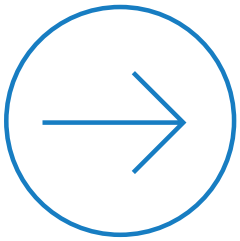
WHITE PAPER

DICTATING THE PACE OF CHANGE



INCLUDING COMMENTS FROM:

Gateley Plc

Aaron & Partners Solicitors

TUCKERS SOLICITORS STANDING UP FOR YOU

SpeechWrite Digital

FOREWORD

JAMES TURNER
President of the
Birmingham Law Society

Senior Partner
at Tuckers Solicitors

During my Presidential year Birmingham Law Society is proud to have partnered with SpeechWrite who have been a key sponsor of our events.

The white paper is a timely piece of thought leadership in view of the rapid pace of change in the Information Technology sector. HMCTS, the Crown Prosecution Service and West Midlands Police have implemented changes which have resulted in the advent of the Digital Court System. The arrival of the Common Platform will further that work and it is expected that the Family and Civil Courts will continue with their move to the use of cloud-based solutions.

The Law Society is scrutinizing the use of technology and the application of Artificial Intelligence within the justice system. The direction of travel is clearly towards remote working and electronic communication as practices seek to work more efficiently. Law firms and Chambers increasingly promote remote working and are moving towards adoption of the paperless office.

This white paper identifies the trend towards increased use of technology in the legal sector and how firms can adapt to an ever dynamic market. It explains the benefits of cloud-based solutions for firms, increasing mobility of data and the cost savings provided by digitised systems.

Chief executives, senior partners, directors and members will benefit from an introduction to the technology involved and analysis of where future developments will take us.

BIRMINGHAM LAW SOCIETY
one profession · one region · one voice

TUCKERS SOLICITORS
STANDING UP FOR YOU

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	4
INNOVATE TO ACCELERATE	5
THE IN-CLOUD	5
GOING DIGITAL	7
MOBILITY	8
TIME TO SPEAK OUT	8
TAKING THE PLUNGE	9
LOOKING AHEAD	11

INCLUDING COMMENTS FROM

Gateley Plc

Aaron & Partners Solicitors

TUCKERS SOLICITORS STANDING UP FOR YOU

BROADBENTS SOLICITORS

WANSBROUGHS SOLICITORS

DEVONALDS SOLICITORS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

The Law Society

BIRMINGHAM LAW SOCIETY one profession - one region - one voice

Liverpool Law Society

BRISTOL LAW SOCIETY

SpeechWrite Digital

DICTATING THE PACE OF CHANGE

AS THE LEGAL INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO ADAPT TO A DISRUPTIVE MARKET, TECHNOLOGY IS THE BEST WEAPON IN THE ONGOING BATTLE TO MAXIMISE EFFICIENCIES AND INCREASE PROFITABILITY.

The UK legal market has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. Increased competition has seen the rise of the mega law firm at the middle and top ends of the market, as squeezed law firms flock to utilise the Swiss verein structure to bulk up.

Alongside consolidation, we have seen significant fragmentation as a growing numbers of lawyers eschew the traditional law firm model in favour of the 'virtual' law firm, which bands groups of self-employed lawyers together to access shared IT and marketing systems and reduce overheads. In addition, deregulation has led to a veritable flurry of entrepreneurial law firms going public. Regional law firm Knights Group became the fifth UK law firm to float in June 2018, breaking records for the largest-ever UK law firm listing with its IPO valuing the firm at £103.5m – that record is likely to be smashed in 2019 when DWF LLP is expected to float.

> "New technology has a major part to play in enabling law firms to optimise their offering."
>
> **Jas Bassi**
> *IT Solution Delivery Manager*
> *Gateley Plc*

In short, the UK's already crowded legal market is continuing to admit new entrants, while also becoming increasingly business-oriented. The resulting pressure on costs has put the onus firmly onto efficiency and differentiation. Law firms are looking to new IT infrastructure to pick up the slack.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

"New technology has a major part to play in enabling law firms to optimise their offering," says Jas Bassi, IT solution delivery manager at Gateley Plc, which in 2015 was the first UK law firm to float. *"Optimisation can often be assumed to be financial efficiency, and although there is an element of this, there is a bigger part for new technology to play in delivering better collaboration in a secure manner, both internally and with clients in an environment challenged by a multitude of cyber security threats."*

As Bassi suggests, firms should not simply focus on technology investment as a way of making existing processes cheaper, it should also be seen as an opportunity to encourage greater engagement and co-operation between law firms and their clients.

