

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Next normal needs

Tony Cox, chief sales officer at Peppermint Technology, outlines what firms need from technology to enhance flexibility and productivity in the new reality of dispersed working



For a number of years now, law firms have been on the road to transforming their organisations towards a ‘digital first’ infrastructure and mindset. As in other sectors, the demands of keeping operations running during the pandemic, with staff decentralised and the majority working from home, have compressed years’ worth of projects into months.

Following the initial impact of the pandemic, many firms are redefining operating models, reassessing how support staff can be deployed most effectively and adapting IT systems to create a modern, flexible workplace that enables individual productivity across dispersed teams.

One of the top priorities remains to provide value to clients with a rich experience and excellence in service delivery – however, largely without in-person interaction with colleagues and clients. This means that individual touchpoints will have an even greater impact either way. To be successfully productive, lawyers and business management

teams at the coalface of client service need to be enabled with relevant information, through frictionless processes, while keeping the administrative burden low to avoid frustration. Put another way, we need technology to make their lives easier – reflecting the appropriate mix of certainty and flexibility that these changed circumstances demand, while ensuring quality.

Here are some of the key components of that service to consider.

Single version of the truth

Organisations have been on a mission to break down barriers between insular business management applications, everyday productivity tools and data sources for a long time. It’s crucial that information on clients, matters and activities is valid, current and complete to create trust, and to successfully enable virtual, asynchronous collaboration and the exchange of information. A unified version of the truth, shared across the firm, is a key factor in achieving this.

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Access to information

This single version of the truth also needs to be accessible, based on individual needs and context. This can make the difference between informed decisions based on relevant insights – moving work on quickly to help a client – and frustrating delays.

Visibility and control

Trust is good, and trust coupled with visibility and control is better. Business leaders have confidence in the performance of their organisations when technology-assisted processes provide reassurance that nobody misses crucial actions, and they have visibility that work progresses. Crucially, data captured along the way creates the opportunity for fresh insights. This is even more important for clients, and not only where typical service-level agreements cover advanced analytics as a standard element. Full visibility into work progress, financials, and so on, enables proactive conversations between lawyers and clients that provide certainty, build trust and nurture relationships.

Latest-generation legal business management solutions

The latest generation of legal business management applications offer an opportunity to create connected solutions that enhance the experience of working and communicating in a largely virtual environment for both lawyers and their clients. This includes a frictionless flow of information and processes across applications, with the flexibility to work in a way that suits the individual. Leadership teams have access to deep management insight across all aspects of their business and the certainty that lawyers can consume new functionality quickly, and at scale, in order to drive business benefits from the start.

Technology leaders increasingly look towards a unified approach to data and software that allows their firms to be agile and respond to evolving requirements at pace, with access to embedded capabilities like AI, automation and no-code/low-code tools.

At Peppermint, our engagements regularly lead to discussions about firms' long-term visions for their technology investments. Point solutions like our client engagement and case and matter management applications, built on Microsoft cloud-based technology, drive broader benefits as they can be embedded in productivity tools lawyers use every day without friction. They are easily adopted as they work seamlessly with the day-to-day applications already in use – and can be used on any smart device, at any time, from anywhere. This goes a long way toward addressing current and future challenges in either a fully remote or a hybrid setup.

They also extend the value of the Microsoft 365 and Power Platform that firms have already invested in – with access to business intelligence, app creation and automation as a native part of the underlying technology platform, without cumbersome integrations.

The consensus is that many changes to how and where work has been delivered will remain in place post-pandemic. Peppermint's current generation of legal applications can both meet firms' short-term needs and support longer-term strategic changes to the workplace. ▶



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