The CX factor[1]

Robert Millard and John O'Connor

There's lot of talk at law firms about client relationships. But for many clients these can still seem hollow words based on one-way relationships. Rob Millard and John O'Connor explore how firms that are trying to embrace true client centricity are setting themselves apart.

Much has been written over the years about how difficult it is for clients to differentiate between one law firm and the next. From a client perspective, law firms all look remarkably similar. Trust, reputation and brand generally play an unusually important role in buying professional services. Appearing in directories such as *Chambers & Partners*, *Legal 500* and *International Financial Law Review* are also important as are word-of-mouth recommendations which has long been recognised to be among the most compelling means of winning new clients.[2]

But what keeps clients loyal? What drives client relationship longevity? Except for the most complex or unique of matters, a range of firms exist from which clients can choose. Those firms are all staffed by highly competent, capable lawyers. Within ranges, all charge roughly similar fees for similar matters. All are highly attentive to service quality. Most engage in at least some form of client listening and try to mould their services and service delivery channels to align more closely with what clients want. But few have transitioned from client listening to becoming truly customer-centric.

This article is aimed at helping law firms to make that transition. The content is based on client-centricity work that John O'Connor has done with many large corporates and financial institutions, including DWF Group plc. It is also based on Robert Millard's unparalleled understanding of modern law firms. It was informed by interviews with Baker McKenzie LLP (Ana-Maria Norbury and Deanna Gilbert), DWF Group plc (Zelinda Bennett), Shoosmiths LLP (Peter Duff and Gaius Powell) and Travers Smith LLP (Julie Stott and Charlie Rogers) about their CX journeys. All of these were exceedingly generous with their time and insights for which we thank them most sincerely.

Clients' demands are shifting

Across many industry sectors and geographies, customers are shifting the ways in which they choose suppliers and service providers. Current research in the United States shows that the percentage of clients recommending law firms is at an all-time high of 69% (up from 49% in 2020 and 47% in 2019).[3] This increase is remarkable. But those results are not from superb skill in solving legal

problems alone – the focus on service quality has given way to one of client experience (CX).

For all but the most complex and difficult of services, service quality is no longer a source of sustained competitive advantage. It is a prerequisite to be even considered. Clients now demand that their experience with the firm advising them be hassle free, transparent and even emotionally uplifting. They also expect law firms to look further than the legal advice and to apply that to helping them solve business problems.

Law firms are changing their business models in line with these shifting client requirements. But too slowly, in our view. The time has come to accelerate. Bluntly, modern law firms must move from client listening to more detailed conversations, and act decisively on what they discover.

No UK law firm has what a leading corporate or financial service client would acknowledge to be a world-class CX programme, or true customer-centricity. Pockets of excellence do exist though, and some of these can be seen in the case studies at the end of this article.

CX is different to service quality

The concept of 'quality' emerged from the total quality management (TQM) movement of the 1950s. Focus was initially on product quality, its emphasis moved in the 70s and 80s to service quality as economies in the western world became more services-based economies. The measurement of 'client satisfaction' became prominent.

Client experience (CX) is different. It means that a firm's core focus is on its entire relationship with its clients – not just on satisfaction. Contemporary research shows that CX is generated through a long process of interaction between a firm and its clients, across multiple channels and through generating both functional and emotional effects.[4] To achieve this requires 'client-centricity' which, in simple terms, means putting clients at the very heart of the firm. This transcends quality, to mean all the firm's lawyers and business services professionals viewing every aspect of the firm from the client perspective. In this article, we use the terms 'client centricity' and 'CX' interchangeably.

Terms and definitions used in this article

Most of the terms in this article are commonplace, but some have particular meanings in the context client-centricity/CX. To avoid confusion, the terms that we have used are defined as follows:

Business model: how the firm intends to compete. Properly deployed, this also comprises three components, namely the client value proposition (CVP), the resources that the firm uses to deliver that, and the profit model.

Client centricity: putting the client at the heart of the business – the notion at the very core of CX.

Client experience (CX): see 'client centricity' above.

Client lifetime value (CLV): the total worth to a firm of a client over the whole period of their relationship.

Client value proposition (CVP): the 'promise' implicit in any firm's offering to a client, that the client's needs will be fully and satisfactorily met.

Net promoter score (NPS): A widely-used measure of advocacy based on a single survey question (on a 0–10 scale) asking respondents to rate the likelihood that they would recommend a company, product or a service to a friend or colleague. Respondents scoring 9 or 10 are 'promoters'; 7 and 8 are 'passives' while those scoring 0–6 are 'detractors'. NPS is a proprietary instrument developed by Fred Reichheld, a partner with the consulting firm Bain & Company.

Quality: as in 'service quality', this is quite distinct from CX, although the two do overlap in some respects. It is a term used in various ways in different contexts, but the focus is on the product or service – as distinct from the experience that a client has with the firm itself.

Resources: the assets (including systems and processes) that the firm deploys in delivering its CVP. Drawing on the 'resource-based view' (RBV) of the firm, the resources that are most capable of building sustained competitive advantage are those that are 'VRIO' which is an acronym for valuable, rare and inimitable, and the firm is organised so as to be able to exploit them.