INNOVATE TO ACCELERATE

Technological innovation continues to rapidly shape improvements in legal service delivery. New tech products covering the full spread of time and billing, document assembly, client relationship management (CRM), proposal generation and matter management have catalysed a revolution in the formerly cumbersome set of standalone processes through which the legal market has traditionally operated.

> "There are a number of law firms now at the cutting edge of technology and investing in start-up tech firms and some also starting their own tech incubators."
>
> **Jas Bassi**
> *IT Solution Delivery Manager*
> *Gateley Plc*

"There are a number of law firms now at the cutting edge of technology and investing in start-up tech firms and some also starting their own tech incubators," adds Bassi. *"At Gateley we are a fast adopter when we identify and prove technology that can lead to positive outcomes to us and our clients."*

Technology is no longer just an adjunct to a successful legal business strategy, instead it forms a central pillar of any law firm's growth plan.

BECOMING TECH-SAVVY

Firms need to be tech-savvy because clients are being forced to evolve at the same rate. Sales and service functions – across all economic sectors – are gradually moving online to make the most of new artificial intelligence (AI) tools to cut back on costs and pass those savings onto customers and shareholders. Technology has climbed right to the top of the corporate agenda and law firms are working hard to make sure that they can meet in-house teams halfway.

> "Efficiency and speed are important to us because they are important to Wansbrough's clients."
>
> **Oliver Price**
> Senior *Partner*
> *Wansbroughs Solicitors*

"Efficiency and speed are important to us because they are important to Wansbrough's clients," says Oliver Price, senior partner in the commercial team at Wiltshire-based Wansbroughs' Solicitors. *"Keeping efficient and sharing work among our teams rather than recruiting new people helps us to strengthen our service delivery. In the 21st century speed is crucial."*

Not all law firms may be able to afford the luxury of sophisticated client portals or bells-and-whistles CRM systems but there are one or two fundamental tools that should be in all firms' tech toolkits.

THE IN-CLOUD

The typical law firm environment has evolved away from its traditional stuffy portrayal. Even in traditional bricks-and-mortar law firms, more progressive attitudes towards flexible working, facilitated by modern technology, has led to more agile working practices, particularly among working parents. In addition, the need to keep in touch with on-the-move clients – and colleagues – as well as a greater emphasis on business development issues has driven the need for more efficient and reliable technology that can help lawyers to fulfil all their functions remotely. Cloud computing has become the easiest way to achieve these aims.

Essentially the delivery of computing systems over the internet, cloud computing minimises up-front technology infrastructure costs by allowing firms to go through service providers in a 'pay-as-you-go' model, rather than hosting core systems internally. The potential for sharing and collaboration is greater, making services extremely mobile. Critically for busy law firms, set-up issues are also greatly reduced and the required systems can be up and running very fast.

> "Cloud technology has become increasingly important to law firms. In my specialist area of criminal defence, cloud technology has revolutionised the service of disclosure and how parties communicate with the court."
>
> **James Turner**
> *Senior Partner*
> *Tucker Solicitors*

SCALABILITY AND FUTURE PROOFING

The scalability of cloud infrastructure is also a big plus; if a firm decides to significantly grow or merge, the increased load will have little effect on the running

of the overall system as the provider can simply adapt to the firm's new specifications, removing the need for additional IT infrastructure. However, the chief attraction of cloud computing for smaller firms with tight budgets is that it future-proofs the IT infrastructure under use: as the software evolves so does the firm's systems via the service provider, with limited fuss in-house.

As law firms continue to familiarise themselves with the benefits of cloud technology, web-based services are set to be the rule rather than the exception.

