

NEWMARK



Re-Imagining the Workplace

Programmes of Transformation in the Legal Sector
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AN UPDATED LOOK AT THE FUTURE OF THE LEGAL SECTOR'S WORKSPACES

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in many law firms recognising that they fundamentally need to question how they will work in the future. If we compare the pandemic with the Great Financial Crisis, the latter was primarily a focus on cost, whereas Covid-19 is questioning how and where people work, their wellbeing and experience, how to manage client relationships, the processes of work, education and training, innovation and sustainability, and the cost base. There is a desire from employees and clients to see change, and to come out of this crisis healthier and happier as businesses and as people. Firms need to recognise this and develop transformational programmes that leverage this desire for change and realise the benefits related to productivity, experience, efficiency and sustainability.

What have we learned from Covid-19?

We have learnt that people are able to work effectively from home on a mass scale, and indeed this has resulted in productivity improvements and work life balance benefits for many.

But for others, there was a sense of isolation and/or issues related to not having the appropriate space to work effectively from home. We emerge from this crisis, not asking whether people can work from home, but *who* should work from home and for how long, and how to balance that with the needs of colleagues who do need to be in the office, as well as the demands from clients, barristers and courts.

Within the workplace itself, we will also see more variety of spaces to cope with the changing needs of the employees. This will be necessary to address the fundamental question – why should I invest in the commute? It will certainly not be to do e-mails, attend virtual meetings or, for many people, even to carry out focused work. But it will be to socialise, collaborate, learn and develop. Building and developing client relationships will also be critical. Whilst working with existing clients would appear to work well on virtual platforms, it is far more difficult to develop new relationships through this medium. Client entertaining and events will become an even more important function of the office. Ensuring that you can curate a high experience blended event or meeting in the future will be an absolute must, as people will expect to be able to join events physically and/or virtually

and experience a similar level of engagement through both. The workplace will evolve to focus significantly less on workstations, and instead will be more like a hotel with increased emphasis on a variety of settings and experiences that facilitate these activities for clients and employees.

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Innovation is something that has been turbo-charged through the pandemic, as necessity became the mother of invention, creating more focus on e-bundles and electronic signatures. But the anticipated transformation of work into a more blended and balanced world of home and offices will further drive change, as people navigate their way not back to the office but into a new world of relationships and practice.

This means it is important to educate and develop staff so they can operate effectively. But do not forget the needs of trainees and junior staff who have been trying to get on-board and progress up the lower rungs of a professional career ladder in a virtual world knowing few people. Learning through osmosis in the office culture of the firm was critical in the past and needs to be thought through in the post-Covid workplace. Indeed, understanding the culture and what makes a firm different needs to be experienced first-hand.

On the positive side, Covid-19 has demonstrated the potential of on-line learning and allowed more staff access to training events thanks to webinars, which were previously restricted mainly to clients. Trainees have also been able to join virtual meetings and seeing the whites of the eyes of both client and senior lawyer whilst discussing difficult situations, rather than just overhearing one side of the conversation in the office.

At a more strategic planning level, organisational effectiveness and dynamism can be enhanced as work is no longer tied to location, and can be managed, for example in London, but delivered elsewhere from teams that can form for specific large-scale assignments, or specialist individuals wherever they happened to be based. Equally, trainees can be rotated around different teams very quickly and get a much broader range of expertise.



A Blended and Balanced Future

The old world debated the merits of open plan versus cellular workplaces, a one-size fits nobody approach, with the lucky few having the ability to work from home on a Friday.

A post-Covid workplace needs to align, blend and balance the varied needs of clients, employees and other stakeholders. It is important to think beyond the firm because clients' expectations and preferences in how they work have also changed. The office is no longer just a place but needs to be a service, and will need to operate more like a hotel,

integrating virtual and physical with a variety of platforms and settings. Many lawyers and business professionals may only want to go to the office for a purpose – and when they do come, whether it is for an event, a client meeting, a team business planning session or an innovation workshop, it needs to be curated to ensure the return from the investment in the commute is maximised. That means ensuring they have time to meet up with colleagues, and/or have the ability to spend valuable face-to-face time to help develop staff or develop business opportunities.

Workplace as a Service

The future of the legal office will be less physical, and more service focused, as it is necessary to create and curate the client and employee experience that will blend the physical and the virtual dynamically.