Strategy: the choice of clients and services and markets on which the firm focuses. In other words, where it seeks to compete, reduced to measurable and actional objectives.

For clients, quality assurance is difficult in legal and other professional services.[5] Lawyers and other professionals frequently have more knowledge of the topic in hand than do their clients, creating 'power asymmetry'. Work product is frequently co-created with clients – or at least based heavily on client inputs. Consistently poor performance leads inevitably to reputational damage, sanctions for professional negligence and, ultimately, failure. That much is clear. How, though, does a client assess whether services rendered in a specific matter were merely 'good', or 'excellent'?

It turns out that it is far easier for clients to assess how they feel about the services that they received, and about their experience of interacting with a particular firm, than the objective quality of the service received. Clients must trust the professionals that they instruct to be technically competent and diligent. Such trust is not necessary to assess their reaction to their experience – their 'gut-reaction' – to dealing with the firm and the way in which the firm deals with them.

At an event held at White & Case's offices in London some time ago,[6] the former chairman of Allen & Overy (A&O), David Morley, spoke of a very complex, challenging transaction where A&O was pitching for the legal advisory work against the usual range of premium London law firms. A&O won the engagement and, he said, he was later told by the client's general counsel that the reason for that was that they felt that when, late at night in the midst of the deal when pressures were immense, they believed that A&O's lawyers would be the easiest to deal with. This is an excellent example of how intangible CX can be.

Professional services are different ...

Professional services have always been recognised as being distinct from products, and from other types of services. More than two decades ago, professional services were defined as:

- highly knowledge intensive, delivered by highly educated people, frequently linked to cutting-edge knowledge;
- involving a high degree of customisation;
- involving a high degree of discretionary effort and personal judgement on the part of the professional creating and delivering the service;
- requiring substantial interaction with the client; and
- being delivered within constraints of professional norms of conduct, including setting client needs above profit and respecting the limits of professional expertise.[7]

Consistently poor performance leads inevitably to reputational damage, sanctions for professional negligence and, ultimately, failure. That much is clear.

For much of the past century, this has been an accurate description of the services delivered to clients by lawyers. Ask any lawyer if they are concerned about their clients, and the quality of services that they deliver to them, and the answer will almost always be: "of course I do!" And that response would be sincere and truthful – to the extent even that the question might be regarded as facile. Yet the statistics for clients defecting to rival firms in recent years have been alarming.

Legal services are also changing. On the one hand, the complexity of legal issues increases continually and exponentially. On the other, it is becoming difficult to justify including the more process-driven 'commoditised' services that nonetheless form an important part of the business of many law firms, under the umbrella of professional services. This does not mean that law firms need to discard these services. The term for services that are not 'professional' is not 'unprofessional' but rather 'technical'. The fact is that clients view technical legal services through a different lens, and the profit drivers of these services are different to those of professional services. The firm's business model

needs to be more granular if the tensions between these client expectations and profit drivers are to be managed in such a way as to optimise performance.

As the '4th Industrial Revolution' unfolds, more of the services now delivered by people will be better delivered by technology. Some lawyers will focus on using ever-more complex technological tools to advise clients on meeting their own increasingly difficult, complex needs, as they are also disrupted by emerging digital technologies and the geo-economic impacts that they spawn. Others will build highly profitable legal service platforms (LegalZoom being a good current example) to focus on more mainstream legal needs. Best CX practice will evolve differently for each.

These tensions can and indeed *must* be managed. CX has proved a valuable tool for banks, retail organisations, airlines and others to transform the level of satisfaction that they have with customers' experiences in dealing with those businesses. It is now gaining rapid traction with law firms and might even be a new frontier on which law firms are competing.[8] Many firms, however, appear to be struggling to separate the concept from similar ones such as 'service quality' and 'client relationships' and 'client listening'.

What to measure?

