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Tech harmony

Gary Shaw, group commercial director at Accesspoint, on the mistakes firms make when it comes to people and tech

It might not be a surprise that the arrival of technology into legal practices over time has brought obstacles along the way, not least, employees who are unable or unwilling to adapt with the firm and as a result make new technology investments void. SME firms that cannot afford to let good investments go to waste should perhaps ask themselves 'how can we create harmony between people and technology?'.

A simple mistake made by many firms is to invest in complex systems, which will quickly overwhelm your end users. To avoid this, firms must provide sufficient resources to those who will be using the systems the most. Explore legal IT specialists for external support, as this can be the most cost and time effective method for SME firms with limited in-house resources. This method not only gives your firm the chance to get a third-party assessment and find out what automation processes they would benefit from most (not many firms can identify it themselves). But it will also allow your firm to get the required development and integration from one place, making training and maintenance easier for fee earners in need of ongoing support.

So, what technology should SME firms use to ease new users into legal IT?

Online portals are quickly becoming the 'must have' tool for firms wishing to deliver the fastest most efficient way to transition people within a firm to new technology methods, as they ensure processes such as client communication, secure file handling, team collaboration and more can be dealt with in one digital space.

Automation tools within admin and operations are also important and are perhaps key when looking at investing in new technology. When applied correctly they can drastically reduce the administrative cost and time spent completing mundane tasks that would usually be completed manually by the fee earner. Innovative forms – which can easily be integrated with a firm's website or case management system – are available in the marketplace and can provide remote, easy-to-use, and streamlined data capturing services for the people in the firm. Many of these intelligent forms are available for different areas of law such as family proceedings, conveyancing, will planning, new client onboarding and more.

For a law firm, it goes without saying that your duty to ensure the technology in the company is up to date and effective – and ensure the people handling the technology will get the most out of it both from a user experience and ultimately maximise your return on your investment. Explore different ways to engage your team so that firm-wide adoption can be achieved at the start – and hey presto, you'll quickly bridge the gap between people and technology. **LPM**

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