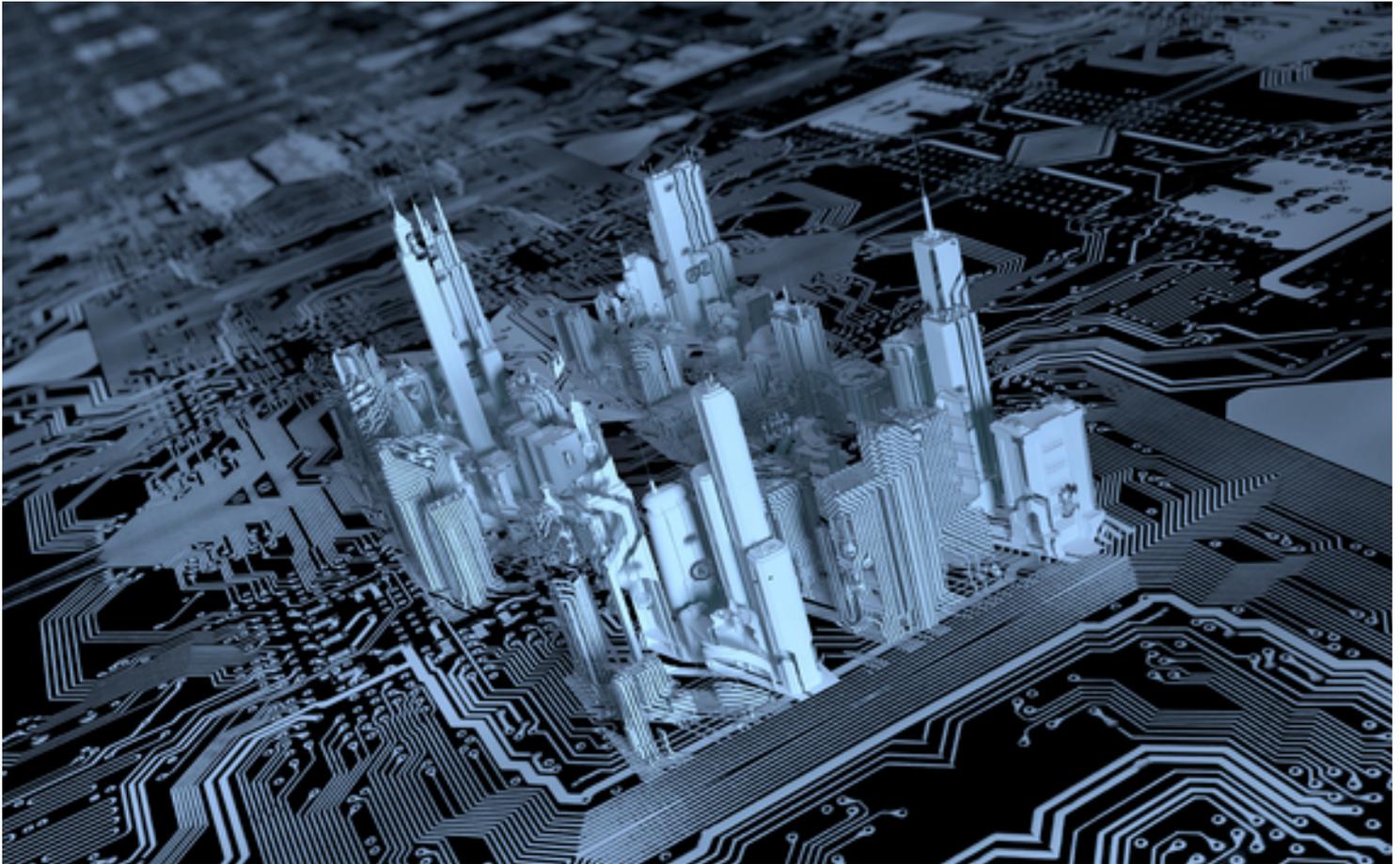


The quiet revolution – poll of 2,000 lawyers reveals law firms are waking up to power of technology



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Legal Week's Best Technology Report highlights challenges of improving processes amid evidence that real change is afoot

Spare a thought for law firm IT directors. They can see much further into the future than most lawyers; they endure sleepless nights worrying about the storage and security of big data; and they are typically fascinated by the potential of artificial intelligence to disrupt the traditional law firm business model.