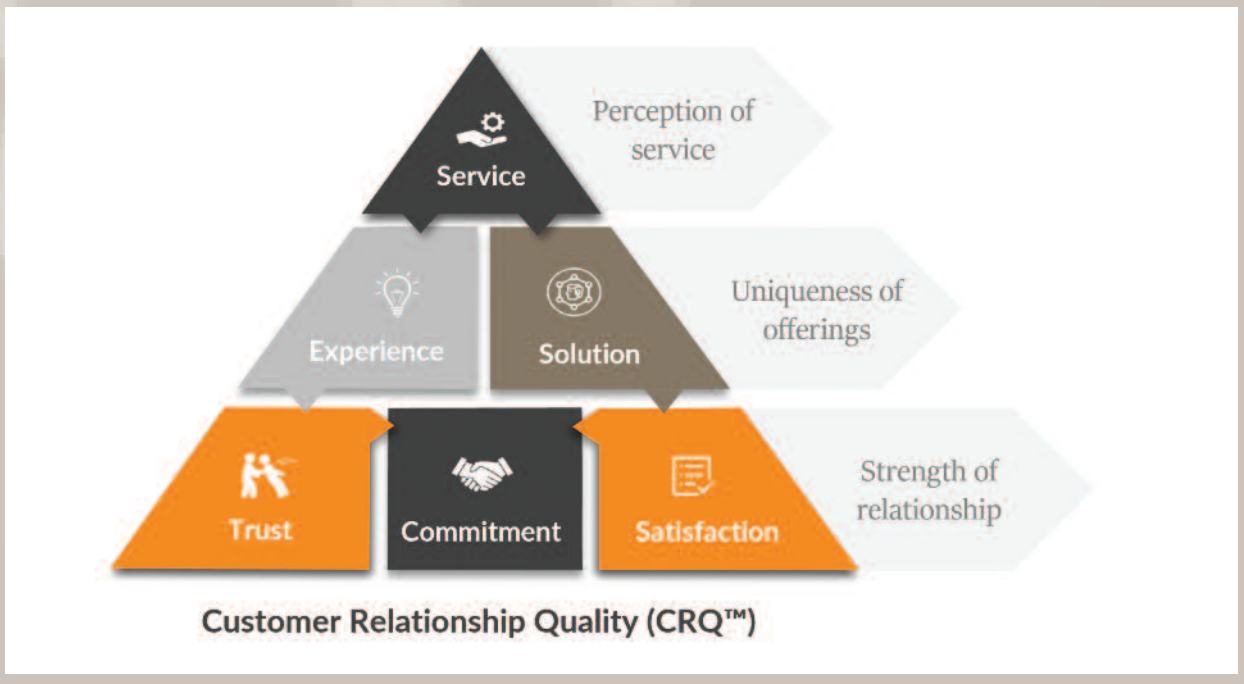
Metrics are obviously crucial. Probably the best know CX metric is the net promoter score (NPS), created by Fred Reichheld based on his work at the consulting company Bain & Co. In his book *The Loyalty Effect*,[9] Reichheld stated that clients should be valued according to the estimated net present value (NPV) of the future revenues to be earned from them. This has given rise to the notion of client lifetime value (CLV).[10]

NPS is based on the proven premise that client relationship longevity can be predicted by a client's response to a single question, typically on a scale of 1 to 10: "how likely would you be to recommend our firm to a friend or colleague?"

Reichheld's research showed that surprisingly high NPS scores are required to indicate long-term client loyalty. The NPS of a firm overall is calculated by subtracting the percentage of clients who allocated a score of 6 or less (detractors) from the percentage who allocated a score of 9 or 10 (promoters). NPS scores can theoretically range from –100 to +100. An average NPS for a European B2B company is around +10 while an average score for European professional services firms is around +30.[11]

But is NPS the best metric for law firms? We

Figure 1. The customer relationship quality (CRQ) model



mentioned earlier how A&O won an engagement based on the general counsel's level of *trust* in the firm's ability to deliver when the going got tough. Few companies measure trust explicitly – yet it is the fundamental building block of any client relationship.

An alternative approach to NPS is to view the client relationship more holistically. Client relationship quality can be visualised as a pyramid comprised of three different levels (see Figure 1 above).[12]

Three levels of customer relationship quality

The first and most fundamental is the *relationship* level. Do your clients trust you, are they committed to a long-term relationship with you, and are they satisfied with that relationship?

The second is the *uniqueness* level. Do your clients view the experience of working with you, and the solutions you offer, as truly differentiated and unique?

At the top of the pyramid is the *service* level. Are you seen as reliable, responsive and caring?

If law firms score well on all six elements of customer relationship quality (CRQ), their clients will act as ambassadors, generating a high NPS.

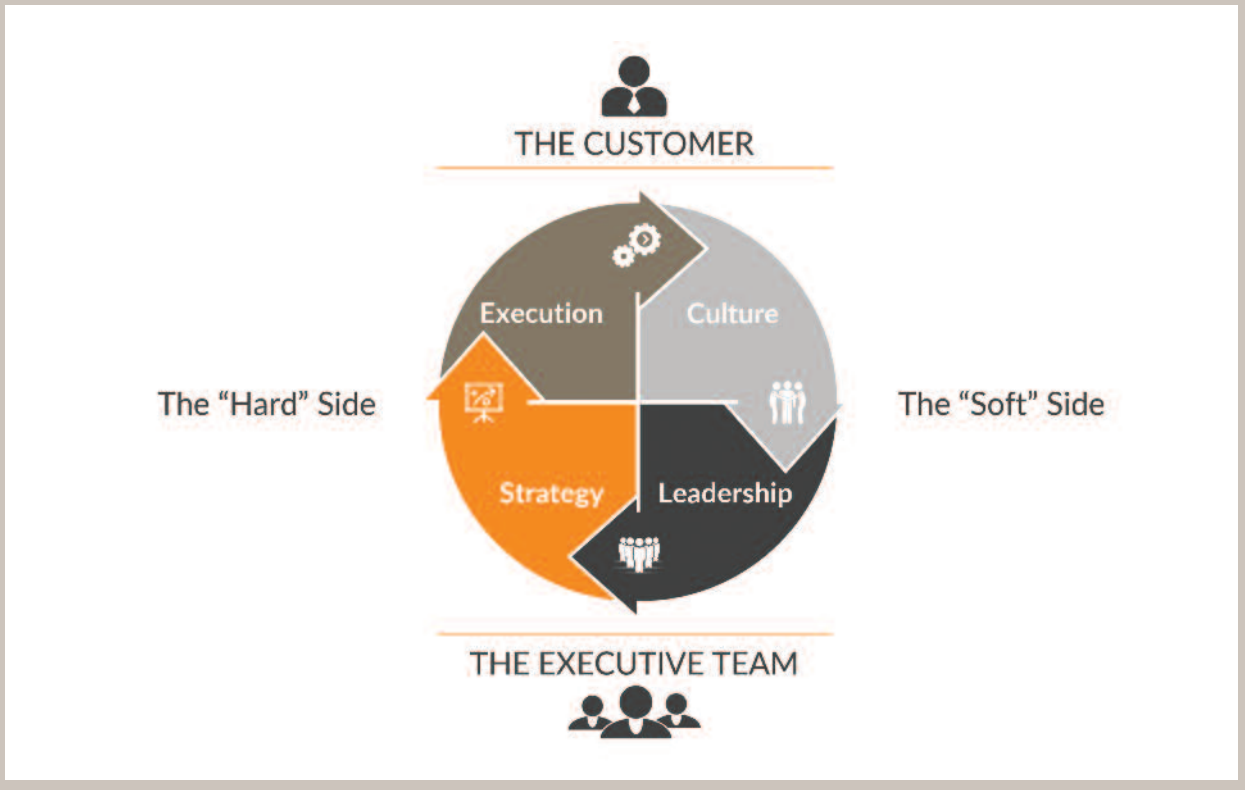
NPS and CRQ scores are highly correlated. Law firms should track their NPS but in order to understand what that is really telling you – and what you have to do to improve that score – law firms also need to measure and understand all six elements of the CRQ model.