"Cloud technology has become increasingly important to law firms. In my specialist area of criminal defence, cloud technology has revolutionised the service of disclosure and how parties communicate with the court," says James Turner, senior partner in the Birmingham office of leading criminal defence firm Tucker Solicitors. *"It will speed up the delivery of CCTV evidence and service of large capacity files of data which hitherto have been served by disc. In my own practice, the use of the Tuckers Cloud has enabled greater efficiency and cost savings in serving materials on counsel, expert witnesses and clients. As firms move towards the paperless office, cloud technology is essential."*

> "Cloud solutions are the current zeitgeist."
>
> **Nick Thornton**
> *Senior IT Specialist*
> *Aaron & Partners LLP*

> "I don't see many established law firms looking to migrate their entire on-premise house to a cloud-only approach anytime soon."
>
> **Jas Bassi**
> *IT Solution Delivery Manager*
> *Gateley Plc*

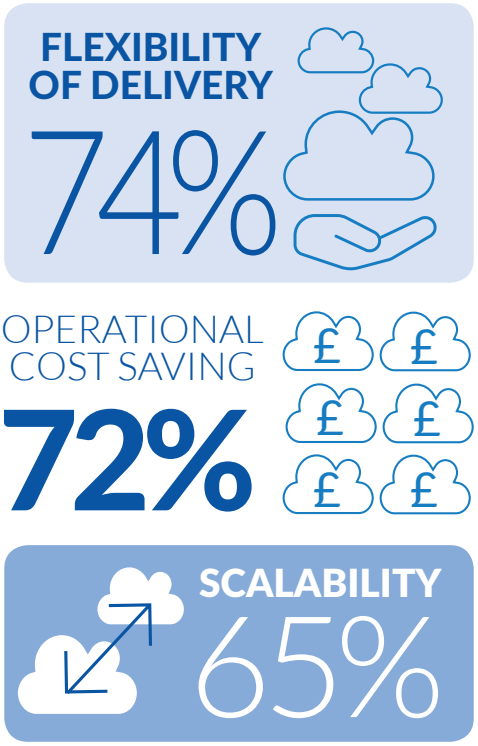
CLOUD SECURITY

It is also important to mention the security aspects of cloud computing. Some firms remain reluctant to harness the potential of cloud solutions due to security concerns. However, maintaining a secure IT solution in-house could be riskier than leaving it to a professional IT company to manage. An external dedicated provider of IT infrastructure will have the resources and know-how to anticipate dangers and respond accordingly – also, economies of scale dictate that an Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) company will be able to implement security upgrades more cost-effectively than an in-house IT department. The ongoing technical support received by clients of cloud-hosting providers is usually a significant differentiator for firms looking to decide between in-house and externally-managed systems.

A HYBRID APPROACH

It is possible to implement a hybrid cloud solution, which – as the name suggests – involves a mix of on-premise and cloud-based infrastructure, allowing you to pick and choose between applications.

Most popular reasons behind the move to cloud services



"Cloud solutions are the current zeitgeist," says Nick Thornton, IT, at top 200 law firm Aaron & Partners LLP. *"We see a mixture of cloud-based and on-prem solutions as the future. The goal is always to offer a more efficient user experience whilst providing resilience and flexibility. All organisations strive to be proactive rather than reactive and cloud services are part of this model."*

