



HARNESSING IT

INTERVIEWS

Nigel Maud

PARTNER/COO



HART BROWN

Taylor Made
COMPUTER SOLUTIONS

HARNESSING IT

INTERVIEWS



In a series of interviews with Taylor Made Computer Solutions, directors reveal what they perceive to be the issues if IT is to deliver key objectives.

The interviews will be brought together as a report to be published by DECISION magazine and then as a digital book.

HARNESSING IT

INTERVIEWS

THE FACT THAT Nigel Maud is planning to go to a conference about artificial intelligence shows how intrinsic IT has become to the legal sector. As partner and chief operating officer at Hart Brown, a law firm with six offices and 100-plus staff, his role these days goes far beyond the actual practice of law.

"I need to find out what's happening in automation and artificial intelligence, and how the legal sector might be affected," he explains, saying that many lawyers underestimate the pace of change and possible impact of IT in their profession. Already, IT has done away with the need to manually search through huge quantities of paper-based precedents, and Maud predicts that kind of automation will make further advances.

"The impact of technology, allowing the crunching of data to provide information at high speeds, is quite scary," he observes.

The firm already allows clients to access information through a website portal, and the next step is to create apps, which will allow clients to log in and see what's happening with their case. Maud says apps won't be a huge benefit to the firm in terms of winning business, at least in the short term, but points out: "If you don't get ahead of the game by making it simpler for clients to have access to you, you will fall behind. This is about how clients expect to receive information."

At least, how some of them do. "Others still prefer to phone up and speak to a person," he adds, "so law firms have to get that balance right, ensuring qualified solicitors are on hand to talk to clients.

He's certainly not a fan of the 'always on' way of thinking, believing that people should have time away from work and from IT.

The knack of managing IT, he adds, is to make its use fit in with his firm's mission statement of being understanding, straightforward and professional.

Lawyers can be at best ambivalent towards computers, he says; their expectation can be that IT is going to be PHD (press here dummy) enabled; in other words easy to use. "The danger is that by taking out some of the more repetitive work, automation can make people think less. It will be challenging to ensure that lawyers don't rely on automation and its outputs."

Indeed, despite the potential of IT to automate some aspects of law, Maud believes that lawyers will always have a job. "Surgery is more an art than a science. The same with law. I have had clients who would print off a shareholders' agreement from the internet and then ask me 'is it OK?' And I will say 'OK for what? Making a paper plane? I can't tell you that it will do what you want it to do, because I don't know what you want it to do. Come and see me and I will draft it for you, or you can just take a punt on what you've printed off the internet.'"

Maud says firms have to be open-minded without being led by IT. "We will never be the first adopter of anything, but we won't be the last either," he declares. That said, Hart Brown were one of the first firms to get a case management system in the 1990s and are about to install a new one.

HARNESSING IT

INTERVIEWS



Lawyers though, says Maud, can be slow to adapt to a changing environment. “There’s still a lot of inertia. I don’t think some of them have grasped the changes to case management systems for example. There is still a reluctance to use speech recognition software, with a preference for the old ways of dictating into a recording device and having a secretary type their letters. Changing their behaviour is going to be interesting.”

Storage is increasingly cloud based, though backup data is still produced and stored off site by Hart Brown as a secondary measure. “Law firms get exercised about having to keep their own servers but I don’t think that is any more secure; and then there’s the added pressure of having to make sure the air conditioning works and allocating space for the equipment. For us what matters is that any system meets the requirements of our regulatory body.”

“The cloud will make the firm more resilient as each of the six offices will be able to log on separately, rather than via head office based and virtual servers.

One by product of this is that it will allow for more agile working, though Maud adds: “I would say that probably 90% of people still want to go to an office for at least part of the time; they like the routine, they like to have their own desk. Although hot desking works in certain circumstances, our aim is

to enable people to work how they want to. I don’t really care how people work as long as they are producing.”

Not surprisingly Hart Brown are (“still”) aiming to become paperless, although Maud points out that this probably should be read as in less paper. To scan existing documents could take years,” he fears. “It’s more practical just to hold onto the paper files for the statutory six years plus.”

HARNESSING IT

I N T E R V I E W S



Established in 1994, Taylor Made Computer Solutions are one of the largest and most highly-ranked IT service and support organisations in the south, currently employing over 110 staff.

Taylor Made are the first technology company in the region to have gained a third consecutive gold award from Investors in People. Taylor Made are also ISO 9001:2008 certified.

The company has been ranked in the top 10 managed service providers in Europe the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) in a leading annual industry survey from MSPmentor since 2012.

Taylor Made are a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, HP Preferred Partner and a NetApp Silver Partner.

Services include:

IT support, IT strategy, IT consultancy, hosted telephony, project management, Securo online back-up, hosted solutions, remote management and monitoring, cloud solutions, disaster recovery, remote access, outsource engineering, security, service desk support.

Researched and published by

DECISION magazine

www.decisionmagazine.co.uk

Taylor Made
COMPUTER SOLUTIONS

CamsHall Estate, Leroux House, Fareham PO16 8UL.

Office 01329 239 900 **Support** 01329 226 900 **Email** enquiries@tmcs.co.uk

www.tmcs.co.uk