Turning 'client listening' into an effective CX programme

Regardless of the metrics used, client listening is obviously more than just the score and the verbatim feedback that is captured. A fully-fledged CX programme is also far more than the execution of a client listening survey. It includes what we refer to as 'hard side' and 'soft side' activities (see Figure 2 below).

- **Leadership.** The most important quadrant. Good customer excellence (CX) programmes are always led from the top.
- **Strategy.** Good CX programmes link

Figure 2. Deep-insight CX framework



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customer, product, operational and organisational strategy explicitly to customer needs.
- **Execution.** Success requires properly resourced teams that are brilliant at executing the strategy.
- **Culture.** Finally, customer excellence must become integral to the DNA of the organisation: "it's how we do things around here".

The hard side activities of strategy and execution – setting up the CX programme, determining what to measure, executing the survey process, using the client feedback to update company strategy – are important. However, one of the key lessons from interviews with corporate leaders is that successful CX programmes require heavy investment in soft side activities if they are to generate real long-lasting results. This means spending significant amounts of time with law partners and client teams planning for success.

All four quadrants are necessary for a successful CX programme. Many law firms start at the execution quadrant and are often disappointed when their client-listening programme produces no meaningful result or change. In our experience, the soft side is often overlooked and almost always under-resourced. Leadership is the most important quadrant while culture is the most challenging.

Step 1. Drive change from the leadership level

If client relationship longevity is driven by CX and a crucial building block of the firm's client value proposition (CVP), then it deserves the attention of the firm's most senior leaders. Without active and highly visible senior leadership support, a firm is unlikely to achieve the CX results that they need to build sustained competitive advantage. It is therefore crucial that the firm's leaders themselves be truly client-centric, that they:
- are genuinely passionate advocates for the firm's clients and their interests;
- take personal ownership of enhancing client-centricity in the firm;
- have an intuitive understanding that client satisfaction drives financial success;
- use client-centricity as a lever to effect organisational change; and
- are relentless about execution.[13]

This list might appear daunting, but it is crucial. Too often, a firm's CX initiatives founder because the task is delegated to mid-level teams who have no more than lukewarm support from senior leadership and are unable to drive the degree of change that can really make a difference.

The need for active and visible senior leadership support is evident in the comments of Peter Duff, chairperson of Shoosmiths, in Case Study 1.

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Step 2. Link strategy explicitly to actual client needs

Once the leadership for the CX programme has been secured, the law firm must use the voice of the customer to drive all aspects of the firm's strategy. This can, and often will, involve major organisational and operational change, as well as changes to the firm's business model (CVPs, resources and profit model). O'Connor and Whitelaw devote an entire chapter of their book *Customer at the Heart* to the strategy of client-centricity.

In Case Study 2, Zelinda Bennett speaks of some of the major strategic changes that DWF Group have made in order to be able to serve their global clients more effectively. Reorganising the business into global divisions and acquiring an alternative legal services provider (ALSP) were bold and decisive

actions taken because DWF wanted to become more client-centric.

Strategy must involve all aspects of the law firm's business. It includes HR (hiring, training and promoting the most client-centric lawyers) as well as finance (investing only in initiatives that will have a demonstrable impact on clients). It must pervade the entire organisation so that every department in the law firm sees its role through the lens of the client.

Step 3. Build a CX execution capability

Besides strong leadership, a successful CX initiative also requires an 'execution' capability to ensure that the voice of the client is both captured correctly and acted upon. Execution is more than setting up a client listening post. It involves turning the outputs from those client conversations and collaborative explorations into tangible actions that solve real client problems.

