

A man and a woman are standing in a modern office, looking at a tablet together. The woman is on the left, wearing a green shirt and brown pants, and the man is on the right, wearing a maroon sweater over a light blue shirt. They are both smiling and looking at the tablet. The background shows office furniture and a large window.

# How can legal services firms attract and retain the right talent?

Why developing the right Employee Experience is crucial to future success in a post Covid-19 world

The world is how we shape it

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# Introduction

***Over the past 5 years the legal profession has undergone significant changes in relation to attracting and retaining key talent within their organisations. However whilst many legal services firms have made improvements to their strategy and the underpinning processes regarding talent management, work still needs to be done to make sure they continue to discover new talent outside their organisation and give existing employees fulfilling and rewarding career paths.***

Covid-19 has made all legal services firms review their business models and in turn their talent recruitment and retention strategies. As the world has moved to remote working many Law firms are finding their existing employee value propositions and processes are no longer fit for purpose. To remain competitive and attract the best candidates in the market and retain the talent they already have they will need to transform how they think about attracting, developing and changing the skills bases in their workforces. So where should Legal firms start? At Sopra Steria we believe the development of the right Employee Value Proposition aligned to a clear Employee

Experience is a must have in the 'new normal' world we are all part of. Just maintaining the same strategy or adding parts to it will no longer suffice. Instead legal services firms need to re-think their Employee Value Proposition across 3 areas – **Partners and Senior Managers, Fee Earning Lawyers and Back Office/Functional Employees**, if they are to remain competitive and ahead of the competition. After all the provision of legal services is a people business with trust at the heart of it.

Large Legal firms must have a focused talent strategy which is agile, scalable and can take into account changing client needs, geographic complexities and enables them to compete with new entrants to the market and niche players who are specialising in specific areas. The most successful Legal firms will be those who adopt a flexible approach to talent management and put in place the right systems, processes and people to enable them to compete.





# Understanding the key challenges

***As identified in the introduction section of this article the legal profession in the UK has had to constantly change and adapt to rising client expectations, technology developments, legislation amendments, new market entrants and different demographics of employees entering the marketplace. Key challenges large Legal Services firms have faced and are currently facing include:***



## Clients becoming more demanding

Clients have always expected quality services and value for money. However as the world has continued to change over the past 5 years clients are now demanding access to information when they want it not just when a lawyer provides them with it. Additionally when making decisions of who to employ to represent them legally clients now want access to win rates, transparent fee structures and business cases so they can assess what the outcomes are likely to be if they invest in legal action. Again the recruitment of the right lawyers, sales people and administration staff is crucial if Legal services firms are going to continue to compete in a digitally transformed world.



## Shift in skill sets

A move to digital channels for interaction has meant lawyers need to be technically astute. Additionally new laws and regulations coming into force around technology, data and security means law practices will need to attract new talent in these areas which were previously seen as being quite niche.



## Technology disruption

RPA/AI was slow to be adopted in the legal services sector. However many large Legal services firms are now utilising this technology to help them speed up many administrative processes and take costs out of their back office functions. The result of the wide scale adoption of this technology has meant many lower skilled administrative jobs are no longer required, but instead have been replaced by higher skilled technology workers. Additionally the use of data and the adoption of advanced analytics tools are enabling many legal services firms to start realising the power of the data they hold helping them with case reviews, winning new business, better business decision making and the creation of marketing campaigns.



## Data management and maintenance

The use of data in legal services is being seen as a competitive differentiator. However to extract value from data the right data management and maintenance structures must be in place. The Legal services sector is not unique in recognising data can be a competitive differentiator so the war for talent in this space is actually across sector. Legal services firms need to find the right talent globally if they are to succeed in this area and stay ahead of the competition.



## Regulatory changes opening up the marketplace

The Legal Services Act 2007 was meant to make the legal services sector more competitive and encourage new business models to evolve. It is safe to say this change in regulation didn't really have the desired effect until 2017/18. However since the world has moved to become more digital this change in legislation is actually enabling Alternative Business Structures to be created with many niche/specialist firms now in operation and actively competing against the traditional players in the Legal Services market.

All of the above are impacting Legal services firms ability to attract and retain talent in terms of having access to the right employees to satisfy client demands and making sure their business models are robust and fit for purpose in the future. The above highlighted challenges could be seen as a major risk to large traditional law firms or they could be seen as an opportunity to refresh their Employee Value Proposition and position themselves for future growth.



