



SmartLaw 2.0

Expert insights for the new future of law

The evolution of SmartLaw continues

As new processes, information resources and technology continue to emerge to meet increasing client expectations, law firms are becoming more nimble, adaptive and flexible.

The beginning of SmartLaw

A few years ago we identified three key areas of focus we believe to be at the core of innovative, successful law firms: **clients**, **culture** and **technology**. Collectively, these concepts can be leveraged to create a new approach to the business of law. We call this approach SmartLaw.

SmartLaw 2.0

Future-focused law firms have found success putting the concept to work as they create amazing client experiences, adopt a culture of change and use technology to empower greater efficiency. Even so, as the industry continues to change, so must the SmartLaw concept.

In addition to the original three areas of focus, we now believe that firms must also prioritise data and process. Together, these five pillars of **clients**, **culture**, **technology**, **data** and **process** create SmartLaw 2.0. These key areas will be critical to the success of firms in the future.

The five pillars



Clients



Culture



Technology



Data



Process





The experts

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As with the original SmartLaw concept, we again asked legal industry experts and veterans to share **their insights about the future of law**. We posed the question:

“What do you believe lawyers and law firms need to do to prepare for the future?”

Here's what they said.





Lindsay Griffiths

Lindsay Griffiths is the director of global relationship management for the International Lawyers Network, where she facilitates relationships among lawyers at 91 law firms in 67 countries, implements internal and external marketing opportunities, and develops new approaches to business development needs.

To prepare for the future, lawyers and law firms need to embrace collaboration. In her book, *Smart Collaboration*, Heidi Gardner extols the virtues of this for law firms, which she defines as “work[ing] together to integrate their separate knowledge bases and skill sets to form coherent, unified solutions.”

Historically, firms and lawyers have been extremely successful operating in silos, but the new marketplace demands more of us than that. With globalisation and the financial crisis of 2008 came the changing of the guard—clients realised that they were the ones in charge. As a result, their needs are what is driving change in the industry.



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Although change has been slow in many ways, it continues to build, and the firms and lawyers that take advantage of the skills and opportunities available are the ones that will prosper in the future marketplace. To do that, they need to be prepared to answer the challenges that clients are putting to them—and those are no longer problems that require only one type of expertise.

More and more, clients want the types of solutions that are only found when experts work together. Not only is our unique expertise more useful when paired with a complementary one, but we often can bring out more efficient and effective solutions when we work together, rather than apart.

The fascinating and exciting thing about the current and future landscape is that it is about both human and technological solutions. We can look at what challenges exist and then work together to identify the solutions to meet them, whether that’s for our own firms or for our clients’ needs. These solutions also extend past requiring strictly legal knowledge as well. Firms of the future will be made up of more than just lawyers, but will also include other types of versatile professionals, with lawyers themselves needing to alter the way that they work and learn.

When we put the entire picture together, professionals within law firms will be able to develop effective, valuable solutions for clients that satisfy them, are profitable for firms and clients, and differentiate them in the marketplace. **They’ll do this through collaboration, having strong processes in place to make efficient use of their resources, embracing technology in the way that makes sense for their firm and their clients, and consistently reviewing and analysing their results to ensure that they’re repeating what works, and addressing any challenges that arise.** This is vastly different to the way many law firms operate today, but as the industry demands more change, firms will be forced to change with it.





Andrew Baker

Andrew has over ten years of experience in delivering on innovative projects that blend data analytics, technology, process improvement, design, and legal services. As VP and Global Head of Services for LexPredict, Andrew works with corporate legal departments and law firms on efforts that exist in the overlap of law + data + strategy.

The legal industry is information rich but data poor.

The industry isn't short on documents, but it is short on structured, normalised practice data. Generally, law firms collect hours and aggregate fees, but the industry has not focused on defining or capturing data that describes the legal services being provided or received with much care. That's a problem for firms and corporate legal departments. This gap hinders organisations' abilities to manage work, mitigate risk, maximise value, enhance decision-making and proactively respond to trends or patterns in the work being done. At a time when there is an increasing focus on "big data" outside of our industry, we're lagging severely in our use of data and missing opportunities to create significant value and modernise services.



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Whether via thoughtful strategy or the gravitational pull of business, this will change, and we are already seeing the early stages of that now. Buyers of high-end services are increasingly restless, partially driven by the stark contrast between how legal services are provided, the ways in which other businesses operate, and the elegance of the technology and services individuals use in their personal lives. As those gaps widen, the need to take action becomes clearer.

