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BUSINESS INFORMATION FOR EVERYONE IN PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

MASTERING MATURITY

GRAHAM MOORE, THE DATA GURU

How mature is your business intelligence? Academics and research organisations like to use maturity models to analyse levels of adoption and exploitation of new technologies. There are many such models for business intelligence, primarily aimed at large enterprise organisations, but the principles are much the same when it comes to looking at BI maturity in SME law.

Based on our experience at Katchr, the current landscape of law firm BI maturity covers a broad spectrum. At the low end of maturity, data tends to be scattered around in multiple systems. There are lots of unconnected Excel spreadsheets used for both data collection and presentation, and different departments – marketing, HR, finance, compliance – all have their own silos of data. Reporting tends to be ad hoc and reliant on technical rather than business management skills.

At the other end, best practice tends to encompass the idea of data governance, which itself is driven by a desire by senior leadership to maximise the value of data, and a culture of performance management. Access to appropriate data is simple for lawyers and managers alike, enabling informed decision-making based on future projections as well as past history.

Data governance is essential here. It is a broad term that covers concepts such as data ownership, control over data quality and a clear policy regarding how data is managed. Key challenges that law firms often face in this area include capturing data in the first place and deciding which is the master copy once data is stored in multiple locations.

In practical terms, many firms struggle with issues such as:
• Partners not sharing client information because the client 'belongs to them'
• Source of business information not being recorded accurately because 'It's not important – it never gets used'
• Risk and compliance data being kept on spreadsheets because 'only the COLP/COFA need access'
• Reports to clients being manually prepared off-system because 'you can't trust the data in the case management system – someone might have entered an inappropriate comment.'

> *A great first step for many firms is simply understanding what data they have, where it lives and who 'owns' it. The GDPR should have started many firms on this road already.*

So how do you improve the maturity of business intelligence, in your firm? The first step, as with any business improvement is to recognise and articulate the goal. This is almost always best done through a series of incremental steps. Throwing technology at a problem without the associated people-related changes almost always fails. I have lost count of the number of failed law firm CRM implementations I have seen for just this reason.

A great first step for many firms is simply understanding what data they have, where it lives and who 'owns' it. The GDPR should have started many firms on this road already, but without it it can be difficult to move forward. Once this is in place, quick wins should be identifiable that will enable the value of better BI to be demonstrated throughout the firm to influencers and stakeholders.

My advice here would be to be pragmatic. The scale of the problem of data quality may seem daunting for a firm with 20 years' worth of varying but generally poor-quality data. However, putting off the problem for another five years will not make that any easier. Alternatively, starting with clean data today means that in five years' time there will be an abundance of good quality data for the many more automated (or AI) data-based decisions to be taken. **LPM**

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