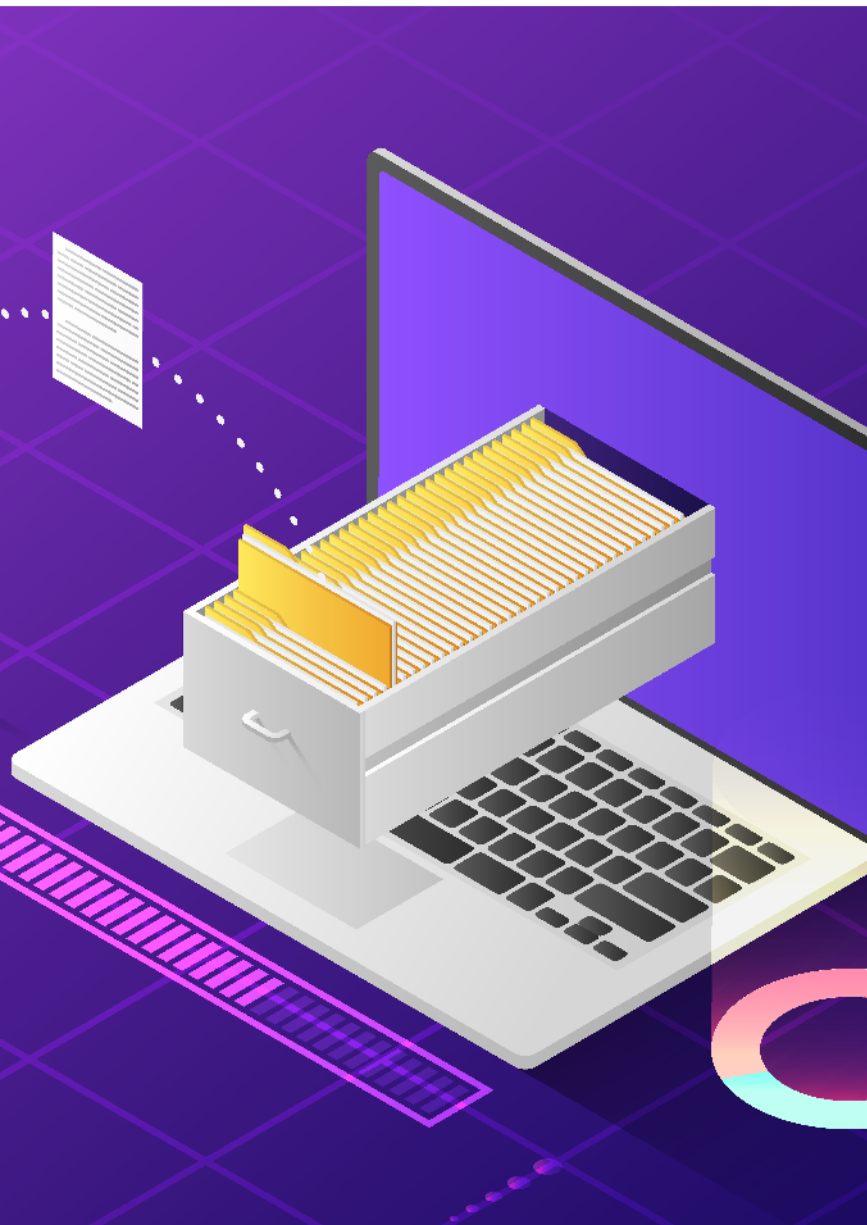
More and more law firms globally are looking hard at how they manage document production and distribution processes and workflows to determine how they can do them better, faster and cheaper. Many have turned to the pdf and seen workflows transformed overnight.

Let's take a very simple example to start: document collation. Lawyers (and almost every other office worker) frequently need to collate multiple document types into a single presentation or submission. This might consist of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents. This is virtually impossible to do in any of these native formats, and if it were possible, it would be incredibly time-consuming. Not so with the pdf – it's simply a matter of selecting the documents and clicking the combine button.

Making light work of binders

Now let's take this to another level. Many courts now require firms to file e-briefs, which might consist of a variety of documents, including affidavits, evidence, pleadings and

Law firms globally are looking hard at how they manage document production and distribution processes and workflows to determine how they can do them better, faster and cheaper. Many have turned to the pdf and seen workflows transformed



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Native redaction

Another manual workflow that has undergone a digital transformation is redaction – a topic that has recently been the subject of news headlines thanks to the Paul Manafort case and release of the Mueller Report in the US.

Prior to electronic documents, redaction was a manual process, with legal staff cutting out or blacking out private or confidential information with a marker. This was labour-intensive and prone to error. However, as we have seen from some very high-profile cases in the US and UK, redacting documents in the digital age is neither a simple nor a straightforward task for some.

In order to eliminate the possibility of future redaction errors, many law firms have seen that a native pdf-redaction tool is a must because it's the only tool that removes (burns out) the information from the document once redaction has been applied. It can't be undone or exposed later because it's no longer in the file.

