

Staying Ahead of the Wave: Implementing New Technologies into Law Firms



Staying ahead of the technology wave is vital for any successful business but finding relevant functionality in a deluge of technology hype is no easy matter for solicitors.

There are many reasons why ideas don't get off the starting block and many of these are associated with avoiding risk. Implementing new products and procedures can affect every area of a business and the potential for failure is not always clear in advance.

One effective approach is to view technology from a single perspective, with the specific benefits for a legal practice in mind. For example: Can a technology alleviate risk and allow a solicitor more time to concentrate on matters of pure legal judgement? Or would implementation simply create new areas of risk?

Taking a logical prospective allows decision makers to overcome inbuilt risk aversion that can actually work against firms. Many technologies have now moved way beyond the cutting edges; services that were once expensive and slow to deploy are now available in the Cloud and charged monthly as 'software as a solution'. Speech recognition is a very good example of this.

Once known as a problematic technology, speech recognition is now being used every day by major firms throughout the UK. Improved technologies have overcome the difficulties of high entry costs, work intensive implementations and nagging performance issues. Transcription by voice command now delivers an increase in efficiency, significant reduction in administration costs and employees whose time is spent on fee-earning activities. All of these advantages can be delivered quickly and efficiently for one low monthly fee.

Often the answer emerges from details anchored in a user's experience of day-to-day process. With vast sums already invested globally we are likely to see only incremental changes to underlying data transport standards. Smart implementations of interfaces and workflows plugging into these standards can yield significant gains.

Oyez spotted one such opportunity in Companies House mortgage charge e-submissions. By offering an application that allows collaborating users to store, and then quality-check a submission before committing to send it, a significant area of risk (solo working on a time-expired portal) was eliminated. What may seem a simple process enhancement actually arises from in-depth analysis of many requirements: user concerns, risk concerns, change

management, and technical implications. Once the submission process was redefined with the user at its heart, the new web interface followed.

The trend to 'perfection of niche' and 'growth by theme' shows a new layering of technologies, with concepts that previously were seen as 'desirable' taking centre stage and offering dexterous companies launch pads for expansion.

The OyezForms range of workflow systems is a further example of relevant, collaborative development. Assembled to a templates built directly from customer input, these workflows offer users a much more efficient way to compile, insert and share the information required for the completion of complex legal forms. Users now have the ability to prepare complicated, multifaceted forms such as the FormE or the LP1F (PA) / LP1H (HW) quickly and in a much more efficient manner.

The best firms know that there is nothing to be gained by ignoring new ideas and sticking to the status quo. As the old business maxim says "If you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always gotten' and that's probably even more relevant for law firms now, than for almost any other type of business



Nick Hodges, Managing Director
Oyez Professional Services