



Law Society
of Scotland

70
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Workshop: Identifying the key challenges faced by the legal profession

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Law Society of Scotland, Atria One



As part of LawscotTech we brought together a number of members of the profession to identify challenges and opportunities faced in the day-to-day work of Scottish solicitors. The insight was gathered through discussion in small groups and can be broken down into the following key areas.

Education

We need technology to become part of mainstream legal education to ensure future lawyers are equipped to run efficient firms and serve clients' needs.

Our participants told us:

- Only a small number of diploma courses include legal technology in sector
- Junior solicitors should be encouraged to consider alternative legal sector career paths that include legal technology innovation roles
- Established lawyers will need to broaden their technology skill set and do more to differentiate themselves
- Legal technology skilled roles benefit the entire legal sector even if they are no directly fee earning, rather they may increase profits and lower risk.

Collaboration

Improving collaboration between firms/organisations, technology companies and other stakeholders will benefit all parties as well as clients through efficiencies and stronger relationships.

Our participants told us:

- We need to see widespread collaboration across the wider legal sector
- We need to facilitate and encourage big firms and legal start-ups to talk and understand each other
- We need to enable access to Scotland's data but also tap into data and information in other jurisdictions
- The legal community in Scotland needs to harness cross-border opportunities outside of the UK
- Scotland's legal community needs to be part of the discussion with legal technology providers from the start of solution development
- Technology can support the High Street rather than threaten it, and help the High Street survive
- Smaller firms do not necessarily have technology contracting experience
- We need evaluation of work profitability (transaction types)
- Comparisons to Fintech can offer great advantages and shortcuts, but Legaltech remains an independent area
- Clients expect collaboration between law firms.

For further information, please contact:

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Client demand

Technology should be used to help solicitors be responsive, streamlining processes and improve customer service.

Our participants told us:

- Technology should be used to keep clients up to date on progress and costs. This can help avoid complaints
- Transparency/timeline notification for clients can help inform “the story of a case”
- Clients want to know: What technology do you use? and “Where do you keep our data?”
- Solicitors need to know what they should consider when hosting data – on-site/remotely/cloud
- Client expectation drives change. Don’t want to fall behind firms offering arms race
- It is essential to manage the costs as well as the expectations of technology
- We need affordable and accessible know-your-customer (KYC) systems for source of funds checks
- Technology and innovation can sometimes create extra work, particularly at the start of a project but long-term they believe there are benefits
- New portals that are being created where log-in is at solicitor and court side are welcome
- It can be problematic for individual consumers to find information about rights and how to speak to solicitor, technology can help.

Firm/organisation demand

Technology can enable increased productivity in areas of transactional and low value work.

Our participants told us:

- We need to make sure firms are equipped to run efficiently and flexibly and able to consider options for working remotely, issuing laptops, general infrastructure
- We need to learn to manage change within organisation to deal with the emotional reactions
- We need to make sure data is not only stored but also used
- We need to ask: does technology equal more work quicker?
- They need to be able to understand how to justify time away from fee earning to work on technology, and know how to quantify it
- They want to know how to change cultures - in other countries technology is being used to manage working patterns
- We need to consider mindfulness - work life balance can be achieved through technology

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Document management

Electronic solutions can provide efficiencies in documents management and access through smart storage, automated research and search functions.

Our participants told us:

- We need to find systems that can help us accessing data to avoid unnecessary repetition of work
- Technology should be used to deal with compliance issues such as Anti-money Laundering (AML) and data protection
- We need to find faster ways of completing forms, i.e. searching LBTT, using pre-completed forms
- They want to make the most of transaction software and integration through dashboards
- Using document/style management system to deal with creation, recent issues, transfer and version control would save time
- Managing issues around the cost of change and managing change when procuring new systems could be improved
- Ensuring the client data and legacy systems documentation held is structured is essential.

This document (May 2019) will evolve as we consider issues and solutions as part of the ongoing LawscotTech programme.

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