Mature corporate legal departments have more (and indeed better) data than their firms, and many are investing in ways to extract new meaning from that data. That focus on quantification will ripple through to the firms serving these organisations. The result of that change will cause some discomfort (in the form of growing pains) and will pressure service providers in new ways. These new expectations will also create opportunities for law firms to engage clients in creative ways and enhance the client experience. **Some law firm leaders are beginning to recognise that and a few are taking bold steps to collect and "weaponise" their data.**

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At the practice level and at a client/account level, firms need new strategies for both discerning what data they should collect and for determining how they will organise it. Not all information needs to be collected through manual data entry. There are new ways to source data, which can minimise the load placed on experts. But additional (relevant) practice data is needed. Further, the industry needs to harness more advanced methods of processing, analysing, synthesising, and transforming data.



Sophisticated data visualisation is key to ensuring lawyers (many of whom are not likely mathematically inclined) can absorb, understand and interact with meaningful data.

There isn't enough use of statistics and machine learning in our industry, in spite of what many publications might claim. There is latent value in the data we have that isn't being mined. And, most importantly, we need to do a better job of making data and analyses accessible. Sophisticated data visualisation is key to ensuring lawyers (many of whom are not likely mathematically inclined) can absorb, understand and interact with meaningful data.

Mature data strategies, deep analysis, and artful data visualisation are outliers in the industry at present. This won't be the case for long. The only question is how your organisation gets pulled into the fray. Will you be drawn in slowly, through a series of splintered, one-off client or business requests? Or will changes take place in your organisation through a purposeful investment in skills and capabilities?





Stuart Barr

Stuart leads product strategy and innovation at HighQ. He has extensive experience in business strategy, product management, consulting and digital transformation in the professional services industry. His particular focus has been on collaboration, project management, process automation and client engagement solutions for the legal sector. Stuart is an international speaker and author with a passion for transforming the way people work.

Having a client focus is more important than ever. Thinking about the overall client journey and all of the touch points from initial engagement through to service delivery is crucial to your firm's long-term success. Importantly, how the client judges the experience you provide them has the potential to make or break their relationship with your firm.

The original SmartLaw concept says you should focus on the firm's culture and the advanced use of technology in order to drive the change necessary. Overcoming the cultural inertia within your firm and encouraging new behaviors is the first and most crucial step towards true digital transformation and thinking differently about your clients. Nothing has changed here and, unfortunately, it also remains the most challenging problem to overcome.



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As more firms recognize this need to change, they usually turn to technology to help drive the improvements to their service delivery. In the last few years, we have seen an explosion in both the volume of legal technology available and its perceived importance in solving problems in our industry.

That is a good thing, technology has a significant part to play and more advanced tools will help to provide solutions to ever more complex problems, but the reality is that most of the potential efficiency gains come from augmenting and improving the way people work—we're not going to be replacing them with machines any time soon.

So the key to a law firm's success in the coming years will be enabling people to be more efficient and focused on higher value work to drive predictability, repeatability, consistency, transparency and profitability. Fundamentally, firms can't keep reinventing the wheel every time they undertake a piece of work, they must continuously improve on the way it has been done before. This is why a focus on process is so crucial for law firms to thrive in the future.

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As process improvement techniques and technology have become more widely adopted and firms start to reap the benefits of more effective and efficient ways of working, those firms that haven't adapted are now at a significant competitive disadvantage that is only going to get worse the longer they leave it.



The great thing is, the more process you put in place, the more data you are collecting.

The great thing is, the more process you put in place, the more data you are collecting. Let's also not forget about the treasure trove of historical billing and transactional data law firms are sitting on in their practice management and other systems.

If you're using project management, workflow automation and process tools to help standardize and run your transactions, you're going to start gaining insight into what's actually happening. You can use that data to analyse what's working and where there is still room for further improvement.

It's this virtuous circle of continuous analysis and incremental improvement that is so powerful and drives real transformation in legal service delivery. New data science roles, combined with legal engineers and project managers will work alongside lawyers to drive the next revolution in the legal sector.



Jordan Furlong

Jordan Furlong, principal of Law21, is a legal market analyst and forecaster who helps law firms and legal organisations worldwide adapt to a new competitive environment.

