

solutions for

legal people



CASE STUDY

Scottish Law Firm Streamlines its Practice

Anderson Solicitors LLP, formerly Gilbert Anderson & Partners, was founded in 1994 by four partners. Since then, the firm has expanded to more than double its original size and today has a total of nine partners and around 50 employees. Its two offices in Glasgow and Edinburgh serve a client base throughout the UK and beyond and the firm is expert in the areas of insurance, commercial and employment law with a growing private client practice. The firm serves all Sheriff Courts throughout Scotland and its Edinburgh presence ensures that the needs of clients are also serviced at Scotland's highest civil court of first instance, the Court of Session. The firm is a major provider of legal services in the main areas of professional work with a wide and expanding client base and a quality working environment for partners and employers.

In 1998 Alan Taylor, a Partner, joined the firm as Associate Partner and was appointed to the firm's IT Committee which was established for the purpose of reviewing the IT system that was in place. It was widely recognised across the firm that the development of a fully automated system was needed in order to increase productivity and exceed client expectations. This meant a complete overhaul of the existing system based around dumb terminals and a carefully considered and extensive investment in both hardware and software to suit the firm's needs. After fully reviewing the legal IT market and the various services on offer, four legal IT suppliers were short-listed from a larger number of IT firms each offering their own unique strengths. In a final decision, the case management system, ease of use and functionality offered by TFB's Partner Windows Suite, was found to be ideally suited to the needs of the firm.

Nature of work

The nature of the work carried out by Andersons in the insurance field means that staff are dealing with a high volume of cases that require fast and efficient resolution. The firm recognised that this type of work benefits greatly from a high level of automation, which is answered by a case management system such as TFBs. Working in harmony with the Microsoft Office suite, the TFB solution also enables many of the administrative functions, such as diary planning, contact databases and simple word processing, to be easily integrated. Back-office functions, such as the accounts system, can also be fully integrated, enabling an accurate and accessible flow of

solutions for

legal people



CASE STUDY

information across the firm. This functionality was seen to be uniquely addressed by TFB with other solutions failing to offer the same levels of ease-of-use and adaptability.

Reporting Function

The Anderson Partnership is keen to maintain regular and efficient communications with both its private and institutional clients, who require to be updated and fully aware of progress. This means that information regarding any one case must be accessible and presentable. The reporting functionality offered by TFB's Partner for Windows suite enables reports to be produced quickly and effectively. Information regarding any one case or client can be retrieved at the click of a mouse and used in a number of ways. Solicitors can easily provide information in anticipation of the queries that clients may have. Increased communication with clients and a fully informative process also help to dispel the traditional image of lawyers as being inaccessible and evasive. From an internal perspective, it also means that the firm has access to the types of reports required to provide information that is crucial to the management and planning of the firm.

Internal & external benefits

As with any new system, the speed of implementation and rate of adoption are paramount to its success. The Anderson Partnership was able to transfer all existing case details onto the new system, with TFB on hand to resolve any possible problems they encountered. A training programme was also set up, with meetings and seminars providing staff with manageable goals and support.

Though clients do not see the internal workings of the system, the benefits that it provides are very clear to them. Often, their questions are answered before they are put to their solicitor, avoiding the need to chase information and saving solicitors from providing a reactionary service by constantly playing catch-up. This way, clients receive the information they need and solicitors can work in a more relaxed and controlled manner.

The time-savings achieved by the solution have also gone a long way to increasing the turnover of cases and, therefore, the productivity of the firm. Staff can spend less time carrying out repetitive tasks as these are eliminated by the supply of accurate and easily accessible information.

solutions for

legal people



CASE STUDY

Fee-earners do not require as much administrative support from their secretaries and can carry out much of their own administration from their PCs. Letters and documents can be drafted, formatted and typed more quickly and accurately than a dictation is recorded. Time spent giving instructions to secretaries is freed-up as much of the client and case information is on-hand for the whole firm. For the administrative staff, this means a more efficient and rapid completion of work and therefore a more productive working day.

The new technology has brought with it many added advantages that the former system failed to offer. Communication across the firm has greatly improved through the use of email. This has also improved client communication and relationships. Furthermore, easier communication with intermediaries such as insurance companies has helped to enhance referral rates and consolidate partnerships.

Embracing technology

"IT is part of everyone's work but we like to encourage individuals to get the most from the system in order to appreciate the benefits," comments Alan Taylor. "TFB is constantly developing the Partner for Windows solution, adding new features and consequently, as the system is continually upgraded at no additional cost, we are still not utilising it to its full capacity", comments Taylor. The role of the firm's IT Manager, Steve Neville, who recently joined the firm, will be to ensure that this is done. He will ensure that the firm is aware of all advances in technology and he will spend time training the staff and refreshing their IT skills in order to ensure that the firm is getting the most out of system. Alan Taylor adds "We are keen to be seen as a law firm at the forefront of technology and we would like to provide our clients with a service that matches their technology capabilities. This means developing an interactive system that will provide secure access to client information." The firm's partners are keen to embrace technology as they see IT as the way forward to ensure that clients are provided with the best service. The Anderson Partnership was the first firm of solicitors in Scotland to achieve a settlement of a client's claim over the internet through an on-line dispute intermediary. The firm is keen to continue working with online portals, recognising that it is to these that clients are increasingly turning, for the service they need.

Future

solutions for

legal people



CASE STUDY

Following the success of the implementation across the firm, The Anderson Partnership is now looking to increase communication and efficiency. It plans to further integrate the workings of its two offices, enabling closer contact between staff and an easily accessible flow of information across the firm. The firm intends to work closely with TFB to develop its IT strategy and make the most of the services on offer.

For further information please contact TFB on enquiries@tfbplc.co.uk or call 01489 609000