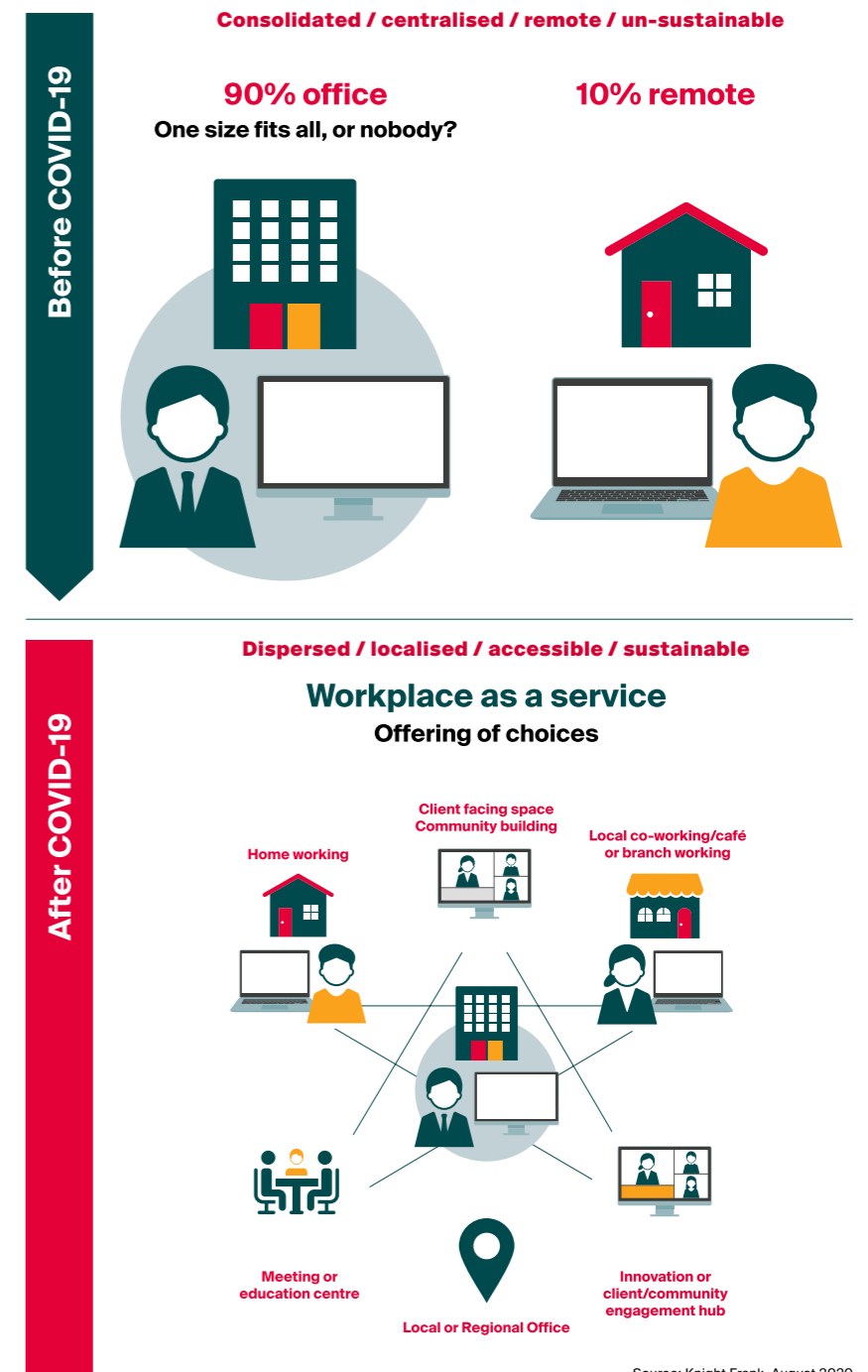
It will overlay a more dispersed, localised, accessible and sustainable business and real estate platform. It will provide choices and options for employees and clients in how they work and develop together, and form relationships in a seamless and integrated way. By taking an employee and client centric perspective, it will also be able to deal with

the critical success factors for most firms of productivity and service, whilst also significantly contributing to ESG, Diversity and Inclusion and Wellbeing agendas.

But this approach will not be achieved by a new office or even re-designing an old one. A truly transformational approach is required that integrates digitisation of processes, development of new management styles and more flexible policies, as well as a more dynamic and service focused infrastructure platform.