The first and most important thing to do, in preparing your law firm for the future, is to recognise that **the future is here**. There's no "next year." There's no "something's coming down the pike that we should prepare for." There's only right now.

Every day that your firm waits for "the future" to arrive is another day in which the future has left you further behind—and increasingly, another day in which a firm or two or five has zipped past you in pursuit of it. The longer you wait to hear the starting gun, the more of your competitors will realise that the gun was never going to go off, and start running.

So, the first thing you need to do is **recognise that the facts you've assembled and the warnings you've heard are all that you need** and all that will be provided. It might not be perfect information and it might not be the 100%, platinum-grade assurance that 'Now Is The Time,' you'd hoped for but it'll do. Find that 'In Case of Emergency' box you've been gradually assembling and break the glass.



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Second, give everyone on your team permission to do something, anything, differently tomorrow than they did today. Some of your people might need a direct order to that effect; give it to them. Tell your team that you expect them to come to you next week having identified either

- something they've always done a certain way that they're now going to do differently and better, or
- something they've always thought clients would like them to do that they're finally going to try.

Have them tell you what the first three steps in that process will be and to come back each of the next three weeks to tell you what they've done.

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Third, assemble a list of the three regular clients you absolutely cannot afford to lose. (If you have fewer than three, choose a client you like to work with and make it your mission to upgrade them to irreplaceable status.) Assume your firm is facing an emergency and is down to only three clients—these three. **What steps would you take to safeguard them, supercharge them, blow them away with your care and attention? Take those steps now.**

People still occasionally introduce me as a “futurist,” a term I’ve never used about myself and discourage whenever possible. I dislike “futurist” because it gives people the impression that I’m talking about someday, down the road, in the fullness of time—and they stop listening, because the very real cares of today beat the possibilities of tomorrow every time.

“The future” is an anaesthetic. It will lull you to sleep if you let it. Wake up to the challenges, the crises and the rare opportunities that are being presented to you today, right now, in this moment.



**There is no future. There’s only right now.
Get up, right now, and do something about it.**

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D. Casey Flaherty

D. Casey Flaherty is a lawyer, the founder of the legal consultancy Procertas, and the primary author of *Unless You Ask: A Guide For Law Departments To Get More From External Relationships*, written and published in partnership with the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC).

What lawyers need to do to prepare for the future is to stop thinking of it as the future—as something that will arrive, in time. As Gibson observed, the future is already here—it’s just not evenly distributed. **We could hit the pause button on invention and still experience decades of innovation by taking better advantage of the tools already available to us.**

We place too much emphasis on technology. We put off the hard work of changing behaviour and re-engineering process because we hope, in vain, that some technology will come along to make it easy. To make it seamless. To make it so we can generate superior outputs from the same inputs simply by shelling out some coin and flipping a switch. It doesn’t work like that now. It won’t work like that tomorrow. Unless we are prepared to invest in personnel, process redesign and training, we will continue to underperform regardless of what tools are at our disposal.



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I realise I’m asking for resources that are in very short supply: time and attention. I’m suggesting that in the face of relentless deadline pressure, lawyers volunteer to endure implementation dips. It’s not fun. It’s not sexy. It absolutely entails tradeoffs and opportunity costs. But there is no real change without real change. And real change is hard. Real change is deliberately slow. As my friend John Grant has put it, slow is smooth, smooth is fast. We have to be willing to slow down in an environment that constantly cajoles us to speed up.

Easier said than done. But the only real way to prepare for the future is to actually prepare for the future. It’s like studying for an exam or practicing for the game. It seems lesser because it is not the thing itself. **Yet, at some point, some portion of our professional lives has to be repeatedly reserved for sprints where improving the work is the work.**





Rachel Roberts

Rachel Roberts is head of business solutions at independent UK law firm Burges Salmon LLP. Rachel leads a growing team of innovation, technology and legal service delivery specialists, project managers and business analysts. The team works alongside lawyers to differentiate and improve client-facing services. With over 20 years' law firm based experience, Rachel concentrates on bringing about new and innovative approaches to legal work in a way that clients value and lawyers can readily implement.

Has technology been grabbing the headlines more and more in the legal sector recently? Yes.

Have I changed my mind from my previous article: that people will continue to be the most important asset that a law firm has? Definitely not.



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The question is where should we be directing investment now to ensure that we continue to offer exceptional client service that our clients really value? Or put another way, what are the key capabilities that we need to build to ensure that we are future focused?

