

Briefing

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SMARTER LEGAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

CUSTOMER SHARE
The CRM team at Shoosmiths say caring is sharing when it comes to clients

ROAD TO WELL
Trowers & Hamlins on making more difference to mental health

DATA DAYS
Elisabet Hardy at Thomson Reuters Elite on empowering better business process



Feel the path

The expanding role of IT in legal service delivery is forcing greater focus on alternative careers. Are firms ready for the future?

Deal with disaster

David Fazakerley, chief information officer of high-growth regional high street firm McMillan Williams, explains why Converge Technology Specialists was by far the best bet when it came to better preparing the firm for the worst



As business growth goes, McMillan Williams Solicitors has certainly had a pretty fair share. When chief information officer David Fazakerley arrived less than five years ago, the business he took on had 10 offices and 160 staff. Today it has nearly tripled that – 28 offices, with a proportionate increase in revenue to £30m. Headcount, meanwhile, is nearly at the 500 mark.

But that pace of expansion also needs to be matched by the right investment in operational improvement and risk management. He says: “Over the years, we’ve invested a lot in technology that’s scalable – and really fit for a £50m operation – and in particular, the resilience of our systems now needs to be higher than if we were still a smaller firm. We’re now too big to fail.” Similarly, the business can’t afford long-term outages or disruption of continuity of service – which of course could well be a precursor to such a disastrous scenario.

“Even a primary data centre with plenty of backup is no longer enough,” he explains. “We wanted at least two other options – a three-data centre strategy.” One of these is a replica of the entire environment, with data replication every three hours and system recovery in four hours. “The operation now needs to be back up and running within hours, rather than days,” he says. And the third pillar is a complete data repository in a virtualisation environment for daily backups.

Test of time

The firm had, in fact, already gone through a full review and selection process when it encountered Converge Technology Specialists (Converge TS) as a possibility for meeting these demands in 2017. Fazakerley discovered Converge TS was now a strategic alliance partner of Thomson Reuters Elite (McMillan Williams is a 3E and MatterSphere firm), and he decided to allow it to have a shot in the final hour.

“I particularly liked that they have such a strong and strategic legal focus and, to be honest, I was still a little uneasy about one or two points with the other suppliers. So, we gave Converge TS the specification and three days to complete it,” he laughs. Not only did they successfully turn it around in the time, he says. It was both “fully costed and high quality.”

But even this wasn’t the factor that sealed the deal. Colleagues now headed over for a site visit. “There was instant rapport – they liked them as individuals, there was an appreciation for the technical expertise of the Converge TS team, we saw the due diligence and how they had worked with other clients, and it inspired real confidence,” he says. “The key reason we chose Converge TS is definitely the people.”

Save the data

At this point, things moved quickly – fortunately, this is a firm used to that. The centres went up in