But the broader challenge for many firms is less strategic and more immediate: getting their

lawyers to adopt current technological changes and fully integrate new technologies into the daily processes of their working lives.

When examining the findings of the eleventh annual Legal Week Best Technology Report, which draws on the responses of 2,159 fee-earners, support staff and partners at international and UK law firms, a quiet revolution appears to be taking place.

The survey, which asks respondents to rate the technology at their disposal, covers hardware, software, security, mobile working, support and the impact of technology on workloads and client service.

Not only are lawyers more satisfied with the diverse range of technology they use, but they are also becoming - incrementally - more adept at using it.

As Richard Susskind (pictured), an acclaimed strategist in how IT is changing the work of lawyers, confirms: "In terms of their basic systems - word processing, accounting systems, e-mail - law firms are very well run indeed."

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Where he sees room for improvement is in "their use of technology and their delivery of service to clients".

But the survey does provide some evidence that law firms are starting to respond to this criticism, with satisfaction extending beyond the basic elements of drafting, communicating and billing to include business intelligence information, client extranets and communication tools, such as Lync a benefit both to the firm and in the efficiencies delivered to their clients.

Meanwhile, perennial concerns about adequate training and effective security continue to linger, requiring better education and eternal vigilance.

At a practical level, respondents are pretty comfortable with technology: for example, 90% have access to an iPad for personal use.

Hardware satisfaction ratings are robust. Every category, bar one, scores a dissatisfaction rating of less than 6%; the sole exception being that unloved workhorse, the printer, at 14%. IT support for remote working related to all devices also causes some concern with 7% expressing dissatisfaction.

The diverse processes and systems employed by law firms are generally highly rated, although several cause some dissatisfaction. Most notable of these are: business intelligence information (10%), know-how systems (11%), intranet (12%) and overall application speed (11%).

On the broader satisfaction questions relating to IT departments, most aspects score very highly with only service desk availability outside normal hours (9%) and the extent to which technology is 'regularly updated and improved to meet business needs' (11%) providing more pronounced dissatisfaction levels; although it is worth pointing out that even for these measures dissatisfaction is relatively low and counterbalanced by high levels of satisfaction.

Most satisfied

1.	Service desk during normal working hours
2.	In-office support
3.	Technical ability to solve problems
4.	Local support
5.	Speed of initial response to a problem
6.	Telephones
7.	Accessibility of IT personnel
8.	IT department's understanding of the needs of the business
9.	Speed of problem resolution
10.	In-office technical support

Related: 'Agile and flexible' - leading IT directors outline their visions for the future

Lengthy Processes

So far, so good. But to what extent are law firms simply making the existing way of doing things more efficient, as opposed to using technology to reshape their internal processes to boost efficiency and improve client service?

Process optimisation - embracing equipment, operation and control - is an integral management tool in any business. IT consultant Neil Cameron believes the legal profession is yet to embrace this concept.

"Law firms aren't really investigating process management and process improvement because they don't think that they do processes," he says. "We all have business processes. Client service delivery is a process."

Colin Smith, IT director at Pinsent Masons develops the point.

"Law firms are relatively late coming to the stage," he argues. "They're having to improve. Some firms are being dragged kicking and screaming, others clearly recognise the fact that internally they need to work more efficiently through improved business processes and working practices, especially cross-border. Increasingly, it's being requested by the clients: they're looking to interrogate your processes and working practices."

The survey suggests that respondents have mixed opinions about process optimisation, at least in the way that it impacts on their workload.