Can we be bold and look to create the 'digital law firm' or are we primarily focused on our law firms as a people business?

The future-facing law firm needs to be both.

The recent trend for design thinking is powerful because it puts the client clearly at the centre of the legal service experience. Clients still want clear answers (delivered more quickly and concisely than ever before) but they also need proactive solutions.

The pressure on in-house lawyers to deliver even more for even less seems relentless.

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So clients are looking for trusted advisors who are active listeners, who understand their business and who can bring 'solutions thinking' into play. **Solutions thinking means that professionals are able to combine their legal and sector knowledge with new approaches and a variety of enabling technologies to do things differently.**

Ultimately, it is people who have the capacity to develop insight that leads to new ideas. It is people that innovate. It is people that increase the value that we can offer clients. It is people that can build long-term trusted relationships.



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But in the same way that law firms cannot be all things to all people, neither can lawyers be all things to all clients.

So we will continue to see an increase in bridging roles—professionals who can bring together legal thinking with organisational skills and technology competencies: lawyers, project managers, legal innovation and technology innovation specialists all working together.

Learning and Development teams have an important role to play in developing new curriculums to deal with the business technology skills gap. No, not teaching lawyers to code, but equipping them to offer technology enablers to deliver efficiencies, or collaborative platforms to underpin effective working or where appropriate, to offer multi-disciplinary teams bringing together a rich offering to improve service delivery.

So technology will continue to come at us thick and fast and we do need tools to use actively with clients in key areas such as collaboration, automation and analytics.

But, it is still about people and evolving as organisations constantly adapting to this fast-paced, exciting market with many opportunities.





Chris Marshall

Chris Marshall is director of knowledge economy at Swansea University's Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law, which is launching a Master's in LegalTech programme in 2018, and which has established a Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Law and the LegalTech Wales network.

It is not just the profession that needs to adapt.

Practically every day there seems to be a new article or blog about how artificial intelligence and machine learning are disrupting legal services or about the launch of another LegalTech platform, and I am sure it must be possible to attend at least one AI or Blockchain conference every week of the year.

Yet there is rarely any coverage of the role of the UK law schools in supporting legal innovation or of the part they must play in reassuring future students of the continuing value of a law degree, given the ways technology will disrupt traditional legal careers.

After all, the law schools themselves must adapt to the changing nature of legal service delivery just as much as the law firms and must work to ensure that future lawyers are equipped with the skills necessary to work with technology and to understand how it might be deployed in practice.

Look beyond the traditional law degree.

To some extent, the UK's law schools are constrained by the formal requirements of the qualifying law degree and there is currently limited space for modules on technological skills in the core undergraduate curriculum. The planned introduction of the Solicitors' Qualification Examination is likely to afford opportunities for greater flexibility in course content but, in the meantime, universities have an obligation to ensure that the education and experiential learning they provide will meet law students' expectations, not to mention those of their future employers.



At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that successful lawyers are characterised by their ability to apply their core legal knowledge and by the creativity of the legal mindset.

At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that successful lawyers are characterised by their ability to apply their core legal knowledge and by the creativity of the legal mindset. So there needs to be a balance that favours the acquisition of legal knowledge and experience but which also recognises the need for an additional layer of skills, for example, to give students an appreciation of how software development might lead to innovation in legal services.

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However, I do believe that those law students who want to understand how coding works should have the opportunity to do so. **Surely it is an advantage for lawyers to be able to apply computational thinking to legal issues, to be able to map processes that deliver solutions to clients' problems, and to find common ground with in-house IT teams?**

I also think that law firms will move away from employing “traditional” legal trainees to recruiting more agile teams with differentiated skill sets. This will create distinctive opportunities for people who understand coding, or who have legal project management experience, or who can demonstrate familiarity with AI platforms, or who have worked with distributed ledgers—but who are, at heart, lawyers.





David Halliwell

David is a lawyer who started asking “surely there’s a better way of doing this?” in 1999 and hasn’t stopped trying to find answers to that question ever since. He leads the knowledge and innovation programmes at international law firm Pinsent Masons, with a team of 35 software and process engineers helping to deliver law faster, better and cheaper.

For lawyers, the answer is obvious, isn’t it? Learn to code. No, wait, get Prince2 or APMP qualified. Hang on, become a design thinker. Build an app. Do social media. Learn a new language. Become mindful. Play the flute. Well, maybe not that, but the list of things you apparently need to cover to be a lawyer these days is staggering.