In today's world, where the client personnel involved in buying and consuming legal services extend far beyond the legal department, the client's voice needs to extend beyond just the GC and her or his legal team. Also think about the influencers who are telling those decision makers that "We have to work with Firm X" or "Firm Y really aren't delivering value for money – we should be looking elsewhere".

One of the better examples of a good execution capability is Baker McKenzie's 'Reinvent' programme (Case Study 3). Reinvent started by using client listening to map existing client interactions with the law firm – 'journey mapping' as it's often referred to – but then moved to the next logical level. Baker McKenzie started working with clients to re-engineer processes and even co-creating new services and solutions. The Reinvent programme was developed to establish the governance, skills and infrastructure required to support better client outcomes. This programme focuses both on re-engineering specific processes and services with clients, as well as a way to develop teams across the firm – empowering execution at a grassroots level. Such an approach is a highly effective way to build engagement with the CX process and commitment to its success.

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Step 4. Embed client-centricity into the DNA of the organisation

Lawyers are consummate professionals. But are they truly client-centric? Most legal professionals entered the legal industry to practise law, to advise clients and to mitigate risk. They didn't join to help CFOs and procurement professionals to cut costs but that's what partners in law firms are being asked to do these days.

Embedding behaviour changes and aligning the firm's culture with the 'voice of the client' takes patience, persistence and continuous effort over a long time. Engagement with clients must be ongoing. Building and sustaining the momentum required to be true client-centric needs a constant stream of input from clients, and constant conversations within the firm about what that input means and how clients can be better served.

In Case Study 4, we look at Travers Smith's ability to embed the culture of client-centricity into the DNA of the firm. Silos have been broken down. Close collaboration between lawyers and business services has been achieved. International clients are serviced seamlessly. The firm's senior leadership takes a very active lead in this.

The reason why most law firms are lagging behind might be not that they are inattentive to clients (that is usually patently not the case). It is more likely to be that they simply do not have the systems and processes in place that are required to get input of the quality and detail that can drive continuous improvement. A properly designed CX programme delivers that. Over time, measurable results emerge

both in terms of client loyalty (NPS and CRQ scores) and also, more importantly, economic performance.

Conclusion

Earlier, we said that many companies start with 'execution'. We strongly believe that the first step in a successful CX programme is gaining the right leadership commitment to putting the client at the heart of everything a law firm does. Once that leadership is in place, it becomes easier to get the law firm's strategy aligned to what clients actually need and the CX execution tasks become much easier. With leadership, strategy and execution in place, culture change automatically follows.

As David Morley's earlier anecdote reveals, the primary impactors of CX emerge when things go wrong. Clients report four major areas where the law firms that advise them are inconsistent, namely: keeping them informed; dealing with unexpected changes; handling problems; and meeting scope.[14] Feel free to work on these immediately, of course. But if you want to achieve a step change, that starts at the top.

Case study 1: Shoosmiths LLP

Passion for the client

Shoosmiths regard CX as a genuine differentiator that is clearly visible in their strategy. One click from the home page of their website lies the statement: "Every service innovation we have delivered in recent years has come about through listening to clients and working with them to find a better way of working that saves time and money."[15]

The firm includes an entire session on CX in its induction process for all staff, fee-earners and support staff, and refreshers are conducted quarterly.

Following careful research and appraisal of options, Shoosmiths settled on using NPS to measure CX. Initial pushback from partners who felt that surveying their clients constituted a form of performance judgement was defused by selecting a large sample (~500 individuals) to survey and avoiding the exercise becoming a stick with which to beat partners over performance. Said Gaius Powell: "I hear a lot about law firms where client reviews often proceed to be an appraisal stick. And I can genuinely say that … this has not been the case at Shoosmiths."

"Lawyers default to client service. Giving a really, really good, technically accurate, commercially helpful piece of advice is good service. But that's not a client experience."

(Peter Duff, chairperson, Shoosmiths LLP).

The initial benchmark survey, delivered electronically, yielded an NPS of 9.2 out of 10, which is high even for professional services (which tend to achieve higher NPS scores generally than many other kinds of business). The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions, aimed at discovering facets of the firm where CX could be objectively improved as a topic separate to but not unconnected with service quality. The term 'frictionless', which appears frequently in CX literature, is rejected in favour of a more positive approach – namely, making client individuals' lives easier and helping their organisations deliver on their objectives.

Some of the specific aspects that have been actively addressed as part of the CX initiative include ways of maintaining relationships with clients in between transactions, demonstrating active interest in clients' businesses, for instance through client roundtables on topics current importance. Internal meetings are used to actively explore client needs and how they might be better met, over and above current transactions.

Shoosmiths's CX initiative is used actively as a platform to better understand the firm's strengths and differentiators, and then to use that to reach out into new markets and to grow market share in existing markets. As Peter Duff puts it: "One of Shoosmiths's strengths is, the clients that know us

love us. What about the other 75% of the population that don't use us?" Duff is also quite clear about what constitutes good CX and what doesn't: "Lawyers default to client service. Giving a really, really good, technically accurate, commercially helpful piece of advice is good service. But that's not a client experience".