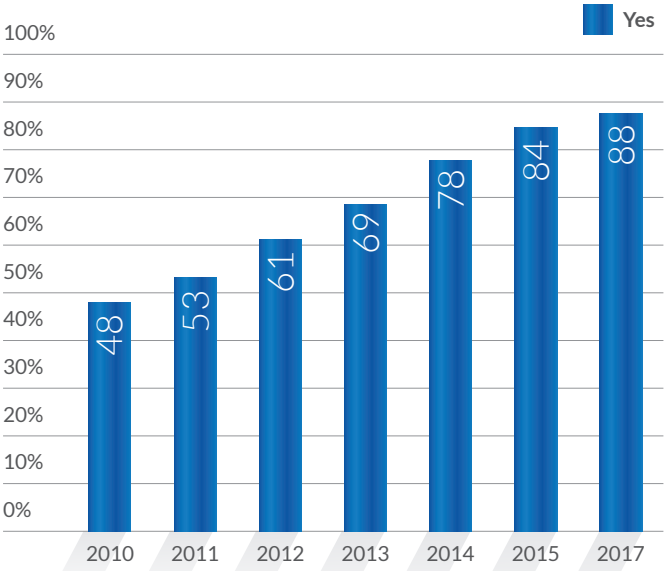
"I don't see many established law firms looking to migrate their entire on-premise house to a cloud-only approach anytime soon," explains Bassi. *"But I expect many will look to deploy new services that are hosted in the cloud, such as MS Office 365, MS Dynamics, iManage Cloud and cloud-hosted communication platforms."*

Currently, the hybrid solution is the most common approach to cloud computing in the UK, according to the Cloud Industry Forum (CIF), which is a not-for-profit agency that promotes the adoption of cloud in the UK.

RISING CLOUD ADOPTION RATES

In 2017, CIF polled 250 IT and business decision-makers, in both private and public sector organisations, and found that the overall cloud adoption rate in the UK had risen by 83% to 88%, since the first poll was conducted in 2010. Significantly, 67% of users expected to increase their adoption of cloud services over the coming year. The most popular reasons behind the move to cloud services were cited as flexibility of delivery (74%), operational cost saving (72%) and scalability (65%). For firms looking to make their first move into cloud-based services, dictation and voice recognition software could provide that all-important first step.

Does your organisation have any hosted or cloud-based services in use today?



Source: The Cloud Industry Forum, 2017

GOING DIGITAL

Analogue-based dictation systems already look archaic to most lawyers. The clear benefits of basic digital tools over tapes include clearer audio recordings, practically unlimited storage capacity and more user-friendly playback and editing capabilities; add on transcription services and it is clear why tape-based systems are essentially obsolete.

> "We use a digital dictation system and a voice recognition system and the speed of use is key for us."
>
> **Oliver Price**
> Senior *Partner*
> *Wansbroughs Solicitors*

"We use a digital dictation system and a voice recognition system and the speed of use is key for us," says Price. *"It is particularly useful for people who are not natural touch typists or don't type at all. It enables us to bring our output out as efficiently and quickly as possible."*

Established in 2001, SpeechWrite Digital is a full-solution provider specialising in workflow solutions, digital dictation, voice recognition and PDF solutions. The Birmingham-headquartered technology company is an accredited partner of original equipment manufacturers, such as Philips and Nuance, and offers sophisticated yet simple tech tools that allow law firms to work smarter – Nuance is the global market leader for voice recognition, while Philips is the global number one in professional dictation.

Most recently, SpeechWrite Digital rolled out its new SpeechWrite 360 cloud voice recognition and digital dictation product in response to growing demand for systems which support modern out of office working. Created as a mobile-first cloud solution, 360 allows users to dictate, track, edit and approve tasks on iOS, Android or desktop.

SpeechWrite 360 easily and quickly integrates directly into clients' existing applications, creating an end to end process and workflow solution. User dashboards allow managers to track their live workflows whilst also delivering insights that help drive efficiency. Clients can even use branded pre-defined templates to directly dictate into, creating further efficiencies within the firm.

MOBILITY

"We utilise mobile dictation to provide users with the flexibility of ad-hoc dictation when they are not in the office or even just away from their desks," **explains Thornton.** ***"This gives fee-earners a reactive tool so that they can efficiently work on-the-fly, saving time and money."***

> "We utilise mobile dictation to provide users with the flexibility of ad-hoc dictation when they are not in the office or even just away from their desks."
>
> **Nick Thornton**
> *Senior IT Specialist*
> *Aaron & Partners LLP*

Thornton echoes a recurring theme among law firms: mobility has become a vital element of any core tech offering. In an industry where the 'billable hour' still remains the key method of recording time and utilisation rates, being able to access shared systems remotely is essential. In addition to supporting flexible working, on a day-to-day basis it reduces downtime due to travelling, transport delays, bad weather conditions and so on.

