



Legal sector challenges

Customer Testimonial

Technology solutions helping firms address Legal Sector Challenges

Almost a third of law firms in the UK think that it is very likely that they will merge in the next three years according to new research.

The latest annual survey of the top 100 law firms by PWC has found that 29% of firms are expecting to merge by 2016.

The challenges

The legal sector has come under increasing scrutiny from banks and the sector's regulator following a number of well-publicised law firm insolvencies, mergers and acquisitions in the region. This trend is set to continue with the likelihood of further consolidation in the market.

Although there are some encouraging signs of an upturn in activity, firms remain concerned about the continuing economic uncertainty and the changing needs and behaviour of their clients.

Another factor which is changing the way that legal practices operate is the introduction of ABS (Alternative Business Structures) or 'Tesco Law. ABS means that any company that is considered to be 'fit and proper' can offer legal services provision, for example supermarkets, insurance companies etc. This will create greater competition and is likely to have a profound effect on basic legal services that do not require specialist legal knowledge.

Many organisations are expected to outsource this work to focus fee-earning solicitors on more profitable and specialist legal services.

Other firms have started to set up in-house contact centre operations employing non-legal specialists, this allows them to retain the service provision whilst

reducing the cost of processing the services required. These operations are increasingly taking payments via the phone, which leads to considerations around PCI compliance.

As legislation around fee earnings continues to bite, legal firms find themselves increasingly having to streamline all areas of their business and work more efficiently to reduce costs and do more with less.

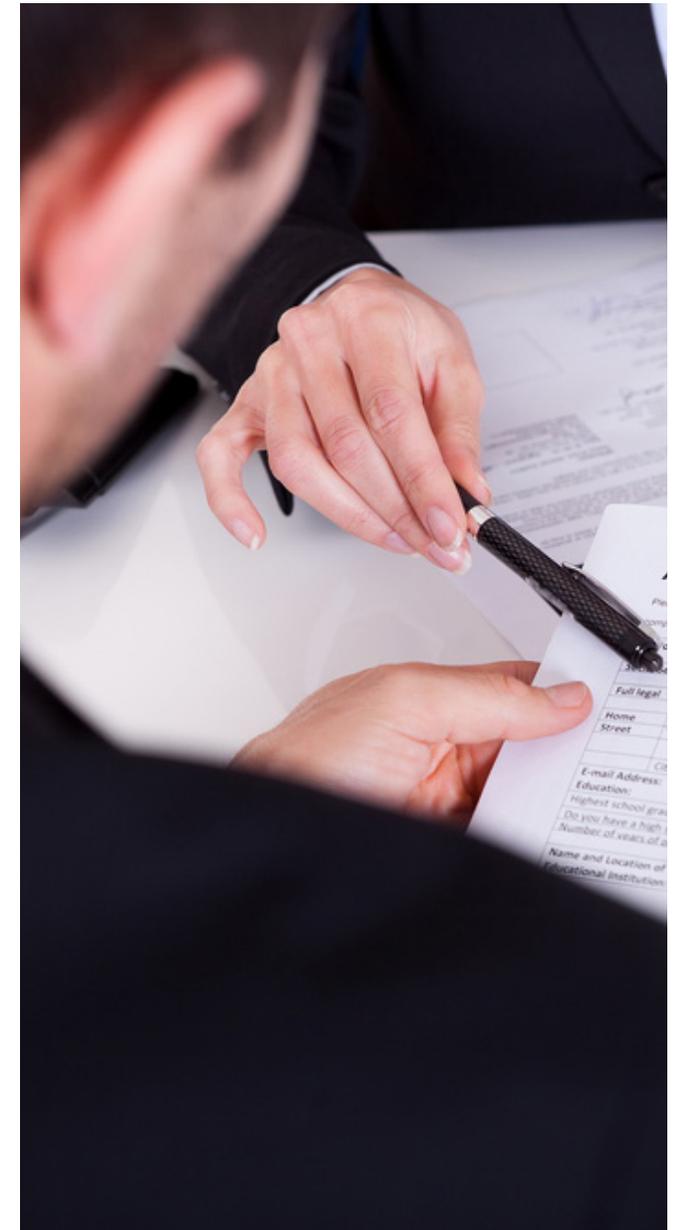
Many companies have disparate IT and telecoms systems that are usually not integrated for example, case management systems that are completely separate to phone, call logging, call recording platforms that make accurately billing clients very difficult which leads to missed revenues. Firms are now looking to reduce costs and improve the way they work are through service and system consolidation and integration.

The changes in the way we work means that many solicitors now increasingly want to have the option to work from home or may need to work from remote locations. The need to manage and measure this and ensure that customer services and compliance is maintained is key.

The benefits of Cloud Services

For many Law Firms both large and small, transferring applications to the cloud has some key business advantages; it reduces onsite requirements, capital investment in infrastructure and ongoing maintenance.

The legal sector is currently seeing a great deal of activity around mergers and acquisitions and moving IT services to the cloud enables organisations to rapidly integrate new sites and organisations into their existing business.



The pay monthly or pay per user model is also a major benefit in changing times as it supports business agility, allowing firms to adjust their IT resources to expansion and downsizing as their needs change.

