



AuraTM

Future of the Workspace #3

THE AGE OF THE DIGITAL-FIRST LAW FIRM

Digital transformation in law firms

The old view of the legal profession as digital laggards is well and truly dead.

It may have once been the case that tradition, culture, billing structures, risk aversion and conservative attitudes kept law firms heavily paper-based and valuing in-person interaction above all else, reluctant to succumb to the appeal of digital transformation. But attitudes were already starting to change before the start of the COVID pandemic – and accelerated at pace thereon in.

“ Change in law firms can be like rerouting an oil tanker and can be very hard. But there’s been a massive mindset change in our lawyers. If there is any positive in the horrible situation we are in with COVID is that people are ready for change. If you aren’t digitally transforming now as a law firm, you need to. ”

Karen Jacks, Chief Technology Officer at Bird & Bird*

*‘The legal sector faces up to its digital future’, The Times, December 2021

Contact us

www.aurafutures.com

London
+44 207 2 400 800
info@aurafutures.com

New York
+1 646 490 3755
info@aurafutures.com

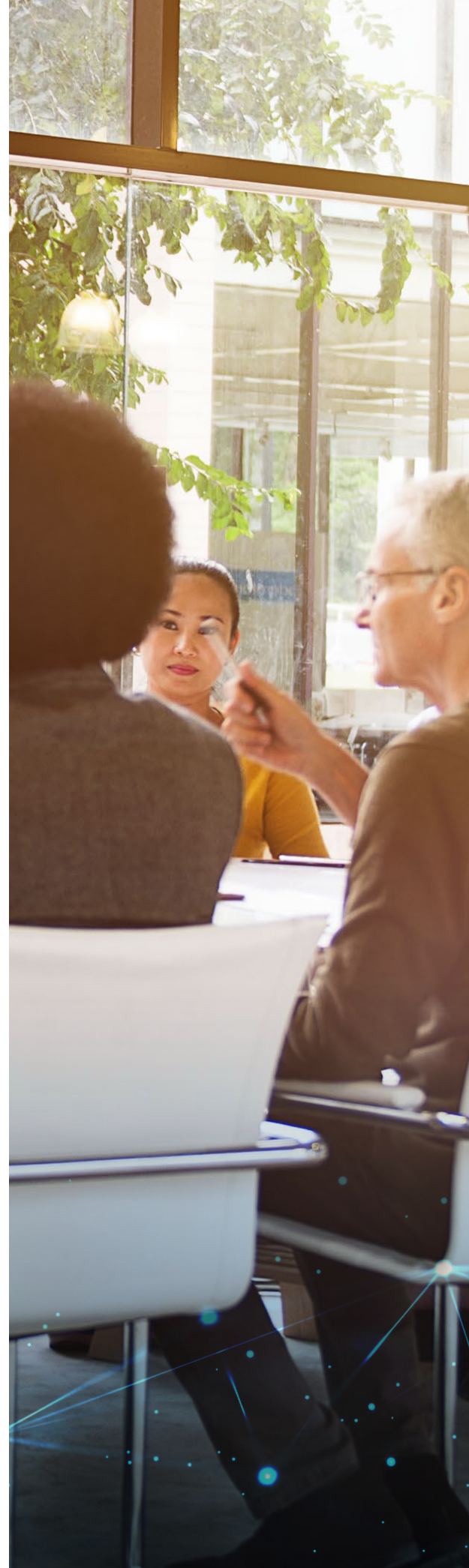
The slower digital evolution that law firms have undergone is in many respects a benefit. Having watched other knowledge industries leap into early adoption, the legal sector has the advantage of having witnessed the challenges other professions have come up against, so can learn from their mistakes. Additionally, with innovation galloping on apace, those more recently investing in technology do so on a much more sophisticated level (and often at a more appealing price).