Driving CX consistency across the firm's 13 UK locations is an important aspect of this and the firm has invested in systems to share information about client needs and preferences, across offices. While Shoosmiths has not conducted a comprehensive client 'journey mapping' exercise, they feel that they have a clear idea of the areas that require improvement, based upon the client feedback received on the analysis they have undertaken. That feedback was laboriously collated, and summaries fed back to each partner, where it related to the clients they serve. Each partner was (and continues to be) encouraged to enhance the firm's overall CX performance, from the perspective of her or his own practice. It is not used directly in the partner appraisal process. The process is very open, and also voluntary – albeit very actively encouraged, including through the partners' balanced scorecard.

Case study 2: DWF Group plc

Solving clients' problems

In the legal world, we have humans buying human expertise and human experience, so customer experience is key. Absolutely key. I [Zelinda Bennett speaking] work with really clever people who are selling their services, experience and expertise to their clients. They are their clients' trusted advisers. But how do they build that trust? Client experience is a fundamental part of that.

The legal world is changing but if you compare it to other sectors, change is glacial. Our clients are looking to highly intelligent individuals to give them very commercial advice in order to mitigate risk. In a conservative world like the legal profession, things change really slowly.

But our clients are changing. For starters, it's not just the general counsel who's buying legal services these days. We're seeing the rise of the legal operations professional, and also procurement. The procurement professional will always look to see where they can get efficiencies. And the buying process is becoming much more formal. We're seeing more hoops to jump through, panel appointments, and very clear demands in terms of what we have to deliver.

Another change in the last 10 to 20 years is the advent of alternative legal suppliers. So what you see is that the high-level core is being commoditised more and more. What is commodity and what is still seen as high-level legal advice? Where you absolutely need that legal professional, that's real 'bet the ranch' stuff but then so much more legal advice now is being commoditised.

"We moved to a global matrix structure. If we want to service global clients, our structure has to reflect that. The way that we go to market globally as a legal business is absolutely driven by clients."

(Zelinda Bennett, chief marketing officer, DWF).

We see the advent of the alternative legal service providers. We have new entrants. There are different products and services as well as new entrants into the market. The accountancy firms are starting to take market share as well. There's much more competition and prices are being driven lower. There's also much greater efficiency in the legal market, but compared to other sectors change is still slow.

That slow pace of change is both an opportunity and a threat. It's an opportunity because there is so much more we can be looking at. At DWF, for example, we have a range of services that are not actually the provision of legal advice, but they are related to the law, for example, advocacy and certain technical products. We also have acquired an alternative legal services provider called Mindcrest, so we're embracing those different areas that are connected to the law. And what we see now, going

back to the changing buyer, is that our clients are very sophisticated, and they see that a lot of work that might have traditionally been done by a traditional law firm can be done more efficiently.

With Mindcrest, that's absolutely great for clients because they can say, "Okay, what is the process-driven work that can be done? And what still sits in the real high level complex legal advisory service?" As more and more clients are waking up to the whole idea of the alternative legal services provider, that starts to push legal advice down the process and the commoditised route.

A client may be thinking, "Well, what do I push to a traditional law firm? And what do I push to an alternative legal services provider?" We can say, "Well, you don't have to worry about that because we can assess both for you." That makes it easy for the customer because they can just say, "Look, here's my problem. Just give me the solution. I don't feel that I have to go to a range of different providers".

Earlier this year we reorganised into three divisions: Legal Advisory, Mindcrest and Connected Services. That was done absolutely with the customer in mind. We moved to a global matrix structure. If we want to service global clients, our structure has to reflect that. The way that we go to market globally as a legal business is absolutely driven by clients.

In summary, there will be more choice for the customer in the future. So, law firms need to focus on what their clients really want and organise themselves to solve their clients' problems.