"Certain fee-earners, such as those who work remotely on Fridays, are now able to produce work immediately. Under the old analogue system, they would have to wait to bring in tapes and ask a secretary to do the work and then send it out the following week," says Price. *"More generally, a number of teams have said that shared working among secretarial teams is helping to bring work out of the building much more quickly than we've been able to do previously."* Futhermore, cloud voice technology takes mobile and shared working to the next level with even greater benefits for flexibility and access remotely, allowing users to log in to any device at any location, anywhere in the world.

TIME TO SPEAK OUT

The great benefit that sophisticated digital dictation systems have over their analogue counterparts is the ability to transcribe as well as record information.

"Voice recognition software and services have improved the efficiency of back-office services for law firms utilising digital dictation. Advances in technology have enabled huge breakthroughs in the accuracy of the transcripts provided, saving administrative and, more importantly, fee-earning time," says Turner. *"The technology provided by firms such as SpeechWrite Digital has enabled firms to streamline their administrative function and liberate fee-earners to focus on what they do best: earn fees and represent clients."*

> "Advances in technology have enabled huge breakthroughs in the accuracy of the transcripts provided, saving administrative and, more importantly, fee-earning time."
>
> **James Turner**
> *Senior Partner*
> *Tucker Solicitors*

THE NEXT GENERATION

The next generation of digital dictation solutions allow you to dictate from any device, electronically sign, send in real time, track and edit your document all within the same system. Transcribers then receive completed documents that have been automatically transcribed into text, completely eliminating the need for typing.

"We see speech recognition as a means to saving users time and attaining more efficiency," says Thornton.

Not only is voice recognition-based dictation three times faster than typing (with speeds up to 160 words per minute) but with 99% accuracy it is also extremely reliable.

"By integrating voice recognition into the digital dictation system, we have found that we can dictate and distribute any letter, statement or court application within an hour," says James Last, practice manager at Broadbents Solicitors, which is a four-site law firm specialising in criminal and private client matters. *"This ensures we can maintain quick and efficient document turnaround across our offices, even during busy periods."*

For smaller legal offices, these types of software packages offer the opportunity to save money through significantly reducing the administrative burden. For larger multi-site firms, the software enables secretarial departments to pool resources more effectively.

> "We see speech recognition as a means to saving users time and attaining more efficiency."
>
> **Nick Thornton**
> *Senior IT Specialist*
> *Aaron & Partners LLP*

CREATING EFFICIENCIES

"SpeechWrite has given us a lot more consistency across the firm in terms of the systems that we use," says Alex Kilby partner at Devonalds Solicitors, which boasts six offices across Wales. *"It has also made us more efficient in our working practices; in particular, it enables transcribers or secretaries to pick up work from other offices, which then eases the workload across the firm and allows us to be a lot more balanced in the work that is being done."*

As squeezed law firms look to cut costs in an increasingly challenging market, digital dictation workflow solutions streamline work processes and help to increase productivity.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

The decision to introduce new IT systems, particularly in an unpredictable market, is not one that law firms can afford to take lightly.

"In my experience there are five main barriers to adoption: historical under-investment in IT legacy systems; reluctance to technological change; security concerns; uncertainty of business benefits; and time and cost of employee training," explains a specialist policy adviser at the Law Society.

Speaking to law firms across the market, the overall cost of implementation is naturally the biggest concern. In this respect, a cloud-based solution offers significant advantages over an internally-hosted product.

ADVANTAGES OF THE CLOUD

"With minimal upfront cost and no minimum term contract, SpeechWrite 360 can considerably reduce a law firm's voice workflow and dictation costs – coupled without the need for installation or costly infrastructure – this creates a really attractive and flexible proposition for our customers," says Andrew Davies, managing director at SpeechWrite Digital.

A cloud-based solution also offers ongoing cost benefits in terms of free product updates and upgrades.