MEETING DEMAND AND EXPECTATIONS

This shift to adopting a digital-first approach – or even simply using more digital tools to facilitate existing processes and ensure better efficiency, productivity and quality of service delivery – is not before time, perhaps, but it is very much a positive one in terms of market demand.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority published a research paper entitled '[Technology and legal services](#)' back in November 2018, which set out how technology had the potential to fulfil unmet needs in the legal market – namely by improving efficiency and reducing costs, to break down barriers in access to legal services. Naturally, this same cost reduction potential also has implications for competition in the marketplace, both in terms of consumer and B2B clients, which makes it a business performance issue not only a social issue. A pair of key statistics from this paper is that, at the time of publication (pre-pandemic), over a third of businesses who use legal services said they wanted the option to access these online, as did almost half of individuals. It's a fair assumption that this proportion will have now increased.

With the clear demand for tech use coming from the market, law firms following the more customer-centric approach that has been proven successful in other sectors – for example, Amazon, Apple and Netflix, who all explicitly put their customer front and centre of their operations – must digitally transform to meet demand as well as increasingly high client expectations. We have all grown used to the improved convenience, efficiency and customer experience of such firms, which often use technology to reimagine services to suit us better. It now tends to jar when we encounter more traditional approaches to customer service, they simply don't stack up favourably.



CUSTOMER-FIRST STRATEGIES TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Companies who offer levels of customer service which tally with contemporary expectations certainly have a jump on those who do not, and it has never been more important to differentiate and compete.

As Professor Richard Susskind OBE explained in his prescient 2013 book *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An introduction to your future*, which set out the future of legal services as he saw it (at a time when hard copy and in-person collaboration predominated): "Most clients do not want to buy the time of experts. They want results, solutions and practical commercial guidance." Digitally transforming to align with what the market wants can only result in higher revenues and, given the cost saving opportunities than can come with some technologies, higher profits, too.

“ Client-first firms are organisations in which every team member’s first thought is ‘will this improve the experience of my customer?’ as opposed to ‘is this going to improve things for me?’ and understanding the two are not mutually exclusive. ”

Ed Fletcher, Partner, Fletchers Solicitors*

*Creating a client-first culture in your law firm',
LexisNexis, September 2018



WINNING THE WAR FOR TALENT

It's not just a case of digital transformation helping to deliver a superior client experience, but also a superior employee experience, too. The sector is currently in the middle of a recruitment challenge, with a recent [PwC survey](#) finding that the shortage of talent was the second highest concern for Top 100 firms, behind cyber security.

In today's climate, it's more important than ever to build loyalty, strengthen culture, and both attract and retain the best candidates.

"Our profession is engaged in a bidding war for talent. Being the best requires the best talent, which means money is undoubtedly important," said Linklaters senior partner and chair Aedamar Comiskey, in an article on [FnLondon.com](#). "But money isn't the only driver. Being part of a purposeful, high-performance and diverse and inclusive team that delivers career growth in a sustainable and fun environment is something that we will continue to focus on delivering."

As Comiskey's explanation pinpoints, the working environment is a key consideration for the best talent, and given that [86% of UK law professionals would like to retain the option of flexible or remote working](#) – not to mention that [48% of C-suite executives in global companies see some form of hybrid working as the future of their business](#) – the focus must be simultaneously dual and singular: digital and physical spaces must be integrated for a seamless, efficient, and frustration-free experience.

“ *In the 12 months to May 2021, the number of workers who have quit their job due to outdated technology increased from 21% to 32%.* ”

The 2021 State of Work report, Adobe Workfront

MAINTAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

“The average spend as a percentage of fee income on legal technologies continues to be low, at 0.5-0.9 per cent, according to PwC’s annual UK law firms survey, even though improving the use of tech is seen as a top priority,” points out business journalist Nick Easen, in his article about the [digital future of the legal sector on Raconteur.net](#). “Some companies in other sectors invest up to 10 per cent of turnover, indicating that law firms have a long way to go. However, some law firms are recalibrating how they deliver legal services to clients deploying digital services and data at the core. The COVID pandemic has squeezed margins, pressured lawyers to do more with fewer resources, with demands for faster turnaround times, as well as greater innovation. If law firms don’t evolve digitally to keep up, clients could go elsewhere.”