Case study 3: Baker McKenzie LLP

Building world-class CX 'execution' across multiple offices and markets

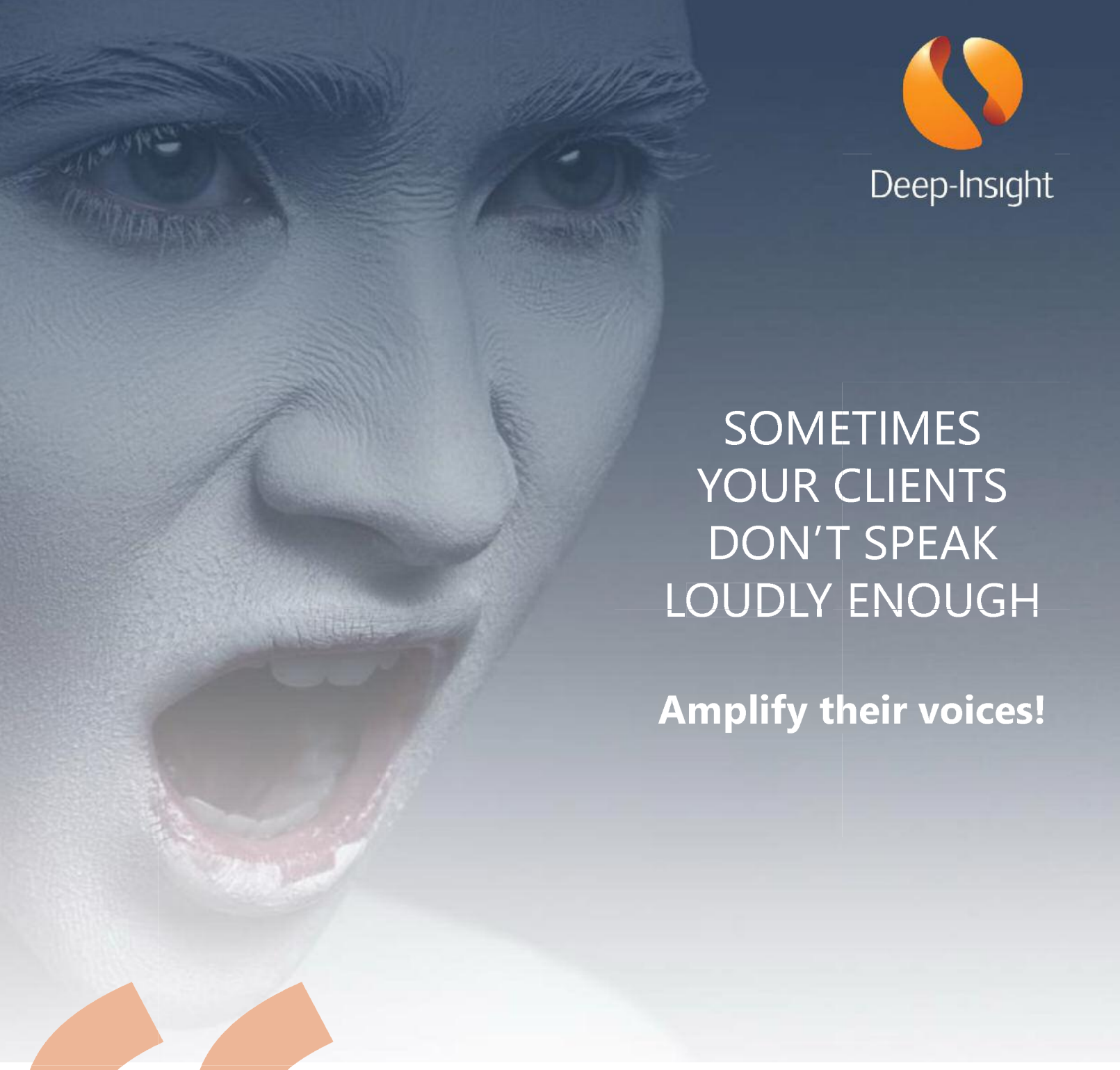
Baker McKenzie's 'Reinvent' initiative is home to an effort that has been under way for roughly five years, to change the way that innovation is approached in the firm. This includes moving the firm from a service quality focus, to one of client experience. This is no small task for a global law firm with more than 6,000 lawyers spread across 77 offices in 46 countries!

Originally focused quite heavily on discovering and enhancing the way in which clients interact with Baker McKenzie and their experience with the firm, the thinking now has shifted to a far broader context: How can the firm really make a difference to its clients not just through the delivery of client services, but across the broader client experience? What systems and processes need to be in place? What does the approach to governance need to be across the firm? What skillsets are needed? What teams need to be involved, other than the Reinvent team already in place?

Baker McKenzie is an enormous and diverse firm, so drawing in the 'voice of the client' and translating that into formats that are usable to drive CX enhancement firm-wide can be challenging.

Design thinking forms an important part of the recipe. Efforts are underway to shift design thinking from being a set of tools to being a mindset. Once people adopt a design thinking mindset they intuitively put themselves in the client's shoes. Mapping client journeys is also still important, especially as an anchor for specific projects. For instance, a project is currently underway to identify where the firm's business model inherently causes tension with delivering really good CX, because of some of the behaviours it drives and how to mitigate that.

Baker McKenzie is an enormous and diverse firm, so drawing in the 'voice of the client' and translating that into formats that are usable to drive CX enhancement firm-wide can be challenging. The firm already had a very robust client-listening programme, though, and a significant data analytics capability. The firm's data analytics specialists play a crucial role in drawing insights from the mass of data that the firm has in its systems. The collaboration with SparkBeyond is noteworthy. SparkBeyond's artificial intelligence-powered



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problem-solving technology is being utilised as part of a three-year exclusive partnership to predict what kind of services clients will require from law firms, the unseen drivers of client demand and how Baker McKenzie might evolve its business to meet those needs.

Drawing meaning from data is done co-creatively with clients. In most cases, co-creation opportunities are triggered by something specific – something isn't working well, or an opportunity has emerged, or clients have provided a particular piece of feedback. Some clients will already be interested in the topic, and others who perhaps haven't thought about it may become interested. Both can be drawn in. The openness, the depth of data and the quality of information that clients provide during such co-creation is always fascinating.

CX initiatives are supported at the highest level in the firm. Its strategic imperative is recognised, and the right people take an active interest in the work.