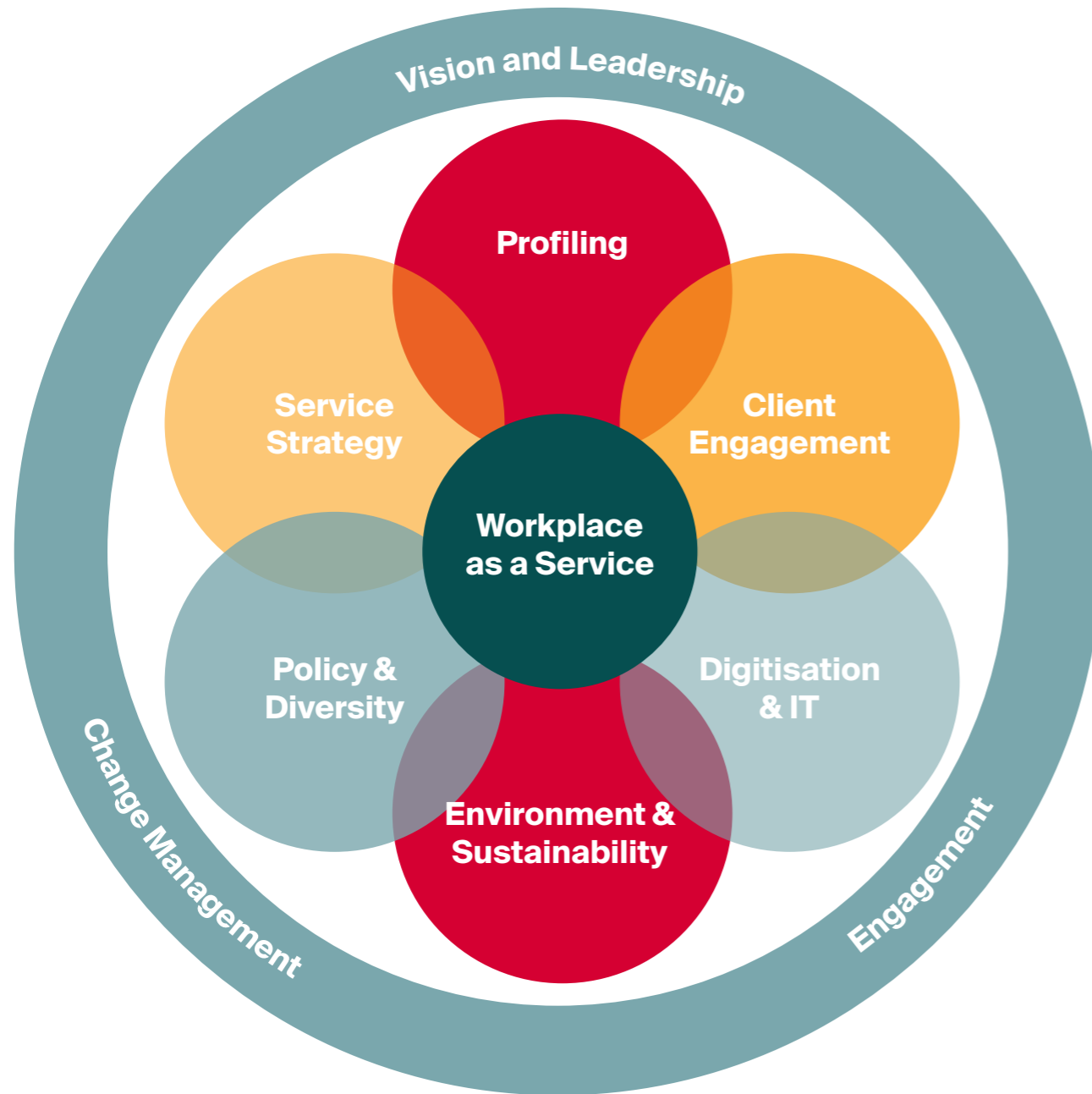
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The future of the legal workplace will be focused on service, experience and wellbeing
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Source: Knight Frank, August 2020

Business Transformation Programmes

Stakeholders in law firms are anticipating significant change as businesses move into the post-Covid world. The change transcends functions within firms and requires an integrated programme approach covering the following:



1

Vision and Leadership

The leadership, current and future, need to develop a vision for how the firm will work in the future.

2

Change Management and Engagement

It would be a mistake to conclude that because we have worked from home for a while that we do not need to manage the change. There will be multiple changes in terms of how we use and behave in the office, management style, team dynamics and collaboration and different people will start working in different ways. All this needs to be communicated effectively, as well as managers and teams needing to be educated and developed appropriately.

3

Profiling

What is the future workstyle profile of staff which requires an understanding of the use of physical and virtual platforms, their psychometric and personal preferences, and their work activities?

4

Client Engagement Strategy

What is the blend of virtual and physical engagement including events and meetings in the future based upon client insight?

5

Digitisation and IT

How digitisation of processes and technology platforms enable flexibility and enhance productivity, whilst reducing the need for space.

6

Environment and Sustainability

The programme can play a significant role in addressing the drive to net zero by clients, their shareholders and investors, as well as the government. There should also be many opportunities to design and operate more sustainable workplaces and platforms.

7

People Policy and Diversity

The profiling needs to be supported by policy, education and training.

8

Client Service Strategy

How best to support client service in the future in terms of geography and dynamic resourcing.

9

Workplace as a Service Strategy

How to deliver a workplace as a service strategy by integrating technology and the workplace. This means defining and delivering a service ethos that starts with the experience that you want to create and then working back to the physical and virtual infrastructure that will deliver it.

10

Delivery & Benefits Realisation

Once the business case is approved, the programme needs to be delivered and the benefits realised; capturing productivity, experience, efficiency and sustainability measures.



The time is now to reinvent the future

Get in touch



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