There’s certainly a level of urgency caused by firms wishing to prepare themselves for the post-COVID business climate, by investing in technology. It doesn’t have to be an expensive or onerous process, either. While specialist lawtech solutions and new business models made possible by technology are appealing to legal services firms, for many organisations the right solution to improve profitability will be far simpler (although no less impactful). Refining and formalising technology put in place relatively quickly when the first lockdown was announced is a savvy choice, while also exploring further integrations which smooth the experience of switching between physical and digital workspaces, for the optimal hybrid working environment.

“

The move to remote working has identified that IT is an area that needs continual re-investment, not just to make sure the basics are working right, but to take advantage of the more advanced technology in the market.

2021 Law Firms’ Survey, PwC

72%

of law firms say digital transformation is a primary or secondary focus for their organisation

(28% primary, 44% secondary, only 18% say not a focus)

What’s happening in your market?: Legal, What Workers Want 2019, Hays

“

‘Improving the use of technology’ remains the number one priority as firms continue to implement a range of new technologies in support of legal services and support functions. Although this has been a key priority for a number of years, the average spend as a percentage of fee income on legal technologies continues to be fairly low at between 0.5% and 0.9% across the Top 100 bandings. The top three priority areas for technology investment are ‘Matter Management’, ‘Document Management’ and ‘Collaboration Tools’.

”

2021 Law Firms’ Survey, PwC

Print less, automate more

Whatever sector a business operates in, the biggest single barrier to increasing efficiency and automation in the workplace, using technology, is habit.

But when the pandemic has shifted attitudes to technology use and hybrid working in the way that it has, this previously limiting factor has for the most part dissolved.

Lawyers have wrestled with piles of hard copy for as long as anyone can remember, but COVID-19 forced them to work in the digital space, and as a result many have had their eyes opened to the benefits of the paperless office. This is the lowest hanging fruit for any previously paper-based practice, as cost and waste reductions, better sustainability credentials, and productivity and security improvements are all easily achievable through a managed print solution.

“ 15% of survey respondents stated they already worked paperless, with the further 17% specifically planning to move to paperless. ”

MHA's Legal Sector COVID-19 Survey
Report, summer 2020



Contact us

www.aurafutures.com

London
+44 207 2 400 800
info@aurafutures.com

New York
+1 646 490 3755
info@aurafutures.com

A PAPER-LITE PRACTICE IN SEVEN EASY STEPS

Our seven-step process to adopting a managed print approach, which prevents a return to previously high levels of hard copy and all the inefficiency and cost that it entails, is quite straightforward with the necessary technology in place. In a nutshell, these are the elements to review and adjust, to cut costs and waste, and improve efficiency and productivity:



1. RULES

Making it easy for people to do the right thing will reap rewards. Print management software enables firms to positively influence user behaviour, as painlessly as possible, through the power of defaults – **if black-and-white, double-sided print is set as standard, then it's possible to cut paper use roughly in half, and save on coloured ink, too.** It's also possible to assign rules that prohibit certain actions, whether at a departmental or individual level, and cap print volumes, to help control costs.



2. WASTE

Our data shows that as much as **15% of companies' print volume is actually unwanted** – people mindlessly press 'print' and don't even collect. We recommend using a follow-me print system, where users have to enter a code at the printer itself in order for the document to be printed. It's also possible set this type of system to require authorisation from another member of staff, for example, the user's supervisor.



3. SECURITY

Follow-me print also has the benefit of removing the security risks associated with uncollected documents sitting on the printer – with the authorised user there to collect immediately, so the printed data remains secure. **Double authentication can be mandated for sensitive information, which helps ensure compliance with GDPR, as well as supporting the elevated security needs of regulated sectors including legal services.**

4. TECHNOLOGY



Print hardware and software is in continuous development, and a lot of that innovation is focused around efficiency for cost-saving capabilities and eco-friendly credentials. New print devices, making use of the very latest software and consumables, allow you to **increase performance and reliability while reducing costs and volumes**, even after the costs of new equipment are factored in.

