

THE LAW SOCIETY BOOSTS STAFF PRODUCTIVITY AND MEMBER SERVICES WITH NEW COLLABORATIVE, COMPLIANT, AND SECURE DIGITAL WORKPLACE



The Law Society is the independent professional body for solicitors in England and Wales. For nearly 200 years, the Society has championed solicitors working in the public interest and their role in protecting rights and promoting justice for all. It has over 200,000 members who are at the heart of everything the Society does.

The Challenge

The Law Society was undergoing a cross-organisational transformation programme which accelerated their move to a digital workplace; the digital solution had to assure staff that collaborative software was secure; the new programme was introduced at a time of Covid lockdown disruption and over the financial year end; a proportion of the in-house IT department staff were relatively new to the organisation; timelines were tight and 'change fatigue' was a constant concern.

Location

London and Cardiff, United Kingdom, and Brussels, Belgium

Industry

Legal Profession

Products

SharePoint, Microsoft Teams, Change Management

Separate Roles

For many years, the Law Society and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) – respectively the professional body and regulatory arm of the Law Society Group - had operated shared services, including IT. The need to create two autonomous organisations would have a major effect on the operations for both, requiring each to deliver major transformation programmes to provide their own discrete IT capabilities and architectures. The Law Society Council, recognising the vital importance of this requirement, invested in new IT programmes for both organisational arms of the Group.

“The IT programme tackled the fundamental infrastructure and application issues we had faced over time with the shared service. We took the opportunity to streamline our applications by removing duplication and multiple versions, while upgrading and standardising on Microsoft 365 and Windows 10 software.”

These initial improvements started in 2017, well ahead of the first Covid 19 lockdown period, and the fire in our offices just the month before this, enabling Society staff to continue to work effectively from home when these incidents struck.

“The aims of the original IT programme received a major revision with the appointment of a new CEO who was committed to transforming the way in which the overall business operated,” says Jane Deal.

“As a result, an overarching transformation programme, **Shaping our Future**, was created. At its centre was a new culture, operating model and strategy for supporting members. We needed to establish effective collaboration to enable our new strategy and ways of working, so we implemented our **Digital Workplace** programme.”

Jane Deal, Operational Director - IT

Digital First

Digital Workplace was designed to enable everyone in the Law Society to work together more effectively through collaboration and information sharing, while improving security and compliance and getting the most out of Microsoft Office 365 tools.

Staff had to be able to find information easily and trust it to be true. They needed to be confident that the document they were using was the latest and only version, securely stored, and shared only with those who needed it. People required access to information and the ability to view and edit documents on whichever device they were using, wherever they were working.



The core plan for this phase of Digital Workplace was to migrate documents and content from multiple locations to one single, secure location in Microsoft SharePoint. Microsoft 365 applications would be installed, properly supported, and kept up to date. To achieve success, staff would need to recognise the benefits of the new ways of working and how the new tools can help them be more productive.

“ Our aim is to equip people to work effectively and creatively together in order to respond to our members' needs. ”

Jane Deal, Operational Director - IT

says Jane Deal. “We want to be more responsive to our members and will only achieve this by building the right working environment for success and working together effectively.”

| Delivering the Vision

Digital Workplace was an ambitious programme. Jane Deal's team recognised they needed a partner with deep experience and expertise to help them deliver against several major challenges.

Above all, the programme's objectives represented a substantial change in ways of working for the organisation. Achieving them meant getting senior stakeholders across technology, governance, operations, and business to agree on comprehensive design and delivery details.

There were internal resourcing challenges, too. As a newly created team within the IT function, programme staff were working together for the first time. Also, staff in all departments were in the midst of business priorities and multiple Shaping our Future change programmes. There were concerns that change fatigue would jeopardise progress on Digital Workplace.

Finally, Digital Workplace was on a tight timeline. The programme needed to move the entire organisation across to the new platform in a relatively short window to avoid a protracted period of time during which some parts of the Society had transitioned to new efficient ways of working and others had not.



Timeline Challenge

Dave Glanville, Head of Solutions, had attended the 2019 Charity IT Leaders conference where he met CPS, a multi-award-winning Microsoft Gold Partner. When the Law Society began looking for Digital Workplace support, CPS was shortlisted. After a stringent tender process, CPS was asked to review and implement the business case strategy.

The first task for CPS was to analyse and validate the business plan for Digital Workplace. That involved deep discussions between CPS and the internal team, sharing alternative technical solutions and exploring the business consequences. As a result of this intense review process, design of the programme was improved, and original plans were rewritten.

"This design phase was critical for us," says Dave Glanville. "As is the case with many organisations, we need to ensure we are compliant when sharing information both inside and outside the organisation. We needed a design that would maximise collaboration and flexibility that is secure by default. CPS was able to help us get over that challenge and, based on our strategy, create a design path to meet our specific requirements."

