

JUNE 2019

# LPM

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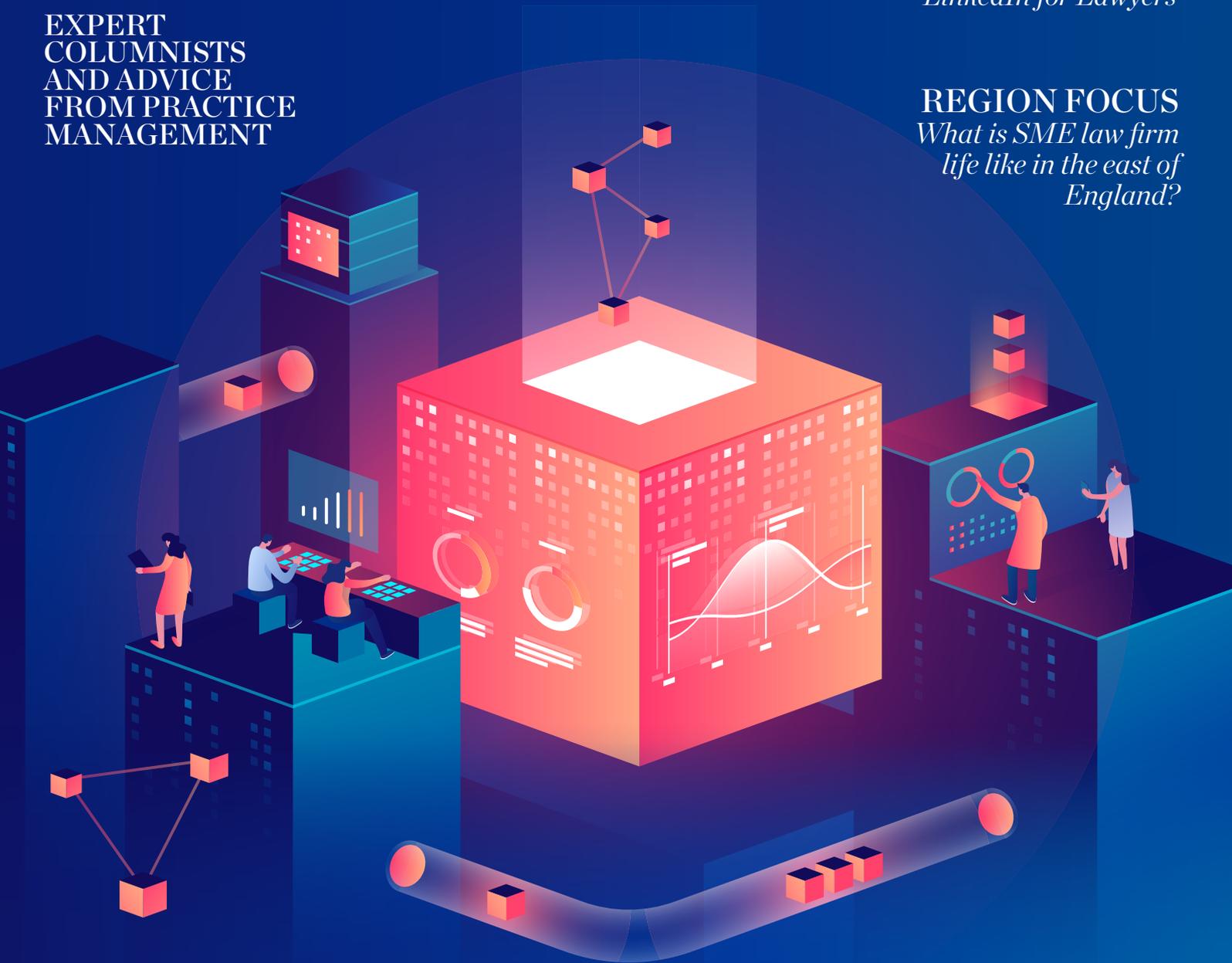
BOOK REVIEW

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## Measure for measure

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BUSINESS INFORMATION FOR EVERYONE IN PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

# INCLUSIVE DATA

Wendy Manfield, commercial director at Stephens Scown, says Katchr helps the firm to be more open about productivity with staff, which leads to better performance

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to say that a good working environment fosters better performance and productivity from staff. This is certainly true at Devon and Cornwall-based Stephens Scown. The firm has placed in the Sunday Times best businesses to work for list five years in a row.

