

## This Month

- **Client awareness**
- **Targeted business development**
- **More essential compliance – HR and documentation**

In the March edition [March2022.pdf \(professionalchoiceconsultancy.com\)](#) I wrote about the right people in the right place and at the right time in order to make a success of the firm now and into the future. Over the last few months there has been a lot on management challenges and potential methodologies plus a number of added value solutions over the last six months or so.

My research over the last year or so has identified so real added value solutions that are great supplements to the traditional PMS/CMS systems.

This month some challenge potential solutions for client satisfaction, retention and development, potential outsourcing of much of the HR function and compliance, smarter marketing of conveyancing activity and compliance and smarter workflow for conveyancing documentation.

Contributors to revenue, gross and net profit, working capital, client satisfaction and compliance.

### Customer Awareness

A very significant feature at the moment is satisfied clients/customers who will give repeat business and refer others and prospects who feel great about your services, support and empathy.

This month I had the benefit of a meeting with Martin Lee founder and CEO of <https://questforexcellence.uk/> that offers coaching, training and advice to businesses including law firms. He made it very clear to me that everybody in a firm irrespective of their role needs to be customer aware and making a positive contribution.

Do we truly believe that our businesses is Customer Aware? Meaning does everything you do meet (and exceed the needs of your clients?). Do you spend the right of time getting to know what your potential client wants and needs or do you – as many professionals reputedly – spend most of you time telling your clients what you do?

Martin believes *“When you demonstrate that you understand your client’s needs, wants and feelings then they quickly become more relaxed and will share more. As you will know from when you try out a new service (a restaurant maybe) you will spend less on your first visit. New clients for your business behave exactly the same way. They will spend less at first, so give them lots of reasons to feel safe and secure with your company so that they want to come back and tell their friends what a great service you deliver. Returning customers or ones that have been given a recommendation by a trusted friend or colleague will spend more with you”.*

You become Customer Aware by ensuring that everything you do is focused on the needs of your client. Look closely at how you communicate, before, during and after a client meeting. For instance, he advocates getting rid of acronyms and jargon (as they are hard to understand) and creating bespoke (individualised) packages for each client to make them feel special and valued.

*“As an exercise try putting yourself in your clients’ shoes and walk into your offices as if for the first time. Does it feel welcoming (or intimidating?); does your Reception feel like a barrier or a safe and secure place; is everything that is needed available; have you done your research on the client’s needs? The same is true of how you communicate both by letter and email”.*

## GDPR Compliance for HR

Proving some of my ignorance I always regarded GDPR as all about client and prospect communications. I have proved wo be wrong in discussion with Carolyn Mumby CEO of <https://www.eledeckshr.com/> that offers outsourced HR administration and management to businesses with HR management, documentation, regulatory compliance, training, automated reports and secure access to data. Another area of business where the small to medium sized law firm can ensure the HR expertise of larger businesses.

GDPR within HR is a major compliance area and risk for a firm with failure to comply with very explicit provisions about document processing activities.

Irrespective of size, businesses must maintain records on several things such as storing, accessing, using, sharing, amending and destroying personnel data and can be required to make the records available to the ICO on request, the consequences for non-compliance are not just financial, they are reputational and impact on company culture.

Basic requirements include:

1. All staff must be issued with a privacy statement explaining how their data will be used and employers need to be able to prove that it's been issued.
2. Restricting access permissions to personal data (and even tighter controls over sensitive data) on a need to know only basis, and a quarantining system to suspend files if they are in dispute.
3. Giving staff easy access to making subject access requests and explaining their rights. The ICO strongly recommends online access and it's likely to become a requirement before long.
4. The list goes on... and on.

Carolyn states *"Although a small law firm is not required to appoint a Data Protection Officer, the firm is still liable for complying with GDPR.*

*"Allowing a compliant 3rd party to process your personnel data on an HR portal is a step in the right direction. Processing and controlling your personnel data in partnership with a reputable portal platform, designed to automate GDPR compliance and minimise risk is complete peace of mind"*

*"At Eledecks we wanted to create a system which solved the problem overnight and didn't require users to have a deep knowledge of GDPR or to separate it out from their day-to-day HR routines.*

*"We achieved a system of breadcrumbs, which kicks in when needed and prompts the client to find the right answer, keep staff informed and satisfy the record keeping requirements at the same time, all of which is basic compliance as far as the ICO is concerned.*

## Conveyancing Challenges and Opportunities

After the pressures in the Conveyancing sector of the last year and the undoubted physical and mental pressures on many staff it is very difficult to predict the volumes of work over the next 2 years and therefore the level of resourcing required in house or outsourced to effectively get the work done.

Business Development

One thing that can be done is to be better prepared and targeted in any business development that is undertaken by the firm which means being prepared and going after the lower hanging fruit. This month I have dialogued with Richard Hinton CEO of <https://www.theconveyancingmap.com/> . This

provides data on geography, activity, competition, estate agents and can even identify when former clients are coming to market and even efficiency measurements for Land Registry updates – certainly a great aid to conversion of enquiries.

#### Efficiency and Compliance

Paul Clyde of <https://www.formevo.co.uk/> has advised me that late last year the Land Registry announced a change in their process with the move to mandating the use of a digital AP1 form from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November this year. While this may not get your pulse racing but as you have got to make the change anyway why not make the most of it with some simple ideas right now that will enhance efficiency and compliance.

*Paul advises “that you take this mandated change as an opportunity for so much more. With some simple planning now, we can remove the need to re-submit information into different portals time and time again. As a consequence, your staff can be engaged within a much more efficient process. With a little foresight any firm no matter what their size should be able to take the data collated during the use of standard Searches to then re-use this to auto populate around 50-60% of their SDLT forms and then complete the process with up to 94% auto population of the eAP1”*

*Currently the Land Registry have taken a soft touch approach when they can see obvious mistakes within the AP1 such as inputting the transferee and transferor incorrectly and will amend this. Come November this will stop and if you make any mistakes then this will simply raise a Requisition. Workflows can radically reduce the potential for these kinds of mistakes and so now is the time to think about introducing these across the conveyancing process.*

Another issue that Paul sees on a regular basis is Law Society CQS Members who are not compliant. *Let me ask you a question if your firm are members. Prior to an SDLT submission, is Q10 and Q4 double checked by someone other than the form creator and have you an audit trail available for review to prove it?*

Section 1.2 of the scheme clearly states this requirement and yet not everyone who is a member complies with this!

*Paul also says “Should you submit LTT’s to the Welsh Revenue Authority within your practice then there is no need to feel excluded from the above as you can combine processes that allow you to submit to either tax portals but again auto populated from Search data and then able to auto populate in turn the eAP1 and for commercial transactions even the MR01 Particulars of Charge at Companies House.”*

*Paul urges you to see the bigger picture opportunity here “This is not difficult to implement, Cloud technology means there is nothing to install and any updates are automatically available. So, seize this chance and make simple changes that can really make a difference to the efficiency in your practice”*

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