“ Clients want more information and there's greater scrutiny

Billing/time recording (42%), email filing/management (38%) and recordkeeping (33%) all attract high levels of dissatisfaction. It would appear that the law of unintended consequences means that some processes that are at least partly designed to save time are, in fact, doing the opposite for those at the coal face.

"Clients want more information and there's greater scrutiny," says David Aird, IT director at DAC Beachcroft. "They want more data with regard to bills and time recording. This is becoming more challenging and complicated, but is necessary to provide clients with the openness and transparency they require between them and their lawyers."

Danny O'Connor, head of IT at Sackers, adds: "In terms of billing and time recording it may take longer for lawyers, but it enables accounts and business development to capture more data. Although it may take more time, there are other hidden benefits to the firm in business information.

"Email filing and record keeping are part of compliance - they have to happen. Through technology, the onus now is on the individual lawyer to complete these tasks as part of their everyday working rather than delegating on to others in their team. Whilst increasing their workload a little, it also empowers them to work more flexibly without as much dependence on support teams."

There is evidence that law firms and suppliers are waking up to the need for 'user experience' to take centre stage when developing apps. At the Legal Week Strategic Technology Forum, which took place at the Ritz-Carlton Penha Longa resort in June, there was **widespread agreement that the design of apps had been neglected.**

"We are expected now to make sure all of our software works properly across all devices," Mark Mountford, applications manager, Bird & Bird, told the forum. "As part of this process I am looking at what technical skills my software development team need to achieve this richer experience which moves away from some traditional software methodologies and practices."

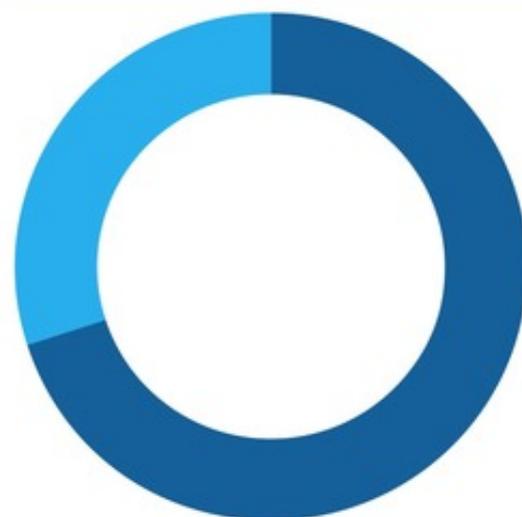
While lawyers increasingly expect work apps to be as easy to use as consumer apps, the reality is that for the foreseeable future they will need training in order to make full use of the systems at their disposal.

In evaluating the training on offer, new systems and data/information security score well. Most dissatisfaction is expressed about software updates (11%) and working remotely (11%).

Given its constant evolution, IT education needs to be continuous. For those lawyers who are no single-minded autodidacts - the vast majority - the crunch question is how often are they willing to attend training sessions.

"Most lawyers still don't know how to use Microsoft Word properly!" quips Cameron.

Would you be prepared to manage your time more effectively in order to support better data security?



■ Yes (70%)
■ No (30%)

Better Training

At the technophobe end of the spectrum, the report reveals that only 6% of respondents would never attend classroom sessions, while 9% say the same of one-to-one training. Both formats match computer-based training in popularity with 60-65% saying that they are willing to attend training sessions, either regularly or somewhat regularly.

But how receptive are lawyers to training in reality?

"Not very. It's really challenging," says Julie Berry (pictured), director of infrastructure & IT at RPC. "We're still in a world where people say: this should be so intuitive to me that I don't need training. But what's intuitive to one person isn't to the next.

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"People don't get the best out of a piece of technology unless they really understand it. We need them to realise that all training is important, not just the legal training, so we try to do continuous learning - always making it available."

Maurice Tunney, IT director at Keystone, agrees: "Many lawyers underestimate the importance of IT training."

