



HARNESSING IT

INTERVIEWS

Alison Lee
MANAGING DIRECTOR



Taylor Made
COMPUTER SOLUTIONS

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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.

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LAW FIRMS ARE NOT exactly renowned for being leaders in technology but Alison Lee wants to change that. The managing director at Biscoes, whose name has survived for more than 160 years despite various mergers, intends to make the name known not so much for its history as for its forward thinking.

With this in mind Lee launched an “innovation think tank” to encourage the generation of new ideas. Staff are encouraged to join Lee for lunch to discuss their ideas for doing things better. That development follows the launch in 2017 of a new web platform and app, allowing clients to log in to a portal on which they can see all the documents relating to their case. The portal, she says, will be of particular appeal to conveyancing clients, as it adds greater convenience to the house-buying process.

The aim is to help clients interact with the firm’s 100 staff and six offices in a more modern way, says Lee, who sees the app as an opportunity to keep the firm’s name in front of clients and to promote other services. It’s a form of future proofing, she adds, since clients will increasingly want to do more things online. “A lot of our current clients are very traditional but the sooner we get used to working in a more agile way, the better able we will be to meet the needs of future clients. Why should we continue to do things how they have always been done?”

Lee says that after more than two decades as a lawyer she has enjoyed the transition to the role of managing director which she assumed three years ago. In particular she has taken a keen interest in how IT can benefit the firm’s staff and clients and likes to keep her ear to the ground to keep up with new developments that could have useful applications.

“At last year’s conference held by LawNet, the network of independent law firms of which Biscoes are a member), there was a talk about how different generations view life differently,” she recalls. “I was very taken with the idea that the young people who will be the property owners and clients of the future are very technology savvy and will want to do things online. For example, they could get notifications on their mobiles about exchanges of contract or the progress of divorce cases. For millennials it’s not IT, it’s just stuff. They don’t want to get this information in a letter and we have to deal with that.”

Firms also need to get on top of social media, she maintains. “It’s massive, so we have to get out there and learn it.”

Then there’s artificial intelligence. “I’ve just got my head around apps, which a lot of firms our size are not even thinking about,” says Lee. “But AI could be used in case analysis, to tell us, for example, what the likely rate of damages is, or to advise what kind of searches need to be done.”

Lee also speculates that clients could use fingerprint ID to authorise payments in conveyancing.

Interestingly, she hasn’t experienced much resistance internally, saying that the current generation of solicitors sees IT as part and parcel

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of the flexible working and work-life balance that they are keen on. “And young solicitors want to interact with clients in a more progressive way,” she points out.

But Lee hasn’t failed to factor in the adage that your IT is only as good as your training and support. “If IT doesn’t work as well as you were expecting, it’s probably because you haven’t done the right training or provided the support which was needed. It’s an evolving process though. Often, it takes time for people to realise the potential of the package they are using, that they are using it as effectively as possible.”

Which means it can take more time to recoup the financial investment in IT. “And there’s always a risk that you will invest in something that doesn’t work as you thought it would,” says Lee. “Only when you are using IT as effectively as possible can you be sure you are getting the best out of it. “

Ironically, traditional methods are applied to ensure that the internet behaves itself with financial transactions. Clients are told not to respond to any communication purporting to tell them that the firm has changed its bank details. Furthermore, Biscoes won’t accept changes of client bank account information via e-mail; the details need to be provided manually by a customer filling a form, or over the phone having verified who they are. In due course that will be via an app which will have end-to-end security in the same way as banking apps.

But Lee makes the point that fear of the risks can hinder progress. “You can get bogged down by compliance and scare yourself out of doing things that are a good idea. Let’s be prepared to manage the risks, or we can talk ourselves out of progress.”

The gradual move to a paperless environment is

perhaps best illustrated by a trial of a new document sharing system for use in court. The relevant documents were shared with Biscoes and the other parties on a USB stick, with the system enabling everyone in court to see the same page at the same time on screen.

Lee says that did away with the need for the traditional lawyer’s briefcase full of paper documents. “In the future, all my files will be on a bunch of USB sticks with the file names on,” she says, glancing at the stacks of paper files taking up space in her office.

Increased use of IT has meant a change in recruitment criteria, with a new focus on people who are engaged with IT as well as having the usual legal skills. To this end, applicants are encouraged to make their presentations during interviews on a computer. Lee was impressed with one who used an iPad to give a PowerPoint presentation.

“This was in private client law, which is traditionally paper based, but there was no handwritten work at all,” says Lee approvingly. “She had the right mentality.”

But Lee is conscious of the need to maintain personal contact, and Biscoes use ‘anonymous shopper’ to check their quality of service. “If they say that they have rung on a number of occasions and didn’t get to speak to a solicitor, for example, I know we have a problem that could affect the relationship with the client,” she says.

One area for improvement highlighted by the anonymous shopper, she adds, was that she didn’t have a personal message on her voice mail. She has subsequently told all the staff to record their own to improve the client experience.

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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.

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CamsHall Estate, Leroux House, Fareham PO16 8UL.

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

www.tmcs.co.uk