This Month

- **Law firm's initiative with key suppliers**
- **Resourcing alternatives**

The future of the practice

Relevant to this month's article are two previous November2023.pdf (professionalchoiceconsultancy.com) and January_2024.pdf (professionalchoiceconsultancy.com)

Getting IT Suppliers to Support their Law Firm Clients

Since the November article where I challenged the behaviour of the three main groups of PMS/CMS suppliers there has been a great deal of communication about the commercial behaviour of some and the client relationship essential solutions delivery from all. There are of course also the possible new boys on the block who seem to be well considering added value.

One of the main challenges for client law firms is that missing is real clarity on the future developments of the acquired products – Continuing? Enhancements? Infrastructure and Added Value needs. There has been insufficient recognition of the current demands and essentials for law firm success and survival.

Some positive movement can now be recognised following dialogue, with two of the suppliers with more openness in terms of the necessary client communications plus more communication with added value suppliers that can immediately enhance the products with the right technology links. Areas like on boarding, secure client portals, client communication, MI and BI, regulation and compliance. Plus of course IT infrastructure and security

Law Firms demand a Face to Face with PMS/CMS Suppliers. Take the Initiative

I would like to see law firms take an initiative and seek a meeting with their account managers from the major suppliers supported by a senior manager with a responsibility for client support and awareness.

Firms have bought the software, paid for the conversion and implementation, paid annual maintenance for support and enhancements to meet business needs. So there is a reasonable expectation of being fully aware of the way forward.

The agenda should be

- What is the strategy and timescale for product enhancement and development
- How and when can we achieve the necessary added value priorities – supplier's delivery or supplier connectivity to added value
- What is the supplier's infrastructure solution – hosted current or cloud – if and when?
- What is the ideal size for the supplier's product – how will they cope with enhanced volumes – particularly with hosted/cloud

Firms, like it or not are having to deal with

- Strategy
- Realistic perpetual forecasting and recovery where necessary
    - Profitability
    - Cash Flow

- Adept management and decision making
    - The right MI & BI
    - Right team and individual objectives and performance
    - Keeping and motivating the right staff
    - Outsourcing balance
- Client communication and empathy
    - Status of live matters and next actions
    - Updating client needs (e.g. Wills)
- On boarding management
    - Speed and effectiveness – measurement of success
- Effective business development
    - Existing clients
    - New business priorities
- Regulation and compliance challenges
    - Right AML and workflow processes/authorisation
    - Right forms and registrations
    - Pii insurance renewals and price
- IT strength and security
    - Reduction of e-mails
    - Secure portals

All of these items are affected by the availability of the right PMS/CMS products being used effectively. The challenges are there and it is reasonable for a law firm to ask the PMS/CMS supplier on the added value that is needed.

The meeting with the suppliers should not be regarded as an IT exercise and should involve accounts, line department managers, IT and the suppliers need to be challenged on how their solutions meet the needs of the business, where they are going forward and when and in the interim what third party interfaces and API can bring an immediate solution.

Any feedback will be well received

Law Firm Resourcing

In [February2024.pdf (professionalchoiceconsultancy.com)] I covered some major challenges and potential initiatives around resourcing – again what is becoming clearer for the response to this plus discussions with PMS/CMS suppliers and multiple law firms the need for the right consideration of outsourcing actions and tasks is growing massively.

Irrespective of size, shape -work types and geography all law firms cannot avoid the essential skills and resource volumes – the latter being more and more challenged by the very unpredictable market. We might know that if we sell Will updates to our current database, we are likely to get a 20% success rate – law firms please don't ignore this statistic – let alone selling LPAs to current Will owners.

Without doubt the potential outsourcing of activity and skills has to be on the agenda. We need to demonstrate to clients, skills, activity and at the same time ensure our book keeping is done, billing, financial management data, MI and BI (cash flow and profitability) along with the necessary compliance needs – failure is affecting many forms in terms of fines and Pii renewal.

For many years there have been outsourced suppliers of document production through transcription – it is still growing with time delays (no longer acceptable) and accuracy. Global 24 x 7 supplies. There is a growth in legal skills resource needs as clients expect more from the team. There is a demand for actual case management support because of un predictable levels of business and potential short terms absences of staff. Big with Conveyancing. There are now opportunities to outsource database and new client business development, something that many lawyers are reticent about but available to do the work – technology through portals is a great new aid. The other big growing area is in managing the book keeping activities if there are skill or resource shortage with smaller firms (even bigger ones now) where you have to comply. Get your billing out, collect the money and provide the MI and BI for the firm to continue.

Irrespective of the size of the law firm because we operate in a commercial arena – profit and cash flow – but also have amazing challenges with regulation and compliance, the need to plan and activate business development, ensure our IT is going to operate and be secure.

There are specialist businesses available, even some accountancy firms are becoming more proactive offering part time FDs, there is compliance consultancy available and even some specific consultants that can aid business development, IT workflows

This is a massively growing new topic needed for all firms. Much could also be on the agenda with the PMS/CMS debate as there is an increasing need for them to collaborate with the third parties – book keeping/accounting, documents, on boarding, client communications.

Experience and feedback would be great

Bill Kirby is a director of www.professionalchoiceconsultancy.com offering advice to firms on business issue 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.com and www.linkedin.com/in/bill-kirby-ab01632/