I’ve been privileged to be invited to speak at a few events recently for law students and they look utterly befuddled by what is now being asked of them. They thought getting through law school was hard enough. Now they’re being told they need to do all this other stuff too.

And the view from the other side of one of those new skill sets is interesting too—I was chatting to some of our data scientists and software engineers about the idea of lawyers doing a week of coding training and their response was, “Yeah, and I’ll do a one week course to become a lawyer!”

Yes, it is a question of ‘more than law’ in some respects. Being good at just one thing is probably not enough to succeed. Being staggeringly good at one might get you there, but unfortunately, that doesn’t apply to many of us.



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My advice to lawyers? Try to be more T-shaped in your skillset. Develop one or two areas of deep expertise (the stem of the T), and more areas where you have some good knowledge or understanding, the bar across the top.

There does need to be some tech knowledge across that bar. It could be familiarity with some of the basics of coding, so that you can have better informed conversations with developers (and in fact apply the same techniques to contract drafting). But you don’t need to become a fully-fledged app developer. Or it could be looking at machine learning applications, or client portals, or how clients might use data, or ediscovery.

It’s not just about tech though, law is changing in other ways too. **Find out about new ways to resource work, better pricing for clients and legal project management.** But you don’t need to get fully trained up in all these areas.

It’s about being curious—reading around the subject, going to the training and talks that are offered in some of these areas, find some thought leaders to follow on social media. But at the same time, don’t panic. The world is changing around us, inevitably, but perhaps not at the breakneck speed some are predicting.

And law firms? **Find and cherish the curious. Give them time and space. And find ways to value them that doesn’t involve just numbers on a spreadsheet.**





George Beaton

Dr. George Beaton is a partner in beaton and a co-founder of FirmChecker, Australia.

When Confucius wrote ‘He that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools’ around 500 BC, he was addressing lawyers and law firms today. The pace of change in legal services is so rapid that few can comprehend what’s happening and no one knows exactly where the puck is going.

We all remember Wayne Gretsky’s immortal words about the puck, “Skate to where the puck is going, not where it has been,” but why mix Confucius and Gretksy?

Confucius is saying every law firm and every lawyer must tool up now for a future where clients and competition will be increasingly different from today, and where the profitability for most in private practice will be far a cry from today’s still heady levels.



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And here’s where the puck is headed. Clients will be choosing whether to use a legal service based on risk-adjusted criteria delivered by an app. And if they do decide to meet their need, their first decision will be whether to go DIY or outsource. There will be a plethora of DIY tools ranging from document download platforms, with or without the attendant services of a virtual lawyer, to AI-powered apps that interpret the law and provide advice on the optimal course of action depending on circumstances.

In more recognisable forms, accounting advisory firms will be offering legal (and other professional) services. It won’t only be the Big Four that provide law-related services competing head-to-head with the largest law firms. Some smaller, even suburban, accounting firms will have morphed into integrated professional advisers for small-medium businesses and their owners. And the morphing will also go the other way with law firms as the pathfinders. These advisers will be powered by a suite of AI and analytics tools that dashboard-display the key facts and trends in a client’s business with benchmarks revealing best-in-class performance, exposures and risks, ratings by past and present clients on sites like Glassdoor, and feedback from their customers gathered from Google and other review and ratings services.

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For those firms that don't start their transformation journey very soon, profitability will slide inexorably, and lack of succession will lead to extinction.

For those firms that don't start their transformation journey very soon, profitability will slide inexorably, and lack of succession will lead to extinction. Clients will happily pay for value delivered, not time expended. This means learning to communicate and recover IP-based value will be a mission-critical competence.

For individual law students and lawyers of all ages, the future holds a world of ever-expanding career opportunities. The jobs range from founding, working and investing in tech start-ups to practising law virtually, serving clients in many jurisdictions and networked on platforms with others, to working in global behemoths, including the Big Four and new entrants to their space.

Sensing where the legal service puck is headed, sharpening their tools, and being agile will increase the probability lawyers and law firms remaining relevant beyond 2020.





Kerry Westland

Kerry Westland is head of innovation & legal technology at Addleshaw Goddard. She is responsible for driving the use of technology and developing solutions to deliver a wide range of legal work across the firm. Dubbed as AG's 'Secret Weapon' by The Lawyer Hot 100, she's a new breed of lawyer, shaping the changing legal profession.

