

# Briefing

PEOPLE, CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

MAY 2014

*Interview***Andrew McEachern**

Norton Rose Fulbright's director of people and development talks global firm culture, getting your values through, and building in collaboration

*Feature***Managing change**

What's next for HR as the legal business transforms – get views from leaders in strategy, transformation and HR pushing firms to the next level

*Industry views***Driving change**

Industry knowledge from suppliers for human resources leaders

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## Reaching for new skies

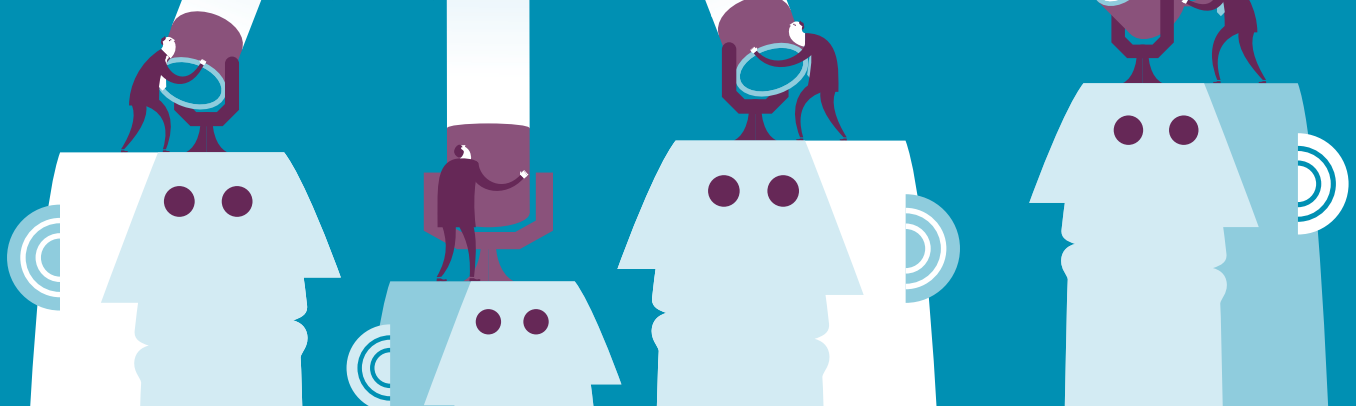
*With great change ahead, how can firms best harness people power – and who will those people be?*



*Industry Analysis*

# Joining up the change journey

**Making change work in your law firm is as much about leadership, mindset shifts and buy-in as it is about technology – but IT can play an enormous role in making change work, says Andy Sparkes at LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions**



**‘Change’ is the new big thing in the legal sector. Most law firms we speak to are trying to decipher how to effect change – altering the way they operate, developing new business models and revenue streams, undergoing restructures and merging appear to be the most common approaches.**

Evidence suggests that merger activity among the top 100 firms reached a record high in 2013, but the ‘change’ they are attempting to engineer through merging may not lead to the outcomes they hope for.

Change should not be viewed as a one-off process – it’s an iterative and continuous journey of improvement. Setting change initiatives into motion based on new growth strategies or operational improvements is easy, but making sure they deliver tangible benefits in the long-term requires an underlying, collective change in mindset, firm-wide capabilities and competencies.

## **Effective leadership ensures positive change**

One reason firms struggle to execute deep-rooted change is that, until recently, very little altered in their operation. New recruits joined and over time adopted the styles and attitudes of the people they worked for – absorbing the same characteristics, strategy and formulaic approach to business. Consequently, there has been limited experience or enthusiasm for change at the highest levels.

Today, change is not an option for law firms. It is driven by factors such as market forces, the economic and regulatory environment and the technology the firm has implemented.

Partners and senior executives need to demonstrate strategic leadership. Leaders in law firms must convincingly exhibit their own appetite for ongoing change and innovation based on substantiated business logic. Typically, resistance to change arises

due to insecurities, unfamiliarity or a lack of appreciation for its drivers. Employees often find themselves at the receiving end of change without an explanation of its rationale or benefit to them as individuals. To overcome these issues, firms must articulate a vision, develop a strategy based on sound business/market insight, and create a flexible/agile internal environment to enable that vision.

Technology can enable this.

### **Winners make change part of the fabric**

Adopting the right IT facilitates (and even helps mandate) change by providing efficient and joined-up access to the required business operations. Enterprise-grade business management systems (like Microsoft Dynamics AX) provide real-time insight into the firm's performance – made possible by the interconnected capabilities it offers. This in turn highlights the gaps in expertise and process that may be inhibiting the achievement of business objectives.

An understanding of a firm's health metrics offers the opportunity to identify areas to drive down costs, create more efficiency, enhance productivity and do things differently – in response to client/market needs. Business management systems deliver this information in an easily understood format, making 'change' routine and the need for it easy to appreciate and compelling.

It's widely recognised that the most challenging aspect of change is getting the people within the organisation to adopt the change. Today law firms employ people for a variety of roles – from lawyers and paralegals to CFOs, CIOs, COFAs, pricing specialists and support staff. It is vital that firms have the right combination of skills, expertise and competencies at all times to meet business

requirements. Business management systems dovetail HR processes with all other enterprise functions to ensure that evolving business needs are reflected in the skill set of the firm on an ongoing basis.

### **Technology can make change easier**

The advantage of firm-wide business management systems is that they reduce the complexity of enterprise management through organisational alignment – a single P&L, a seamless work environment across multiple locations, visibility of workforce skills, insight into client, matter and department profitability, view of the firm's contacts network, and so on.

This degree of clarity can help firms identify and explore innovative ways of working. They are also easy to adopt. For instance, LexisNexis's enterprise-grade business management system, LexisOne, is based on Microsoft ERP technology. It's familiar in look and feel to other Microsoft software that employees routinely use in law firms. This helps overcome the initial reluctance that firms might face when asking employees to embrace new ways of working.

'Change' is a mentality, a frame of mind, a fluid approach – not a periodic, dramatic event. Technology can help law firms adopt this way of thinking by making transformation a way of life. In so doing, firms will embrace dynamism and innovation unremittingly to always remain in tune with an ever-evolving industry landscape. Managing this change is the key, but the right technology platform can help.

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