A native redaction tool also supports various workflows that make the process much easier and faster – search and redact, review and redact, as well as allowing you to redact a page or range of pages.

While the pdf may not have delivered on the dream of the paperless office, it has significantly transformed many manual, paper-based processes in legal offices. These include e-binders, redaction, electronic forms, digital signatures, file splitting, and document review, all of which have enabled firms to deliver better and faster services to their clients globally. ▽

correspondence. Moreover, the e-brief needs to be arranged chronologically, with a cover page and an index to help navigate it. Putting together e-briefs or court bundles, closing books, deal books or matter bibles has traditionally been a very manual process, taking many hours. This was certainly the case with the Swansea Council legal team, which was spending almost 40 hours per case manually, editing and assembling document bundles, and then submitting them as part of child care cases.

The team decided to make a change and went with a pdf workflow that automated the process of converting the documents into a single electronic binder, complete with a table of contents, bookmarks, and links to help the reader navigate the document. After the council went to a pdf workflow, it reported saving 20 hours per binder.

New Zealand law firm Simpson Grierson tells a similar story; it moved from a paper-based workflow to a pdf one to generate e-binders,

Building futures

James Gilding, managing director – business services, Mitie Document Management, describes the role technology and innovation have to play in the modern workplace

It seems the pace of change gets faster each year that goes by (maybe it's just my age!) and there is more and more for us to evaluate as business leaders.

There are now so many opportunities in the market purporting to help us to automate activities, streamline processes and revolutionise our working environment. We need a cheat sheet just to help us pick through all the noise!

The great news is that if we do put time into evaluating some of the areas of our business that could benefit from new ways of working, not only could we improve service and save costs, but the real hidden benefit could be a better working environment for all our building and service users.

When we evaluate potential products or services for our business, we need to score them not just on the benefit the specific business area derives, but also on the impact they can have on our workplace and the wellbeing of our teams.

What do we want from a modern workplace?

The modern working environment needs to create a space where our best and brightest individuals have freedom to think, solve problems with creativity, and find it easy to collaborate with colleagues and supply partners.

To drive this forward, we need to think about the workplace as becoming a great destination, rather than just where we go to 'do stuff' for work. And there are two areas we must address for a great modern workplace, both of which need to deliver for our people.

The first is the physical environment. Our office buildings should be seen as places where team members feel supported and able to maximise their contributions through a positive experience along the day's journey.

However, we also know our workforce has to be more flexible in terms of where and how they deliver for us. The key benefits we want from a physical office environment must therefore also be mirrored or complemented when people are working remotely. In my experience (with a bit of help from Abraham Maslow) we get the best performance from teams when we create a modern workplace and environment that delivers:

- 1. Quality physical environment.** People have an expectation of a minimum standard where they are able to maximise their performance.
- 2. Safety and security.** This is very much part of the physical environment, but it's also now an important part of the virtual support we provide teams.



- 3. Esteem and recognition.** This is a biggie for me. We all need feedback on how well we are doing and to see that we are appreciated by the business.
- 4. Sense of achievement.** We must allow teams to take pride when a project is successfully delivered.
- 5. Being accountable and responsible.** Autonomy is often the making of our high-potential team members. People can achieve greatness when they are given freedom to own their decisions.
- 6. A clear strategy.** One that is also simple. Strategy should be easy to understand, to apply and – more importantly – to explain to others.
- 7. Belonging.** Teamwork makes the dream work. You have all seen the poster, and the truth is it's bang-on. A realisation you're part of a collective, where each is responsible for one another, inspires us to do more and not let ourselves or our colleagues down.

How can technology help?

We can establish a positive experience from the first point of contact with the building. This could be automatic number plate recognition technology on the car park barrier that allows pre-booked staff in, or a virtual reception tool such as our 'signature experience pod', which joins and streamlines the process of booking into the building, access control, room booking, and host management, as a single easy action.

By adopting a connected workspace approach to your office environment, you can maximise the use of many existing technologies, including access control, CCTV, building-management systems, room booking, visitor-management software and room sensors. The connected workspace concept is the application of consultancy, systems integration and technology, to help organisations improve the performance of buildings, but also the wellbeing and productivity of people within them.

This joining of the dots in our working environment through technology helps us to recognise genuine return on investment. We can free up premium office space through the efficiencies delivered. There are now a number of examples where large-scale firms have embraced this concept and reduced their building occupancy while maintaining a positive growth strategy and delivering on wellbeing and sustainability targets.

Virtual actions

As we move to make our offices more efficient, and with a wider user requirement, one necessary outcome is empowering the remote worker. Whether it's from a customer location, coffee shop, the library or working from home, our teams need to have a great working experience in the virtual world as well.

Secure connections, single sign on and easy access and sharing of our files are just some of the minimum expectations of the new generations coming into our workforce.

The varied workflow tools we have embedded within our businesses can also add huge value and efficiency to our remote workers. Examples such as hybrid and digital mail, self-service tools like ServiceNow, and digital document and workflow solutions such as BigHand, can all be part of our virtual infrastructure.