Innovation is a buzzword in the legal market at the moment—innovation roles are being created across the industry and many in-house teams have legal operations roles evaluating the efficiencies of their in-house teams as well as the service delivery of their law firms.

There are many reasons why law firms need to innovate—the more-for-less challenge, the development and adoption of technology, and the onslaught of new entrants into the legal market to name a few. But what do lawyers and law firms need to ensure their innovation agenda is successful?



But what do lawyers and law firms need to ensure their innovation agenda is successful?

Investment

For me, a very big and obvious need is investment. Investment is needed in the research and development (R&D) of new technologies, new skills and training. Many firms are doing this, with ring-fenced R&D budgets and hiring people, but it needs to be bigger.

It isn't just looking at investment as a cash fund for new tools. It's also about investment in time from the lawyers across firms. Understanding that they are the ones that work with the innovation teams, the knowledge teams and the client teams to drive new working practices. This is hard when utilisation targets and budgets are based on a fee earner's capacity. Firms must invest people-time in these projects as well.

Permission

Law firm leaders must give permission to those in their firm to play. Along with permission to fail. Innovation cannot be done as an aside to a day job. It needs to be part of what that person is doing.

As a lawyer, who has a set number of hours to do and client deadlines to meet, finding the time to think and develop, invent and create new things can be hard. It can be easier to carry on doing what you've always done.

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We all inherently hate to fail and worry about the consequences of a failed project, but in R&D there will be failures, the challenge is to learn to fail quickly.

This does go back to the investment—normally expenditure needs to show return. There will be projects where money is spent that will ultimately fail. The team needs to know they have the permission to do this.

And if you get all of this right, the end result is a project or product that your client loves and you want to roll it out to a department—how do you do it?

Repetition

Humans are wired to be resistant to change. For example, just look at the number of people who refused to watch The Great British Bake Off when it moved to Channel 4. Or, the people who watched hoping or expecting it would fail because it couldn't possibly be the same.

So how do you get lawyers to do things differently?

The big answer for me is repetition—you just have to keep going. You will have early adopters who will get what is happening instantly and will become innovation's biggest champions.

There are others who look at you like you are Noel Fielding and can't possibly be as good as beloved former hosts Mel and Sue. But week after week begin to understand that you are just as good, only different.

But what about those who completely refused to watch the new series of Bake Off? How do you convince them?

You need to keep talking to them, telling them stories and real life examples, getting the early adopters and the converts to talk to them and repeat the message again and again. These stories and messages then permeate across the firm, allowing the new product, technique or workstream to be adopted in that practice area.

Yes, there will always be those moments where people need to be told that this is the new way of doing things—but I'm believer in bringing people along the journey with you and repetition is the key to that.

Reward

And finally, the way to encourage innovation and thinking differently is by looking at how we reward lawyers.

If you are rewarded for reaching your yearly hours target—why would you spend time out with people like me—developing new solutions or processes that ultimately save time?

How do you encourage junior lawyers to question the processes when they are wanting to advance up the career ladder, learning from those above them?

We, as a profession, need to find ways to encourage and reward those who lift their head off their desks and take time to think, create, develop and innovate.





Dan Wright

Previously a corporate lawyer and partner, Dan Wright is now focused on innovation and leads Osborne Clarke Solutions—a new team of ex-lawyers and technologists who, enabled by new technology, sector knowledge and strong relationship management skills, work directly with clients to build practical solutions to real problems.

At Osborne Clarke, amongst other things we think law firms need to:

- Go beyond law and reimagine what they are and what they can do. Keep talking about transforming how law firms work, but talk more about transforming what law firms do;
- Foster diverse non-legal skills, from a diverse talent pool. You can't solve different problems with the same solutions. Embrace cognitive diversity—flexibility, curiosity, emotional intelligence. Create cultures that will readily adapt to a changing world. Diversity lies at the heart of success;
- Become more creative—with clients, other law firms, advisers and other stakeholders in their clients' work;
- Provide a wrap around their services. Clients don't need just advice. They need it delivered in the right way at the right time to the right people. They need processes, automation, project management, risk management, predictability, productivity and self-service tools, data analysis, fingertip access to insights, more control of their matters, as well as legal knowledge and advice. They want that from people they know and trust, who just use technology to help provide these total solutions;



Focus on the human, not the machine. Use technology to augment what those humans can do and the value they deliver;