Other key benefits achieved from moving to a cloud model, as well as saving money on license fees, infrastructure and management, are the additional gains of real time collaboration, video and voice alongside email and documents, process and resource information, which can transform the way a business is run. Cloud service also gives firms the ability to keep pace with rapidly developing technology. And as law practices reap the advantages of cloud computing they pass these on to their clients in improved efficiency and competitive fees.

For larger law firms, cloud services give the opportunity to tap into innovative solutions and keep up with the latest developments. And for new start-ups, it can provide the equivalent IT capability of a large organisation without the capital outlay or onsite infrastructure.

4net Technologies provide a consultative approach to cloud services, ensuring that these are relevant and suit your business requirements and strategy. These services can be built on either Public Cloud services, such as 4net ESP or 4net Cloud Video, or on Private Cloud Services where 4net Technologies will develop a Cloud Strategy that is specific to that customer in their own on in a 4net managed and secure datacenter within their own dedicated network.

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The 4net Cloud is totally flexible, allowing organisations to mitigate the risk and complexity of migrating services at a pace that suits them in a structure that suits them.

We offer a timed roadmap which allows clients to migrate to the cloud at their own pace and hybrid deployments if you are not comfortable having all your services in the cloud.

4net's Cloud Service successfully combines the most advanced technologies with the latest services and applications to create a network, which has no boundaries or limitations.

These services deliver a consistent user experience across all devices, applications and data, to ensure that your employees can communicate with customers and stakeholders no matter where they are based.

One law firm that is well ahead of the rest is Stephenson's Solicitors LLP. Stephenson's have 30 partners and over 400 staff across the UK.

Key benefits

- Scalable solution – pay per user scale up or down as your needs change
- Flexible pricing model/no capital outlay
- Built in security, business continuity and disaster recovery
- Access to all the latest versions of applications
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Access via any device to your corporate infrastructure
- Free your IT people from routine activities to concentrate on business development activities

Stephensons

legal services the way you want them

Customer testimonial

One law firm that is well ahead of the rest is Stephenson's Solicitors LLP. Stephenson's have 30 partners and over 400 staff across the UK.

Operating from a number of regional locations they rank among the UK's top 100 Law Firms and are one of the fastest growing practices in the North West. They recently took the title of Law Firm of the Year, for the second year running.

The judges of this prestigious award were looking for a firm that set itself aside from its competitors in a legal market, which is constantly changing during the recession. They said "Not only has Stephenson's responded to these challenges, but the firm continues to go from strength to strength with a highly impressive 13% turnover and 36% operating profit increase in the year to April 2013."

Stephenson's have been a customer of 4net Technologies for the past four years. They originally had an old Siemens system, which was end of life. They needed a new centralized solution that was scalable and provided a contact centre to support the increase in activity they are seeing around conveyance and commercial work.

The company has grown both organically and through the acquisition of smaller legal practices. The latter meant that Stephenson's had inherited a wide range of different telephone systems across their sites. 4net designed a centralised solution, which means that when a new company is acquired, or a new location opened, we can install a simple gateway that will integrate the existing legacy system into the centralised infrastructure. This enables Stephenson's to integrate

the new business or site simply and cost effectively, providing immediate collaboration and maximising resources.

Said Kallum McLeod, Head of Customer Service, "The footfall through the door is dropping. Technology is changing the way we work; people no longer want to make an appointment to see a solicitor. Our telephone enquiries are rising month after month, responding to market changes."

"Our 24/7 contact centre responds to the needs of our clients and is essential in the growth of our business. It is important that we can route calls to the right teams and agents. We have been able to move from a split based routing into a skills based routing that has streamlined the way our agents work and improved our customer service. We can also provide good Management Information from the system to our contact centre managers so that they can continue to improve the way they work".

Kallum continues; "Call recording is not just helping us to make us PCI compliant, it is helping us to change agent behaviour, increase conversion and improve quality assurance.

We have improved our staff training and so how we deal with customers, it is maximizing the business we can acquire from calls and it's improving our management information."

Geoff Clarke, Head of IT said "The many changes in the legal sector has placed a greater importance on IT and our systems. The solution provided to us by 4net Technologies has meant that we have a centralized system that supports the whole business, and one that we can manage ourselves, which means that we have been able to save money through the reduction in support costs."

Stephenson's have a number of projects in hand that will help to support their future business growth. These include upgrading their existing contact centre to

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Stephenson's Solicitors LLP

develop the reporting capacity and further integration work into their case management system.

They are also considering the roll out of some Unified Communications features to allow remote and home working, with potential virtualisation and video conferencing.'

Geoff concluded: "We are really happy with 4net, they understand the way we work and our market sector, and they look at areas of technology that are relevant to us. They are proactive and help us to evolve our business."

4net's powerful combination of service excellence and technical expertise makes us the partner of choice for organisations who want to transform the way they communicate with customers, staff and stakeholders, reduce costs and gain competitive advantage.

Our contact centre, unified communications, managed and cloud services are designed to address today's complex business challenges, helping you to respond to your customer and staff requirements.

From simple IP Telephony Solutions to Virtual Contact Centres, from Unified Communications to Cloud Services, we partner with best in class vendors such as Avaya, Microsoft and Enghouse to deliver a solutions portfolio that will address today's changing workplace and build tomorrow's future, making 4net the preferred communications partner for many businesses across the UK and the Globe.