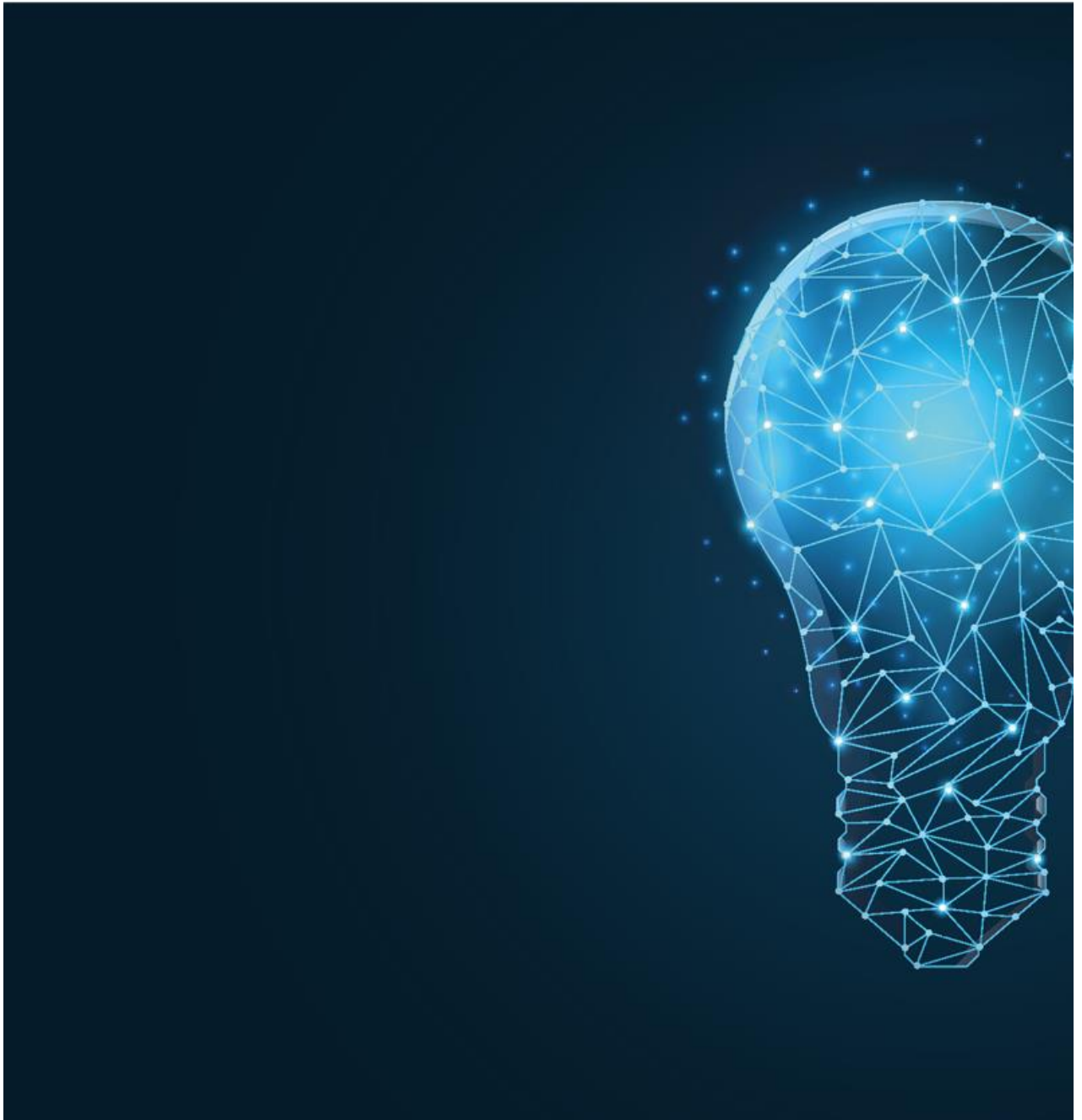




Law Society
of Scotland



LawscotTech roundtable May 2020

This is a summary of a virtual roundtable discussion with the technology providers in our LawscotTech community focusing on how the Covid-19 crisis has affected the legal sector in relation to technology, identifying issues and looking at ways we can support the profession together.

What changes have you seen in the market since the crisis?

- Employment law was very busy at the start of lockdown as everyone was trying to get their heads around furlough etc. This is likely to spike again once furlough arrangements come to an end. Particularly mid-sized firms have seemed very busy throughout the past months. We will probably see a lot of case law being generated through employment law going forward.
- One firm who has been offering their licence for free has seen an increase in uptake from smaller firms and also outside of the UK.
- The interest in any content around remote working, video conferencing and risk assessment has naturally increased.
- The first response in March from some firms was to 'wait and see' what would happen rather than taking action but this changed quickly in April. Clients now keen to maximise the systems they have and continue to do so going forward.
- Since support staff in many firms are furloughed, partners and directors are having to do work and use systems they don't normally use and are therefore building a new understanding of workflows and becoming more directly involved in technology. This might change the relationship between decision holders and staff to encourage investment in technology.

What are the main problems solicitors are experiencing?

- Firms are looking for solutions to help efficiency and reduce cyber-risk but this can be a challenge for smaller firms who don't have many resources or tech skills.
- Remote working opens up a variety of risks that members need to be aware of.
- The Law Society has a role in raising awareness of the consequences of when things go wrong.
- Some key stakeholders ceased legal processes at the start of the COVID-19 crisis and it has been challenging for firms to adapt. Many legal firms were fairly well prepared to move to remote working but they couldn't carry out work due to lack of automation in stakeholder processes.
- The Law Society has been heavily involved in pushing for improvements and the working groups that are now in place will continue for the foreseeable future. We need to make sure the legal sector is ready for the next potential lockdown.
- There is an increased risk of fraud as criminals seek to take advantage of the disruption, and there has been a purported 400% increase in counterfeit goods during the crisis.

Ideas for next steps

- Run virtual drop-in sessions to talk for 5 mins about a problem/area of interest
- Survey members to find out their main operational and tactical problems This could then be used to create a library of best practice.
- Progress work on the tech procurement process; outlining questions smaller firms may consider asking vendors as part of their tender process and a more advanced framework for procurement in bigger firms with IT departments. This will assist tech companies prepare better for pitches.

General overview of the current market

- The Scottish property market has not fully reopened which is a real challenge for the legal sector – resales are all but dried up with only few virtual viewings leading to reported offers.
- Some firms are seeking work increase at the moment in some practice areas as a consequence of Covid-19
- We are still seeing traineeships advertised
- The furlough scheme has meant that we are not seeing the same economic crash as in 2008. This could be the key to high street recovery. Much will depend on how fast the housing market reopens.

Thank you to everyone who participated:

Graeme Johnston – Juralio
Rachel Jones – SnapDragon
David Fleming – Mitigo
Tom Zayan - Clio
Paul Ryan – Focis
Andre Boyle - Millar&Bryce
Lauren Riley - The Link App
Danae Shell - Valla
Jo Sidhu - Legl
Laura Bosworth - Amiqus
Stephen Hill - Denovo

Charlotta Cederqvist – Law Society of Scotland
Paul Mosson – Law Society of Scotland