We also need to consider:

- Providing collaboration tools to help pull together our dispersed team members.
- Helping to inspire social communication – the power of the watercooler conversation.
- The right tools for the job. A great digital environment that can't be used properly owing to equipment issues is bound to create noise and reduce productivity.
- Maintaining regular face-to-face meetings. Working remotely on a permanent basis can lead to isolation issues and you can't overestimate the importance of non-verbal communication and body language.

Where to start?

No doubt we're all somewhere on a journey towards a better workplace and environment. We are all also having to manage the cultural shift towards flexible, agile and remote working.

Wherever you are on this journey, you should challenge your leadership teams, service partners and the employees/building users to help drive the work of innovation and support new ways of working. One thing's for sure: more than ever, we're now in a market where business change is a constant, and keeping pace with the cultural drivers and available technological solutions is a full-time job. ▾



A plan to reduce pressure

Jim Leason, customer proposition lead, legal professionals Europe, at Thomson Reuters, outlines the role project management has to play in achieving a more flexible working environment for the legal sector in future

There was a view when I was practising that lawyers do anything and everything to help a customer, including working many nights on the trot. When I look back, I'm not sure I could, hand on heart, say all of that late-night working was absolutely necessary. With most legal projects, you tend to know in advance that you have a set period within which your clients would like to complete a matter. You also know there are a set number of standard tasks and phases that need to

be worked through on any matter type.

While lawyers deal with 'unknown unknown' issues that may arise (it's often where they demonstrate value), for the most part managing legal projects is a case of managing 'known known' issues (where you have instructions and the facts to deal with them), as well as the 'known unknown' issues (where you're waiting on information for instructions about how to deal with issues you know need attention). For the most part, legal teams have advance warning

For more information, visit:
www.legal-solutions.co.uk/panoramic

With the right visibility of timelines, scale and complexity of a project, as well as of the potential challenges to achieving success, you can usually set sensible expectations to avoid committing to unachievable timescales

about what's coming up and needs to be done.

Reducing late hours and last-minute fire drills, and achieving more flexibility, is possible – without losing superior client care – provided there's a commitment by a legal team to proper planning, and then to operating in a more structured reporting environment. Without this, it will always be hard to ensure the right progress is being made towards a client's objectives on a matter, and so to avoid asking people to unnecessarily cancel their plans, or organise emergency arrangements for commitments outside work, to focus on resolving issues that could have been foreseen. In my view, taking control of this challenge is essential for enabling more inclusive, diverse teams on matters.

Making new plans

Thomson Reuters has just launched Panoramic, a tool that enables firms to better plan, budget and manage their matters – and to ensure they resource matters with the right people who have relevant skills. Our Practical Law editors have created generic matter maps, anticipating the standard phases and tasks involved in completing different matter types – for example, a private M&A deal, or a money claim – and Panoramic is configurable and dynamic to accommodate tasks for specific issues on any matter and to evolve the matter plans as new pieces of information about a project come to light. All these tasks can be assigned, budgeted and tracked for progress to completion, providing real-time transparency, including of the actual time and fees recorded against what was planned in the budget.

Panoramic is designed to meet the needs of partners, fee earners and pricing professionals, in consultation with users from over 30 law firms in the US and UK, to ensure it matches how

professionals want to manage legal matters. Having this level of visibility and control of a matter will give new insight for many. It can be used to improve client expectation management, including whether planning assumptions change fundamentally as information comes to light, and when key dependencies aren't met.

Customer requirement

Importantly, this level of transparency provides legal teams with a much better tool to forward plan the right resources (with the right skills and availability to do the work) against matters. This will help towards levelling the playing field for those less able to deal with last-minute demands on their time because of other commitments, ensuring it is easier for them to continue to play meaningful roles on the most significant projects.

However, we should not see this flexibility challenge as something that is solely for law firms to manage for their staff. Customers in organisations have a role to play too, particularly when it comes to providing instructions, setting deadlines and managing the expectations of their own stakeholders. Having been a customer myself, I know there are ways to achieve this. With the right visibility of timelines, scale and complexity of a project, as well as of the potential challenges to achieving success, you can usually set sensible expectations to avoid committing to unachievable timescales.

The legal sector has never been as dynamic and open to change as I see it today, driven by significant external forces: competition, client demands, competition for talent, the changing regulatory environment, and uncertain economic conditions. With advances in technology, data analytics and user-centric product design, the legal technology market is evolving with platforms – like Panoramic – that can be transformational. That's not just of a firm's financial performance, but also of the wellbeing and opportunities of staff, and levels of client satisfaction.

But the industry or organisational transformation I describe relies on cultural change, as much as on the products that serve the market. I think it was the British army that coined the phrase 'proper planning and practice prevents piss poor performance'. In these times, there really is no excuse for it. ▀

How do I collate
Word and Excel?



Why can't I make
the edit in PDF?



It's okay to sweat the small stuff.

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Editing



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