



# Overcoming **The Legal Services** Legacy Technology Conundrum

Practical steps for making sure the right technology migrations take place for greater business benefits and competitive advantage

# Introduction

In Legal Services everyone seems to be talking about new technology and how it can enhance their business today and in the future. But before Legal Services firms get carried away with looking at future technology trends they should remember that **60%+** of their IT budget will still be allocated to keeping legacy technology running so the business can continue to operate.

Whilst much has been written about the topic of '**digital transformation**' and many promises have been made in terms of cost savings, improved client experiences and access to better data and reporting the reality is quite different. From Sopra Steria's own research we have found that:

- **62%** of organisations feel they being held back by legacy systems and processes
- **61%** are suffering from system complexity issues
- **71%** of organisations believe they will have migrated the majority of their workloads to the cloud by 2022 but Gartner claims 80% of workloads are still on premise
- Over **20%** of large scale digital transformation projects have been cancelled within the last 12 months

So if the disconnect between reality vs promise exists around the transformation of legacy technology **What do Legal Services firms need to concentrate on to get back on track?**





# Understanding **the challenges** ahead

Most legal services organisations will already have an IT strategy which they believe is linked to what the business needs to achieve from a client, employee and operational perspective. However in recent years many Legal Services IT teams have been too focused on future technologies they need to adopt without giving due consideration to their existing technology systems and processes which may need to be upgraded, maintained or retired so new technology can be deployed and have the impact the legal services firm is looking for. At Sopra Steria we have found the main challenges Legal Services IT teams are facing around legacy technology infrastructure and systems include:

- Understanding the age of the technology in use and documenting processes for maintaining it
- Over reliance on 1 or 2 skilled staff members to manage and maintain specific technologies - what happens when they retire or leave the organisation?
- A lack of understanding around the capabilities of older technology infrastructure meaning the impact of outages on the wider organisation has not been calculated
- Little/no understanding of technical debt around legacy technology infrastructure
- Data not being stored or backed up correctly – quite often as data is silo'd end users will find it difficult to find, retrieve and use the data they need to be able to do their jobs effectively
- As many legacy technologies are out of warranty or past their end of life date this leaves them open to cyber security attacks
- The business unwilling to change existing processes and ways of working which rely on legacy technology being available
- Limited IT budgets being made available for the migration/upgrade of business critical technology
- Changing legislation means processes are generally fixed first as the effect rather than reviewing the root cause of being non compliant
- Aversion to risk by management teams – if it is working why do we need to upgrade it?



Quite often because of the issues highlighted in the box on the left hand side of the page there is a never a right time to **upgrade legacy technology infrastructure and systems** resulting in:

- Costs of maintaining old technology becomes greater than replacing it with new technology
- Reduced technology efficiency preventing necessary changes to services
- Supplier support for technology is no longer available
- The contract for technology or its attached services is due to expire with no option for renewal
- The risk of maintaining technology becomes too great for new technology initiatives to be deployed



# Developing **the right approach** for legacy technology transformation

As identified in the previous section of this article it is important Legal Services firms have a defined and clear approach when looking to upgrade their technology infrastructure. As we have seen from Sopra Steria's own research legacy technology processes and systems are hindering business performance. Quite often when transformative projects fail or are cancelled it is because the key factors to a successful upgrade were not considered at the appropriate time. So what are they?

## What are your organisation's business needs, processes and culture?

Before starting any legacy technology transformation project it is important for IT teams to first of all ask business stakeholders what their requirements and expectations are of IT and then work back to the system, process or technology which is going to be changed. If the IT team works in a silo and just changes or migrates to a newer technology quite often they will face a flurry of 1<sup>st</sup> line calls as users will be taken by surprise of the change. This can result in short term dissatisfaction with the IT team and a lack of confidence and less budget availability in the future if it has adversely affected a senior manager. By being up front with business teams about the change and the potential impact many of these challenges can be overcome.

**To make sure there are as few blockers to upgrading legacy infrastructure IT leaders should:**

- Capture senior managers priorities and concerns and address them in the planning phase
- Make sure the business unit(s) which may be affected by the change understand the benefits of migrating and is willing to change their processes
- Take time to understand end user's appetite for change – articulate to them why changing current working practices will be beneficial and short term pain will result in long term gain
- Involve senior managers as part of the research process – they may be able to outline business benefits or remove blockers before they happen
- Allocate time and budget to user testing and training
- Develop a strong communication plan to keep users informed of the changes happening
- Undertake a risk evaluation for the proposed changes and include mitigations for each risk
- Show how you will manage supplier relationships and whether you have a good knowledge of their future plans

## 7 Steps to Technology Transformation

1. Start with considering your organisations business needs, processes and culture
2. Have a technology upgrade plan and then continuously review and improve it
3. Build an accurate register of all technology assets
4. Take time to understand the full extent of your technology infrastructure and systems
5. Build the right skills base in your IT team or partner with a trusted provider
6. Have a flexible and responsive IT service support model which takes into account legacy vs new technology issues
7. Agree and develop a technology upgrade roadmap which takes into account design, build and budgets required so all stakeholders can assess the impact of investment

## Have a technology upgrade plan and continuously upgrade and improve it

Too often we see many organisations create a legacy technology improvement plan only for it to sit on a shelf or on someone's desk and never be re-visited. At Sopra Steria we believe a legacy technology upgrade plan should be continuously reviewed, improved and adapted to changing business needs. By adopting this approach iterative or phased migrations can occur and prevent the accumulation of future legacy technology debt.