- Focus on the human, not the machine. Use technology to augment what those humans can do and the value they deliver;
- Embrace failure and empower their people to try good ideas, and be happy to kill them off (the ideas, not their people) if they don't deliver as planned, and move on to the next good idea;
- Not create solutions to non-existent problems. We don't need more 'Innovations' catalogues. Just look for the real problems and provide practical solutions to them. Meet unmet needs;

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- Enable client self-service, and in so doing use disruption to reframe where else we can generate value for clients;
- Help in-house teams offer even more value by enabling them to take operationally useful tools across their businesses—and elsewhere;
- See that not everything new is Innovation. Some is just simple common-sense management and strategy;
- Have real strategies (not just goals), and rational plans to deliver on them;
- Be a partner rather than a supplier;
- Let clients, and others, leverage firms’ technology to liberate the currently trapped value that so many people can bring to clients’ work;
- Make it normal for data to be caught, analysed, and learned from (using new skills), to improve processes and services—and create new ones;



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- Generate network effects around their products, before others do around theirs;
- Make their clients think, “We had no idea we could ask our lawyers to do this.”
- Be different, early, and always relevant to their clients;
- Be realistic about technology’s actual capabilities, and build accordingly, but push at the boundaries. That’s where differentiation and new value lies;
- Not just invest in technology— invest in the time to use it well;
- Not to ignore simple solutions. There’s real value in simplification—both for the client and the law firm. Be down with the weeds as well as up in the sky.

The right technology can help attack all of the above—but technology as the slave of the right process for the client and work. Human first, then technology.



Human first, then technology.

This all helps avoid entropy, and practices that can remain unchanged for decades. It also helps produce a diverse range of stimulating careers for our people, and helps attract tomorrow’s talent to continue to take us wherever we can add value.





Ben Wightwick

Ben Wightwick is a director in the product team at HighQ where he is focused on the delivery of HighQ's client engagement and product delivery use cases and the evolution of the platform. With over 17 years of experience in legal, Ben has built a wealth of knowledge and industry expertise which provides a solid base for his product management duties and his client-facing work. Passionate about building awesome products, Ben thrives and gets the most excited when he sees HighQ technology solving business challenges, adding value and facilitating change within organisations.

As I said in our previous ebook on 'SmartLaw' back in 2016 - "The future of legal services is already here. You can't put the lid back on the box," and I'll re-emphasise that. The demands of clients are growing increasingly in terms of complexity and volume, and discussion and ultimately meeting these demands have become an increasing mechanism for clients to determine which law firms will get their legal spend compared to previous years.

The last two years have been dominated by the hype and potential of technologies in the legal profession like AI and blockchain. In the last two years, there have been some great examples of law firms applying creative thinking, clever and established technology and their own people resource to deliver valuable services to their clients.

However, when looking beyond the hype of AI and other technologies, I still don't see enough emphasis, or indeed hype, placed on the value of the people behind the scenes and the change required to do it on a large scale. It's the people that will provide the client connections, the people that have the experience and insight that will evolve the delivery of legal services, NOT technology alone.



I still don't see enough emphasis, or indeed hype, placed on the value of the people behind the scenes

In order to deliver the services of the future, we have to prepare the next generation of lawyers and those entrenched in the profession for what's expected. We have also got to encourage law firm leadership to be brave, experiment and build for the future. To be clear, what's expected is change and on a pretty large scale.

There should be a mind-shift change in our law schools in order to progress, an objective to create t-shaped professionals. **Current law firm leadership should not be saying we need to be more innovative, they should be saying we need to add more value.** The industry should encourage and promote the skills of listening, experimenting and openness.

In the short term, the traditional lawyer (someone with a deep set of expertise) will be augmented by complimentary team members who bring other skills to the table. However, in the medium term, I hope the skill set of the traditional lawyer will be those t-shaped individuals who have deep knowledge and skills in a particular area of specialisation, along with and the desire and ability to make connections across disciplines.

The legal profession is on a constant journey and to be at the forefront of the pack, law firms will need to listen to clients more closely, adapt and change to market conditions. They need to build the right collaborative environment to get work done more effectively. Firms need to use data to influence decision making and then apply the right technology for the challenge at hand.

BUT the most important part of the puzzle will be the people and the culture they work within.





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SmartLaw focuses on five keys to success for law firms: their clients, their culture, their intelligent use of technology, their data analysis and their process improvements.

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