# Where should Legal Firm's focus?

***It is probably no surprise to leaders and partners in law firms that the advice would be to first of all focus on what they want to achieve as a business then implement the right talent management strategy. However this simple statement is far from easy. Senior leaders and partners in law firms should be thinking about the major internal and external challenges they face then work on developing the right Employee Experience.***

As recognised in the challenges section of this article attracting, recruiting and retaining the right people to create and deliver the organisations strategy is crucial for achieving future business objectives. This means creating the right Employee Experience is crucial to your legal firms success and it must not be underestimated. Employee Experience is formed in the minds of prospective employees well before they become a part of your organisation.

It starts with their experience of the hiring process (including touchpoints such as your website and third party recruitment agencies for example). Additionally for existing staff it isn't just a staff survey once a year and an accessible HR department by phone or email. It's the work environment, the culture, the leadership style, the ease of accessing information, giving employees

access to the right equipment to do the job being asked of them and of course the employee's impressions and perception of the organisation gathered through their thoughts, observations, and feelings.

“

**A good Employee Experience makes employees feel welcome, appreciated and creates a personal bond between the employee and the organisation they are working for.**

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I'm sure many of you reading this article can remember good and bad Employee Experiences and share them with your colleagues, friends and family. Employee Experience isn't just an idea or concept to keep your employees happy. It's a critical success factor for all business leaders both now during the Covid-19 pandemic and will play a crucial role in how organisations are set up for success in the future.





# Key questions legal firms need to ask when developing their Employee Experience strategy



1. How engaged are my existing employees? Can we easily set up surveys to find out?
2. Can our public facing website and social channels be easily accessed and used by potential candidates?
3. Do we have access to the right data and information to find out what our existing employees think of the firm and what external candidates think of us?
4. Can we create the right reports for senior managers and partners so they can further understand the needs of the workforce?
5. Can we create action plans which are visible across all areas of the organisation?
6. Can employees access the information they need when they need it?
7. Are we reliant on manual intervention to answer basic employee questions?
8. Do we truly understand employees lifecycles for different groups of employees and what their triggers for leaving are?
9. Can senior managers easily access information about the recruitment process and see where poor systems and processes may be hindering the attraction of future talent?
10. Can employees easily access the benefits they are entitled to?
11. Is the rewards programme easily understood by employees and are they actively engaged in using it?

# Developing the right way forward

*To develop the right Employee Experience a digital strategy needs to be at the centre of it. A truly 'digital' Employee Experience capability is seductive but needs to be delivered within the context of a well thought-through and tested Employee Value Proposition, which also takes into account the understanding of the expected Employee Experience.*

If an Employee Experience solution is poorly delivered, does not take into account an employee's day to day requirements or is not sufficiently tested, organisations can be left with an expensive technology solution and disconnected/disillusioned employees or prospective candidates. In recent years we have seen some of the best Customer Experience (CX) programmes revolutionise the way how customers can access information and interact with organisations.

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The most successful customer experience consultancy partners believe that what's best for the customer is best for the business.  
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For example a good Customer Experience consultancy will help an organisation to:

- Understand their customers like never before – taking into account the different touchpoints and interactions with an organisation. Making them easier to do business with
- Reimagine products and services so they are relevant and articulate how they can solve their customers problems and issues in a timely manner
- Bring new and better services to market which helps their customers today, in the future and differentiates them from the competition
- Put in place the right processes, communication tools and resources to become a truly customer-centred organisation

At Sopra Steria we believe we should take the learning's and best practices from these stand out Customer Experience programmes of work and apply them to the Employee Experience.



Your employees are just as an important asset to your company alongside your clients. So why should Law firms do all the hard work of attracting clients through a great experience and risk losing their employees who will ultimately enable the organisation to service them? Surely what would make sense is to create the right Employee Experience so employees remain part of your organisation and you can continue to deliver to the high standards set from your Customer Experience programmes of work.

An employee centric approach should be at the heart of all HR strategies defining not just what HR does but how HR does it. This will take time and is not an easy task. But starting with your employees requirements first before you start re-designing your Employee Experience journey will ensure that your digital and process simplification programme of work is clearly aligned with both corporate ambition and employee expectations.

**Digital transformation projects aimed at improving performance, productivity and the Employee Experience are only going to be successful when they championed by HR even if the primary beneficiaries are leaders and employees delivering wider business benefits including:**



### Increased Productivity

Automating of routine tasks and processes that releases administrative effort and improves the Employee Experience.