He points to the 40 new lawyers his firm has recruited in the last year: "Capabilities vary from lawyer to lawyer and each individual has unique requirements and we facilitate those with bespoke training whether they be a technophobe or highly competent."

Organisations such as the Legal Technology Core Competencies Coalition (LTC4) are becoming increasingly prevalent. The focus of its IT training programmes is flexible and customised for individual lawyers and law firm staff.

One user of LTC4 is DLA Piper (DLA), where Head of IT Jed Lowe suggests that: "The idea of trying to get lawyers into classrooms to teach them about new technology is anathema now. It's an

approach which might have fixed problems 10 years ago."

Instead, DLA "hits all lawyers across the firm with highly relevant tailored training, one-to-one coaching on what's available to them".

Brian Smith, IT director of King & Wood Mallesons, concurs: "Classes for advanced Word or advanced Excel have varying degrees of success in attendance. We find it works well if we sit with lawyers individually, talk with them, spend time with them and understand what they're doing. But that takes time."

To promote training, he suggests "targeting those individuals who will give up their precious time - lawyers who speak to lawyers, and say: 'Yes I've had an hour with the trainer, it was really valuable, it's cut my working time because I'm able to use this technology.' That's the best way of doing it: word of mouth. Lawyers will listen to other lawyers."

Despite the deluge of hacking stories, of which Talk Talk and Vodafone are the most recent examples, lawyers still feel remarkably confident in the security of their client data: 63% feel very secure and 35% mostly secure.

"Security is paramount," says Aird, "but you also need to make sure that there's a balance between security, usability and accessibility."

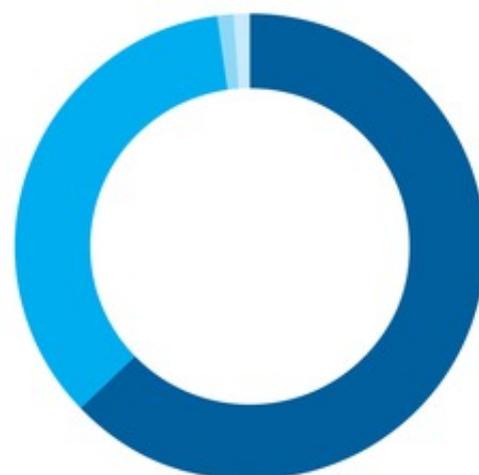
So where should responsibility lie?

The majority of respondents (74%) feel it should be a commitment shared by both the individual user and the IT department, although 30% of respondents would not be prepared to manage their time more effectively by for example not working in public places in order to support better data security.

Berry says: "Because law firms have a Big Brother approach to protection, we put systems in place that protect lawyers from making mistakes, or things going wrong. It's really difficult. It's like a child burning their fingers: when do you explain that if they put their fingers in the fire they will burn them? You need to keep putting layers of protection in place."

Colin Smith adds: "Security is improving. Eighteen months ago, whenever anything came up about security or cyber security, I'd be the first point of contact. Increasingly, lawyers have

Overall, how secure do you feel your client data is?



- Very secure (63%)
- Mostly secure (35%)
- Insecure (1%)
- Very insecure (1%)

become aware the business is under pressure to keep pace with the growing threat from cybercrime. There is a recognition that investment will need to increase in security related monitoring, testing, threat intelligence and incident response services. It's not just an IT problem."

And how will technology impact upon law firms and lawyers of the future?

Susskind smiles.

"All the evidence suggests," he says calmly, "that with increasingly capable machines, the average computer will have more processing power by 2050 than the entire human race."

More sleepless nights ahead for the IT directors.

For more information about the Legal Week Best Technology Report email lara.rosenthal@incisivemedia.com or call her on +44 (0)20 7316 9864 .

Legal Week Strategic Technology Forum 2016 will take place on 8 june at the Ritz-Carlton Penha Longa, Portugal. For further details email legalweekconference@incisivemedia.com



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