What started as a traditional partnership out of St Austell in 1938 now operates as an LLP and has a separate ABS running alongside – through which it runs its employee ownership scheme, called Scownership. Launched in May 2016, it was the first ever implementation of a shared ownership model in the legal sector.

Wendy Manfield, commercial director at the firm, says a big player in the success of the model was Katchr's dashboard. "Using Katchr has really helped us to roll out Scownership and drive staff engagement because everyone can see how the firm is doing in terms of productivity and profit."

## LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

Manfield says Stephens Scown wants to promote a healthy work-life balance and develop a sustainable and profitable business, like any other law firm.

"Our philosophy is 'love where you live' and the West Country is a great place to work. We want staff to be able to go out and hit the surf when the weather is good and the waves are up.

"If we're going to promise that, we have to have a financially robust and sustainable business. And Katchr gives us visibility on the numbers, which means that all our staff can really engage with the business."

Under Scownership, the profit allocation is not based on salary; it's a flat number that's paid to all members of staff, she explains.



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It's easy for fee earners to be perceived as the be-all and end-all of a law firm, she says, and Stephens Scown wants to break that view. "We really want to make sure that everyone, both inside and outside the firm, understands what we're all about.

"Applying high levels of service is important. We spend time with clients, understand what keeps them up at night and where they want to take their businesses in the next five years. By improving client engagement, we can grow our business and develop relationships that go beyond the purely transactional."

Manfield says Katchr is also a transparent business, that runs along some similar lines. "They take the time to understand us and the legal sector. And they're genuinely one of the nicest suppliers the firm works with."

With Katchr, she says, you really feel like you're being looked after – the team is very much a part of Stephens Scown.

## FREEDOM FEES

The firm's performance and financial information started off as something only individual fee earners and the team leader could see. Then the whole team wanted to see how everyone was doing, which swiftly moved on to secretaries and support staff wanting to see how everyone was doing across the business, says Manfield.

"We decided to open up our financial information and make it available to everyone. After all, if you've got employee ownership, it's about engagement – and being transparent about how colleagues and the business are performing is part of that."

Stephens Scown recently reached its financial year end – Manfield says Katchr was a huge player in that process as well. Historically, business information updated at the close of business the previous night, but with Scownership, Katchr has enabled the firm to run live updates.

The end of the month is when all of the billing is done – and staff put themselves under incredible amounts of stress and bill like mad, she says. "Because of the real-time updates happening throughout the day, Scownership trustees were able to really motivate staff. And we exceeded our fee target this year because of it.

## LPM FIRM FACTS

**Stephens Scown**

**Revenue: £20m**

**Corporate status: ABS**

**170 fee earners,  
300 total staff**

**Offices: St Austell, Exeter,  
Truro**



*“Giving staff that level of autonomous access to key information for the work they have to do is vital to running a successful firm and Katchr does just that. That is what’s going to make the difference.”*

“This year was very special for us because, for the first time, we’ve hit £20m in revenue. And what really helped was having access to the Katchr dashboard and the numbers in real time. We wouldn’t have hit those numbers quite the same if we didn’t have those dashboards,” Manfield says.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

But Katchr’s capabilities and the potential the firm has to leverage performance data doesn’t stop there. Manfield says Stephens Scown has just gone through a review with the team at Katchr and given them a list of wishes and must-haves – and when Katchr says they can deliver something, they always follow through, she adds.

Next on the agenda, she says, is to give fee earners and support staff more relevant information in terms of how they manage their matters. “And they’ll have access to information straight away instead of waiting to review the

finances in the monthly report.”

It’s making the business-as-usual tasks more meaningful – from checking client balances to ensure that they’re compliant with the Solicitors Accounts Rules to dipping into matters they need to close off, she says.

“Giving staff that level of autonomous access to key information for the work they have to do is vital to running a successful firm, and Katchr does just that. That is what’s going to make the difference. It means people can plan their work around servicing, and absolutely looking after, our clients.”

She says Stephens Scown has another project with Katchr on the go at the moment, one that’s going to be a “game changer for the firm and our clients.” The fact that the dashboard is so intuitive and so many opportunities are springing out of it is all credit to Katchr, she adds – and the firm is ready to take performance metrics to the next level. **LPM**

**ABOUT US**

Katchr is the leading specialist provider of management information software to mid-sized UK law firms

[www.katchr.com](http://www.katchr.com)