The security issue, especially for law firms, is equally as important as price. SpeechWrite 360 is UK-hosted entirely in the cloud on Amazon Web Services (AWS). The AWS cloud infrastructure offers the most powerful, flexible and secure cloud-computing environment available – importantly in an increasingly regulated market, AWS services also comply with EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Other users of AWS services include major multinational corporations, such as Philips, BP and Unilever, and over 2000 government agencies, including the UK's own Ministry of Justice.

SOFTWARE INTEGRATION

Integration requirements also need to be considered. Do these new technology tools fully integrate with your current systems? If not, you may need to overhaul your IT infrastructure.

> "... it is simple to use; within half an hour I was up and using it. Those sorts of things are key to making the most of an IT product"
>
> **Oliver Price**
> Senior *Partner*
> *Wansbroughs Solicitors*

"SpeechWrite integrated simply with our key systems, we have had no problem there at all," says Price. *"The other thing is that it is simple to use; within half an hour I was up and using it. Those sorts of things are key to making the most of an IT product."*

Of course, as Price suggests, ease of use is extremely important. Money and time spent training employees to use laborious and difficult to navigate systems are resources wasted.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The level of technical support required should also be carefully considered. If you implement a self-managed product, generally speaking you are largely left to your own devices once it has been installed. However, with a subscription model based service you are also paying for access to product specialists who can provide ongoing support and assistance.

"We chose SpeechWrite because it seemed to be at the forefront of digital technology, backed by an excellent product with Philips. The product seemed to tick all the boxes in terms of what we needed as a firm and the offering was strengthened by the service and support that we wanted," says Kilby. *"On the odd occasion that we have had minor issues, the support team has always been instantly on hand. We have always had a good working relationship with the company."*

Finally, how can you measure the effectiveness of your software? Most new products provide in-built analytics, which discover, interpret and explain meaningful patterns in the data to ensure that you can monitor and action any issues in your systems. With cloud technology, users can access real-time data driven metrics to provide insight into organisational workflows and drive meaningful process improvement.

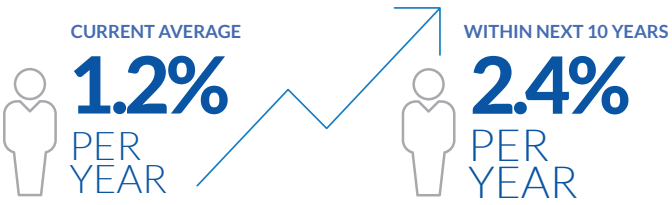
LOOKING AHEAD

Further efficiencies are needed because the legal market is set to get even more competitive, according to the Law Society's recent 'Legal Services Sector Forecast 2017-2025'. The report points to research that shows law firms are gradually adopting technologies automating legal functions, with functions previously carried out by qualified solicitors starting to be replaced as well as functions previously carried out by paralegals and support staff.

The Law Society projects that as new technologies continue to get adopted, the resulting rise in automaton of legal services functions could see output per person employed grow from its current average of 1.2% per year, to reach 2.4% per year within the next ten years – essentially doubling productivity within the next decade. Those figures stand against regulatory data showing the number of practising solicitors in England and Wales has reached an all-time high, passing 140,000 in 2017. Over the past five years alone, the number of solicitors has grown by 15,000. Increased productivity combined with an increased lawyer population suggests further pressure on price, particularly with the continuing proliferation of 'virtual' law firms driving down fees.

Against that challenging backdrop, staying ahead of the game in terms of efficiency-saving legal technology should stand firms in good stead down the line.

GROWTH IN PRODUCTIVITY



The resulting rise in automaton of legal services functions could see output per person employed doubling productivity

ABOUT US

SpeechWrite Digital are specialists in providing legal dictation and voice recognition solutions for solicitors.

Our solutions allow law firms to be more competitive, flexible, efficient and productive whilst also reducing costs.

Our practical technology, sophisticated yet simple, allows you to enhance your working environment and simply work smarter. We listen, learn and collaborate to support you through every stage of the process while also offering professional guidance and support along the way.

SpeechWrite Digital

For more information please contact our team:
0121 236 2626 | whitepaper@speechwrite.com
www.speechwrite.com