Nikhil Kaimal, a consultant on the programme, was impressed by the way CPS responded to the timeline challenges from the start, but also importantly, how the whole team worked sensitively with the Law Society. "They had a very narrow window in which to design and deliver Digital Workplace," says Nikhil Kaimal. "Quite simply, if the CPS team had been unable to work to the Society's timings, the programme would have failed. Schedules were particularly demanding because there were a large number of diverse business units covering different specialist functions, needs and responsibilities.

“ The CPS team's patience and experience was crucial in working with those stakeholders and getting their support. ”



Smooth Adoption

Sarah Hall, Senior Change Manager for Digital Workplace, is responsible for making sure end users adopt the digital solutions in plan. Her objectives were potentially compromised by a series of issues: a new Digital Workplace programme team, competing projects, Covid absences, staff working from home during lockdown, and the fact that implementation of the programme coincided with the end of the financial year. Close collaboration with CPS was key to enabling smooth adoption of the programme.

"Digital Workplace is a major change for people," Sarah Hall says. "We worked well as a team with CPS to define an adoption process with consistent messages. Because we were clear about who was leading on which task, we could optimise our resources and swap people seamlessly into different roles. Together we created a very efficient adoption 'machine' that ensured the majority of end users were moving easily to the new solution, and we could focus our time on the exceptions that needed extra help. Our relationship was strongly based on trust and real bonding between us."

The adoption process showcased Microsoft 365 tools and leveraged CPS capabilities as a Microsoft Gold Partner. Teams, for example was an invaluable tool for enabling groups of information stewards and 'Digital Heroes' to collaborate and support each other, and to 'show and tell' the potential for digital working.

Embracing Change

Within eight months, the Law Society has moved from old ways of working to an entirely new modern workplace solution in the cloud. It has met its objectives, delivering a Digital Workplace for over 400 employees who now have secure, compliant, flexible, multi-platform access for work and collaboration.

Amongst the long list of impressive outcomes, all planned deliverables have been or are on course for successful delivery, with promised benefits fully expected to be realised. Stakeholder confidence and feedback has been positive and, despite exceptional pressures on resources, morale within the IT team remained high.

Change and adoption strategies have proved highly successful, and staff say they felt supported throughout the change journey. Multiple levels of engagement (including 150 workshops and related sessions) were delivered by the joint Law Society and CPS team to help staff in the ways that work best for them.

The Digital Heroes community ensured direct contact points for the programme with every department and group in the organisation. This community continues to act as change champions who are actively driving adoption of the new tools.

Changing Attitudes

In some areas the programme has brought a much faster change in attitudes than Jane Deal's team had expected. SharePoint, for example, was an application with a mixed reputation across the organisation before Digital Workplace was conceived.

"Mainly because of a lack of understanding of its potential, the attitude was sometimes 'anything but SharePoint' when people were looking at potential repositories for information," says Dave Glanville.

“ Now, after the intensive change and adoption engagements, people are saying, 'Let's do this in SharePoint. Show me how.' ”

LinkedIn Learning is another unexpected success story. The online course provider had been expected to offer an important self-service education resource for the organisation. Nobody imagined in the early months of the programme's implementation that the take-up of LinkedIn Learning would exceed 98% as result of Digital Workplace.

“ LinkedIn Learning adoption was at 98% across the whole Society ”

Team Results

Success for Digital Workplace so far can be largely attributed to a 'one team' approach with CPS, according to Jane Deal's team.

"They have a bunch of individuals who came together, ran into every hurdle imaginable, put together a highly detailed and robust technical design, executed it, and showed end-users they can transform their working lives," says Nikhil Kaimal.

“ Because of the global pandemic, this 'one team' were unable to get together in person even once. Yet they managed to deliver a solution to a complex schedule that is transforming the entire organisation. Together they set a template of what client-supplier delivery relationships should look like. ”

Nikhil Kaimal, Programme Lead

Planning for the next phase of the programme includes digitising and automating existing processes and identifying potential opportunities for implementing other Microsoft 365 tools.

"For example, we expect to move away from our traditional intranet system. SharePoint will be much better at introducing the functionality that people really need," says Dave Glanville.

“ Although we've taken significant steps in a short period of time, we've really only just begun. When I look at the Microsoft 365 suite and what's on the horizon, we know we've got an amazing platform to build on. And best of all, our staff are increasingly excited about what they can do digitally and can safely explore the potential. ”

Jane Deal, Operational Director - IT



Business Benefits

- Better membership services using a single version of information
- Compliant and secure data that meets the organisation's unique requirements
- Digital platform enabling much better solutions for business needs



“ Throughout the project there was never a line between our people and CPS. Everything they did was about ensuring the effectiveness of our programme. Our success is very much tied up with our CPS relationship. They gave us invaluable technical and change management expertise, of course, but their positive attitude was absolutely invaluable. ”

Jane Deal

Operational Director - IT



The Results

A digital workplace has been designed and delivered on time within eight months. A carefully managed change model ensures that end users can adopt new solutions in the ways that work best for them. Feedback is extremely positive. LinkedIn Learning achieved 98% adoption. Stakeholders in unexpected areas of activity are recognising the benefits of using digital tools. The platform is compliant and secure, enabling users to find Microsoft 365 solutions to meet their needs

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