

# Briefing

## *Interview*

### **Paul Caris**

Eversheds' CIO on life after the iPad, and the end of firm-owned hardware

## *Feature*

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The technologies making tomorrow's law firms work harder, faster, better

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## **TECHNOLOGY IN LAW FIRMS**

DECEMBER 2013

*THAT'S GOT IT!  
NOW, TURN IT OFF AND  
TURN IT ON AGAIN...*

# **Upgrade your firm**

**Mass mobility, third-screen working, cloud IT, enterprise resource planning, matter management, information visualisation, big data...  
Welcome to 2014**



A man with short brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt, stands on a balcony. The balcony has several round tables and chairs in bright blue and orange colors. In the background, there is a modern building with large glass windows and a metal railing.

*Briefing Industry Interview*

# Going dynamic

Briefing talks to Andy Sparkes, general manager for LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions, about a new future for law firm enterprise IT based on Microsoft

**Many firms have a wealth of management information, but it's not always joined up or used well. Every step of the journey to better information helps everything, from winning work to pricing and then delivering it, from knowing your cost of delivery to dropping unprofitable activity – but it relies on deep, pertinent management information.**

Andy Sparkes, general manager at LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions, says the availability of such information gives any firm a significant

competitive edge. The rewards are many – better transparency, vastly more efficient workflows, improved client-win rates, and enhanced profitability. “That gives opportunities to work differently and to drive productivity,” says Sparkes, “by using information in a smarter way.”

Better management information has the potential to transform the client experience, not just the firm's operations – presenting tangible, demonstrable value to clients in more detail.

Firms also need access to data about comparable completed work to structure correctly priced proposals.

“Delivering the work means knowing resource availability – getting the right people onto the project for the client’s needs.” And that, he says, is before you start thinking about setting up the back-end infrastructure, accounting for time and invoices. “That end-to-end efficiency is what much more holistic IT systems can really help to support.”

Technologies connecting that archipelago of internal legal functions can weigh heavy on business operations and their IT suppliers. For many firms, joining up departments means joining up a whole host of different systems, says Sparkes. “That’s the challenge we’re continually trying to address, particularly with Nimbus [LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions’ new Microsoft Dynamics-based legal business management solution]”.

Slow adoption of firm-wide IT is, he says, perhaps less a technological problem and more a matter of buy-in. “Firms historically haven’t needed to worry about these things, so they haven’t been ‘front of mind,’” says Sparkes. “A big part of current progress is a mindset or a change management undertaking – it’s applying a methodology, an approach supported by the appropriate tools.”

What that change means for firms is pressure towards project-style working. That’s the way Sparkes sees legal going – but not quite quickly enough for some firms that are losing revenue because of inferior data capture and resource planning. “Knowing the cost structure, and therefore matter profitability, allows you to price with more certainty, communicate more openly with clients – and to begin to optimise your approach.”

LexisNexis has reflected these needs in designing Nimbus, says Sparkes, which is built on Dynamics AX, Microsoft’s industry-grade

enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform which powers thousands of (non-legal) companies. LexisNexis has taken the core platform and “added a legal-relevant layer”.

“As with other Microsoft platforms, tailoring and customisation are needed to make sure that the nuances of legal are adequately reflected. In a professional services environment, there are two things that matter most: managing relationships and data quality. Over the longer term, data quality and data control become key, and that’s where appropriate tailoring is crucial.”

Sparkes’s pitch for a Microsoft-based legal ERP is that it has scale behind it – thousands of businesses use Dynamics AX, and Microsoft is one of the world’s largest IT companies.

Nimbus comes with ‘baked-in’ integration to key legal technologies. There’s deep Office and SharePoint integration, built in BI reporting and, for example, the opportunity to deploy the comms and collaboration package Lync “for one-click desktop-to-desktop comms, an advance that could help firms respond to the flexibility needed in different operating models and ways of working”, he adds.

Sparkes has one more significant twist when it comes to Nimbus: it has an in-built HR module – so it can deliver resource planning, which is increasingly critical for people-based businesses. It’s probably the only legal IT solution that can deliver that integrated alongside all the other firm-wide IT elements.

The future of many legal businesses hinges on management and fee earners’ willingness to adapt, but it also hinges on flexibility and IT capability. Whether it’s a revolution or evolution is up to you, but change is afoot, either way.

Find out more about  
**LexisNexis** Enterprise Solutions  
[www.lexisnexis-es.co.uk](http://www.lexisnexis-es.co.uk)