**The benefits from continuously reviewing and improving the legacy technology upgrade plan include:**

- A phased approach to the retirement of technology – this is usually cheaper and simpler than a full decommissioning legacy project
- Reduction of risks to your systems and infrastructure throughout a migration process
- A clear focus on the reduction of legacy technical debt

- The ability to regularly check which technology will be impacted by the upgrade and put appropriate plans in place for anything that might have been missed at the initial scoping stage
- Clearly documenting any changes and additions made to the technology
- Having the ability to use architects and senior technical staff to help check the documentation, systems and infrastructure
- Make sure the changes made remain compatible and integrated with the rest of your systems and infrastructure

## Build an accurate register of all technology assets

The assets and data stored within those assets is valuable information to the organisation you work for. Understanding your data and information will be an important factor in any legacy renewal programme. Your organisation will need a data or information assets register for security and privacy reasons. This is a record of all the information you hold such as the technical documentation for all of your IT architecture and products. It will usually tell you - The type of information you have, where

the information is stored, how the information is secured and how the information should be handled. Whoever is in charge of the legacy migration project should check the data asset register regularly and keep it up to date with any changes made. These checks may also highlight any additional technology that has become legacy and should be on the migration roadmap.



## Take time to understand the full extent of your technology infrastructure and systems

Your organisation may have documentation showing the full extent of your systems and infrastructure, but in many cases we have found documentation is not kept up to date. There are many reasons why this may be the case including how your IT infrastructure has evolved over time or because of key personnel moving on or retiring. Before any changes take place it is suggested a Senior Architect or Technologist is employed to do the discovery work so you can be sure of all the critical dependencies and risks associated with migrating legacy technology infrastructure.

Linked to point 2 of our 7 step approach, regular IT infrastructure reviews should be included as part of the migration plan. These reviews should be undertaken to check what is in the plan is actually true and if there are any surprises they are identified before the actual work takes place. IT infrastructure reviews usually have several parts to them including infrastructure, performance management, service availability, security management and capacity management. These surveys should also consider administration and business processes, if the existing infrastructure meets organisational and user requirements,

whether infrastructure integrations are up to date, security and other risks that may be affecting systems. By making sure everything is clearly documented for ease of reference when the project actually starts it should act as valuable resource to whoever is working on it.



## Build the right skills base in your IT team or partner with a trusted provider

It has been well documented that there is a critical shortage of IT skills available in the UK. Additionally many staff who operate or manage legacy systems are coming up for retirement. This means it is important to take a skills audit as part of your legacy technology upgrade plan. You may be surprised to see some of the gaps which exist. If you do not have the right skills within your own organisation you will have to turn to a specialist partner to undertake the work. This shouldn't be seen as a negative. It may actually turn out to be a positive move as a partner with many years experience in technology, systems and processes across different sectors may be able to provide you with information, technical knowledge or better ways of completing the migration that you didn't realise existed.

## Have a flexible and responsive IT service support model which takes into account legacy vs new technology issues

Your organisation is likely to be moving technology into the cloud, be upgrading business critical applications or be looking to make sure existing legacy technology can run new processes to support the business. As this move occurs you will need to consider how to make your IT service model more flexible. As part of your Legacy Infrastructure upgrade you need to ensure your existing IT service model can satisfy users needs throughout the migration process and afterwards, that the IT team's governance structure and processes are fully aligned to the IT and business strategies and operational processes are flexible to support both new technology or the depreciation of legacy technologies. Additionally you should also decide how you prioritise your technology migration and assess whether a change to the business would be a more flexible solution.

## Agree and develop a technology upgrade roadmap which takes into account design, build and budgets required so all stakeholders can assess the impact of investment

The final stage of the 7 step approach is to make sure any future technology roadmap takes into account users needs, can be shared across senior management teams and is easy to maintain and use. The legacy migration project plans you put in place should have a clear business case which articulates the compelling reasons for change and value for money.



## Final Thoughts

The lifecycle of technology is becoming shorter every year. In the legal services market new competitors are disrupting the industry by basing their technology strategy firmly in the cloud. They do not have the legacy technology overheads established firms face. Additionally client and end user computing demands are rising and any outage is costly not only in terms of potential lost revenue or staff productivity but in terms of the brand reputation and overall client experience. Much has been written about the potential of 'digital transformation' in the Legal Services sector. In many cases IT teams in the legal sector have taken their focus away from the legacy systems and processes which actually help their organisations to operate day in day out.

Legacy system and infrastructure modernisation cannot simply be an upgrade any more. It must be underpinned by the right approach, plan and people in place. Understanding what to get right and the elements of your IT system necessary to reach your organisations goals is essential. Just as important is knowing how to get it right; how to plan, invest, design, and engage key stakeholders around legacy technology modernisation is equally important as we have outlined in this article.



## More Information

Sopra Steria has a deep understanding of the legal services industry and the challenges all organisations are facing in this changing and disrupted market. Our industry experts are able to advise, design, deploy and manage your technology and IT services to help you deliver better customer experiences, empower your staff and make sure you stay one step of the competition.

**For more information on the services we provide to Legal Services firms please contact:**

**Barry Fazackerley**

Executive Director – Financial & Legal Services

E: [barry.fazackerley@soprasteria.com](mailto:barry.fazackerley@soprasteria.com)

Or you can visit our website at [www.soprasteria.co.uk](http://www.soprasteria.co.uk)

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

The world is how we shape it

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