### Cost Reduction

Removing and simplifying process steps that liberate costs with obvious bottom-line benefit.



### Improved Engagement

Improving employee perception and engagement with well-defined benefits for customers and the business alike.



### Improved HR Effectiveness

Reducing the transactional and process burden on HR teams enabling them to commit to strategic projects and programmes of work.





# Critical success factors in developing the right Employee Experience

Having been on the journey ourselves at Sopra Steria we have found 4 critical success factors to creating an engaging Employee Experience which we believe Legal services firms can adopt:

- A single-minded focus on process simplification and integration underpinned by the technology, (including AI, Chatbots etc.) that makes delivery of a great Employee Experience repeatable, sustainable and cost effective
- Strong and compelling BI; timely qualitative and quantitative metrics underpinned by high levels of data integrity that ensure trust in the messages
- Technology and process changes which demonstrably empower leaders to manage and make better decisions and employees feel ownership of their own experiences at work
- Strong HR governance which enables HR teams to see and take action on real-time data

unthinkable ten years ago. But technology is only one part of the equation. In the post Covid-19 world a positive Employee Experience is going to become a key differentiator in the search and retention of talent, as current and prospective employees seek meaningful work and want to work for organisations with a clear purpose.

Attracting and retaining high-quality talent in Legal Services will require identifying the right people and employing them combined with an Employee Experience which gives them access to the right information, tools, equipment and the development of a culture where they are rewarded not only with pay and incentives but a great working experience as well.

For the individual	For the Legal Firm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access the right courses so they can keep skills up to date</li> <li>• Clear how to progress and career pathways in place</li> <li>• Information on benefits packages is available</li> <li>• Information to be able to do jobs effectively is readily accessible on any device and in relevant languages</li> <li>• Questions and queries regarding the organisation answered in a timely and appropriate manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The deployment of Automation/AI technologies</li> <li>• Systems, technology and processes joined up</li> <li>• The right skills training available to employees at different stages of their career</li> <li>• Information is available in different languages so all employees can have a consistent Employee Experience</li> <li>• Data and information is managed and maintained correctly and can be accessed via employees and senior leaders when they need it</li> <li>• Business systems and processes will be able to clearly show value for money and where gaps exist</li> </ul>

*Table 1 – Key factors which will affect the Employee Experience in Legal Services Firms in the future*

Many of the technology advancements we have seen in the HR space in Legal services firms regarding Employee Experience were

# Final thoughts

***The legal services market is clearly going through a sustained period of change. The attraction and retention of talent is going to be intrinsically linked to law firm success in a post Covid-19 world. To attract and retain the right talent necessary Legal Firms must examine their existing Employee Experience and ask themselves if it fits for purpose today and for the future.***

This will involve making sure the right capabilities are available within the organisation or accessed by third party trusted partners. At Sopra Steria we believe the following key factors will underpin the development of the right Employee Experience for legal firms in the future:



## Access to the right information

Data must be connected and available to HR teams, employees, senior managers and partners with reports available on any device at any time.



## Agile and flexible support models

Changes to data, information and employee requirements must be responded to in real time. This means having technology and processes in place which are agile, responsive and allow the business to deliver the right Employee Experience outcome at every touchpoint.



## A clear focus on the end result

The Employee Experience must be designed with employees at the heart of it. It cannot exist via silo'd information or poor access to services employees need to undertake their day to day jobs.



## Self service and automation

Employees need access to the information they need immediately. Being able to self serve and answer queries, questions and gain the right insights is a 'must have' not a 'nice to have'.



## Improvements through insight

Continuous improvement to the Employee Experience must be at the forefront of every Senior Manager, Partner and HR departments mind. If employees feel they are not receiving the information they need they will quickly become disillusioned and leave the organisation.



## Access to new skills the organisation needs

The Employee Experience starts when a candidate accesses your website for the first time and continues when they are recruited in the organisation. To win in the war for talent the Employee Experience must be brilliant from start to finish with no gaps in between.

**Now is the right time for business leaders to review their existing Employee Experience and plan for the future. Those Legal Services organisations who take the time to create the right Employee Experience today will be at a real strategic advantage in a post Covid-19 world.**

## More Information

Sopra Steria is a global provider of strategic HR technology solutions. Our HR technology services have been specifically designed to help legal organisations overcome their people, technology and business challenges. By working with Sopra Steria, HR departments can unlock a range of business and technology benefits across talent management, payroll, time and attendance and the potential of their organisations data through our HR analytics platform.

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**We look forward to working with you.**



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