5. RATIONALISATION



Many businesses still have a printer for every office space, every cluster, or even every desk. With digital-first practices gaining ground, the demand on printers is reduced, and they can be shared between more people, so shrinking a fleet of print devices can be achieved without impacting productivity. **We regularly help clients achieve reductions of 50% or more by treating devices as strategic assets rather than components of a workstation.**

6. AUTOMATION



Automating manual processes not only saves time and resource, but also reduces scope for error and increases employee satisfaction through the eradication of repetitive tasks. A good example is invoice sign-off – it's not uncommon for PDF invoices to be printed out, to have them authorised by a wet ink signature, only to have that signed document scanned back in to the system. E-signing technology takes time and complexity out of invoice processing.





7. INNOVATION

While all company communications – internal and external – used to be print-based or in-person, there's now a raft of dynamic digital options available. **New technology can help you deliver information in real-time and tailor the messaging for different groups, with instant updates easy to make.** Digital signage, mobile apps and virtual meetings can all help to engage stakeholders effectively, and enable businesses to operate in a more agile manner.



Contact us

www.aurafutures.com

London
+44 207 2 400 800
info@aurafutures.com

New York
+1 646 490 3755
info@aurafutures.com

Transforming digital as we know it

This is digital transformation, but not in the original sense of the phrase. We've all moved on since then, quite rapidly.

Companies are already connected – only a proportion of the workforce will remember what work-life was like before mobile phones, computers, and the internet – and the next stage of evolution is to merge the digital and physical worlds to offer stakeholders one seamless and frictionless experience of an organisation, wherever it is they are working.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER UNDER ONE PURPOSE

With our intelligent visual communication solutions, it's possible to solve the challenge of engaging a global or hybrid workforce and fostering the company culture. Internal communications can be pushed out company-wide at the press of a button, or tailored to specific group similarly easily – either issuing updates in real time, or having them scheduled in advance. Connecting the physical and digital in this way brings people together via their own devices, no matter where in the world they are, whether they're in-office, remote or hybrid workers.

Thanks to digital display integration it's possible to deliver content from a variety of sources direct to screens within the workspace. From news feeds to market data, live updates such as weather or traffic, company-created content from canteen menus to business metrics, and even crisis or continuity messaging, it's never been easier to keep a workforce (and other stakeholders, from clients to collaborative partners) informed and engaged. Additionally, live-streamed company events become a way to bring everyone together at the same time, even if their offices are on opposite sides of the globe.

“ 89% of EMEA legal firms had fixed desk policies in September 2019, a year later 97% now expect to adopt hybrid working long-term. ”

CBRE survey, September 2020

Contact us

www.aurafutures.com

London
+44 207 2 400 800
info@aurafutures.com

New York
+1 646 490 3755
info@aurafutures.com



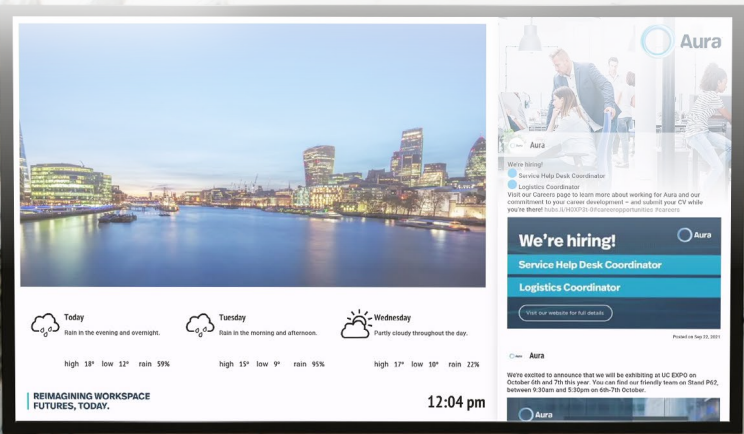
QUICKER, EASIER, MORE SUSTAINABLE

It's not just increased efficiency and flexibility that digital signage and screens can bring to an organisation, either. When employee communications were print-based within the workplace, there was a significant cost (in terms of resources, time and money) associated with updating posters and notices around an organisation's estate – aside from the cost of the print itself, there would be a delay in waiting for the copies to be delivered, then there would be the logistical challenge of installation (so digital also cuts out man hours and travel costs for this aspect). With a digital solution in place, it's simply a case of uploading content as once it's been designed, and choosing when and where you want it to go live.