One very tangible outcome of where co-creation delivered something entirely new was where the firm developed a new service to deliver a streamlined solution around changes to LIBOR. Drawing partners into the co-creation workshops is easier when, as in this example, they see a very direct benefit to their own practices and client relationships.

At a systemic level, getting the governance right is also crucial. CX initiatives are supported at the highest level in the firm. Its strategic imperative is recognised, and the right people take an active interest in the work. As Ben Allgrove, Baker McKenzie partner and the firm's global head of R&D commented: "Understanding these unseen drivers [of change in legal services] and root causes driving future client demand will allow us to shape the future of our business. Thereafter we plan to quickly explore, with our clients, how we might co-create a range of new value across the legal, tax and compliance functions."[16]

Like changing course in a supertanker, large global law firms tend to move slowly into new directions. Reinvent, including its CX-enhancing initiatives, is nudging the firm into the direction that it needs to go in order to thrive over the next decade, and the next.

Case study 4: Travers Smith LLP

From good to great: embedding customer-centricity into the DNA of the firm

Travers Smith's CX initiative needs to be viewed against the backdrop of it already being a very successful law firm. The CX initiative is not intended to be remedial, so much as about what to do next, to move yet further from 'good' to 'great'.[17] Client listening had already been a strong feature of the firm for some time before CX began to be addressed explicitly. To start the CX initiative, external organisations were engaged to develop an impartial view of client expectations. Their results were cross-referenced against responses from partners and associates to the question: "What do you think your clients want from you?" This exercise revealed a great deal of correlation between external and internal perspectives, showing that the firm's lawyers were already talking to their clients about their expectations and experiences, and were in tune with these. This was also reflected in a very high NPS that the firm achieved in a benchmark satisfaction survey at that time.

The next step, taken three to four years ago, was to develop a set of seven 'client personas' or profiles intended to represent the firm's different client types. So, for instance, the head of pensions said that the firm's primary contact with pension fund clients was with that fund's trustees. So, a 'persona' was created of a 'typical' trustee. How old is he or she? Male or female? How long have they been doing what they're doing? Do they read *The Guardian* or *The Telegraph*? Who are they as individuals? What do they care about and what do they dislike? How do they like to communicate with the firm?

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Of course, every individual is different, but these personas provided general frameworks from which to consider how they might be experiencing Travers Smith, and what they might prefer to be different in terms of that experience. The insights triggered by thinking about the personas are also usefully different to the perspectives that partners typically use when thinking about clients.

Another piece of research was undertaken just before the Covid-19 lockdown. This aimed to develop a more granular understanding of where the firm's client organisations were headed and how their needs were evolving. This exercise involved a series of board level, commercial, strategic discussions with clients. Travers Smith's senior partner and managing partner were both integrally involved with these. Sometimes the client's GC participated, other times not. The choice was up to them.

Sometimes, a piece of research would be presented on a topic important to the client. Other times, the approach would be to ask questions and then listen. The meetings involved a lot of listening, which was in many ways the easier part of a two-step process. Having listened and collected a great deal of high-value insights, the second step was to put what the firm had been told into action.

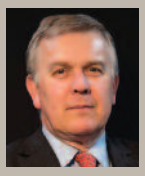
Sometimes clients get frustrated because they feel they have to feed information to their law firms several times. At Travers Smith, central information repositories and communication processes have been created to ensure that everybody who needs such information has access to it, and clients need to communicate it only once.

Much of the work that the firm does for clients requires a collaborative approach. It's high value, interesting, complex work and work with a high margin. By its very nature, such work tends to be cross-practice. Strong collaboration has been an important part of the firm's culture for a long time, but through efforts at enhancing CX, this is being reinforced. Individual fiefdoms and 'silos' do not tend to be tolerated at Travers Smith.

Another feature of the firm's approach to CX is close collaboration between lawyers and business services. Business service professionals are respected, so the firm attracts top talent. For example, the firm has employed a number of software engineers doing work that the firm probably wouldn't dream of doing without them. These engineers work together in teams with the lawyers with whom they work, physically co-located in the same space. Travers Smith's CTO also speaks to clients' technology teams to find ways to make things easier for them.

The firm has only two offices but does a great deal of international work across multiple jurisdictions with many other law firms. Great effort is invested in keeping project management and process light and seamless so far as the client sees, through business professionals working hard behind the scenes to make that happen. These efforts to make things as easy as possible for international clients are also an example of something that the firm instituted as a direct response to input from clients.

Travers Smith's CX performance is not publicised in the firm's public messaging or built explicitly into the brand. To the firm's clients, though, it is very visible and real. It is also there, implicitly, in the wording on the website – which is deliberately written in language designed to resonate with clients. The firm's service offerings are arranged by client need rather than by traditional legal practice area. The whole culture of the firm, and the mindset of its partners, is inherently client-centric. The firm's senior leadership takes a very active lead in this. For Travers Smith, overtly publicising CX initiatives is not necessary.



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16 See "Baker McKenzie Launches Unprecedented AI Collaboration with SparkBeyond to Reimagine Legal Industry", www.bakermckenzie.com/en/newsroom/2020/10/reinvent-sparkbeyond-ai-collab.
17 J Collins, *Good to Great: Why some companies make the leap … and others don't*, New York: Harper Business, 2001.