

This Month

- **Status of current challenges**
- **Add to efficiency improvements**
- **Document Security**
- **Supplier changes to the sector**

The Current State of Challenges

Our new and potentially scary world is nearly upon us and I am aware that many law firms have been really proactive during the lock down period. **Doesn't apply to everyone though.** Previous related pieces (Month) available on web site

<http://www.professionalchoiceconsultancy.com/articles.php>

- They have assessed their business strategy and direction and have made sure that the identified key players have well defined job roles and are committed to the success of the business. New style management teams and shared accountabilities
- During furloughing and controlled return to work business processes have been reviewed, division of labour defined (right people on the right rate are conducting case activities), using clearer guidelines on meeting and document content and timing and more effective use is being made of incumbent IT systems – already showing gross profit enhancement and improved cash flow. More enhancement available – see later in article
- More ownership by all of payment terms, billing and cash collection.
- Revised budgets/perpetual forecasts have been made based upon market place and business development assumptions for the next six months. This has enabled careful consideration of working capital and cash flow and the ability to fund the way forward. More proactive conversations with accountants and banks have been facilitated. The revised budgeting exercise along with other points has facilitated the return to work or redundancy situation.(June). The interest in outsourced book-keeping has grown along with the consideration of part-time FDs or NEDs bringing more commercial expertise.
- Terms and conditions for clients have been reviewed with much more control over letters of engagement and clarity of what is included and what may be considered as extras and more payment on account encouraged. It means getting paid for what is done and not carelessly adding to WIP that will not be recovered.
- Proactive effort has gone into the application for Pii renewals.(July)
- Mobility and agility of working has been applied and this meets in many cases the motivating environment for key staff members (and be attractive to potential newcomers) and potentially will cut the future costs of premises. There has been a growth in outsourced telephone answering, outsourced document production, hosting of IT and telecommunications, secure document management and e-signatures. For many this has been done well and professionally but there are potentially a few where some compliance and security risks exist.(August). Great suppliers associated with https://www.manchesterlawsociety.org.uk/mls_advantage/ (May)
- Business Development has been enhanced recognising the need to maintain contact and advise existing clients segmented from the drive for new business. It is interesting to see the enhanced number of client testimonials appearing on web sites and LinkedIn. Those with limited efforts will suffer going forward.

Getting More from Our Business Processes to Meet Business Needs

Just about every law firm over the last six months has adjusted its working processes or certainly sees the need to ensure efficiency, productivity, gross profit, cash flow and client satisfaction and service.

Working methodologies have been reviewed – more effective use of case management systems, business process review, more effective division of labour – the right people doing the right part of a job. Even getting to the point of outsourcing some tasks – and all of this whilst maintaining compliance and security.

Many years ago factory production and processes, retail and service delivery gained major benefits with Lean and Six Sigma methodologies. There is now every justification for the same methodology to be applied to law firms before we necessary leap at AI, new case management and workflow systems. Such a process when combined with human centred motivation and digital technologies will enable firms to prioritise their changes for the best effects.

<https://www.cubethinking.co.uk> is a north west headquartered business performance consultancy with a background in Lean & Six Sigma with years of experience and now because of the demand and their foresight has appointed a lawyer - Graham Hansen <https://www.linkedin.com/in/graham-hansen-715406145> as its legal director to ensure that specific legal industry challenges can be recognised and taken into account for best effect.

Initial contact to Graham or business owner Jason Kingston - jkingston@cubethinking.co.uk

Securing and Effectively Managing Our Documents

Remote working and limited access to offices has enhanced the need for further changes to secure and compliant working methodologies. <https://docutechsolutions.co.uk/> a MLS Advantage supplier has a number of key solutions available for consideration. Nathan Doe would love to hear from you nathan@docutechsolutions.co.uk

- Secure mailroom facility that enables the centralised processing of incoming mail an automatic processing and then secure electronic distribution to the appropriate recipient whether at home, working remotely or in the office. Speedy, efficient and secure to BS 10008 meaning legal admissibility – cost saving and speedier distribution.
- Electronic signatures which can be remotely applied to any document with full digital compatibility. Removes the need to print documents for wet signatures.
- Document Management System (Docuware) – means secure documents are accessible from any location with control over editing or changing (tampering) – more efficient with no need for manual input and certainly no duplication.

Further Changing World

When I joined the legal sector 25 years ago there were about 20+ suppliers of practice and case management to the sector and this has changed significantly with the Access Group announcing the acquisition of Eclipse (Proclaim) and DPS which adds to their portfolio which already included SelectHR and Riliance. The Advance Group has also recently added Tikit to its portfolio of multiple acquisitions from many years ago and the development of ALB plus of course Oyez recently added to

Laser Forms. Access and Advance are very large companies. On a slightly different scale - Practice Evolve has acquired Linetime. So the number of independent suppliers has reduced significantly. In principal it does mean that there can be more and better integration of products from single suppliers and more investment in technological development.

It is well worth the management of law firms keeping abreast of the strategy of their practice and case management suppliers and would suggest potentially senior attendance at User group meetings and this also provides the opportunity to speak with other clients

Bill Kirby is a director of www.ProfessionalChoiceConsultancy.com offering advice to firms on business issues from strategy, planning, business development, the effective use of IT applications and IT hosting for compliance, business continuity and DR. He can be contacted at billkirby@professionalchoiceconsultancy.co