73%

say they have an open mindset to digital transformation

What's happening in your market?: Legal, What Workers Want 2019, Hays



What is the office for, now?

“EMEA lockdowns have fast-tracked law firms’ working strategies, delivering years if not decades of change in just a few months,” said Frankie Warner Lacey, Head of Legal Practice Group at CBRE, in [a statement back in October 2020](#). Everybody in business can relate to this. Almost overnight, companies in all sectors had to reimagine their working practices as their offices became no-go areas. Zoom and Teams use skyrocketed, while hastily-arranged home workstations became where most work got done, facilitated by Cloud file storage and digital signing software.

Fast forward almost two years, and the much-vaunted return to the office hasn’t yet happened, not fully. And attitudes to technology, working from home, and work-life balance have shifted so much in the intervening 24 months that a transition back to pre-COVID norms is looking less likely – especially where a war for the best talent, across a wide variety of sectors, is giving employees more power than they might have had previously. If they don’t like what’s on offer, they may vote with their feet, and firms could risk losing their brightest and best.

WORKSPACES TO FACILITATE EFFICIENCY AND EFFICACY

The solution could well lie in hybrid working practices featuring workspace collaboration solutions – organisations where the physical and digital workspaces have been seamlessly combined, and the right technology is in place to facilitate the efficient and effective working of dispersed teams, will find themselves able to attract and retain the best talent, as well as give their people the tools to do their jobs to the highest quality outcome.



Key to success is providing a seamless experience – logging on at an HQ hot desk should be much the same as logging on from the home office – and equity of opportunity across office-based, hybrid and remote staff. This is a huge HR challenge, and one that can only be met with the right tech tools to hand, and the careful refinement of policies and processes.

During a recent panel discussion organised by the University of Leeds Workplace Behavioural Research Centre as part of their [‘Adapting Offices for the Future of Work’](#) research (funded by the UKRI Economic and Social Research Council), all speakers agreed that this type of change would need to be carefully managed through an iterative process – involving employee consultation and the subsequent devising of new policies and processes, which are then piloted, and feedback sought in order to refine and develop them further, according to business and employee need.

DOING MORE, WITH LESS SPACE

Many organisations are rethinking their real estate in the light of this shift, and the legal sector is no exception. [The 2021 Law Firms’ Survey](#), undertaken by PwC, discovered that “the majority of firms [are] expecting staff to be in the office 40-60% of the time, [while] almost half of the Top 100 expect to reduce their office footprint with 87% expecting to reconfigure office spaces.” This focus on making less office space work harder, without a drop in productivity to match the drop in costs, is only possible through the adoption of 21st century working practices – and the creation of flexible, tech-enabled spaces which promote collaboration and relationship building.

People will mostly go to the office to interact with team members, clients, and other stakeholders; indeed, many are champing at the bit to be able to return to in-person conversations and relationship-building, even if they won’t be commuting five days a week (and of course, some will). The office will become a hub for learning and development, and the embodiment of company culture.

58%

say their employer is investing in automation (compared to 70% UK average)

What’s happening in your market?: Legal, What Workers Want 2019, Hays



A FRICTIONLESS WORKING DAY

To make its new purpose achieve its fullest potential, the office is best reimagined to support new working practices, make every square foot work harder.

A variety of comfortable, flexible spaces which facilitate collaboration for groups of all sizes – and include remote attendees too, via AV and conferencing technology – can be designed in, along with desk space and perhaps quiet booths for deep thinking work. A room and desk booking system (accessible via mobile as well as from interactive screens within the building) will not only ensure people have the right spaces in which to work when they commute in, but will also generate dependable data to inform future decision-making about workspaces, ensuring maximum value and cost control.

With careful planning and the deployment of the right technical solutions, niggles and speedbumps can be removed from employees' working days (and improve the visitor experience, too). Visitor management systems allow for touchless entry and sign-in, while interactive digital screens support wayfinding and the location of colleagues or departments.

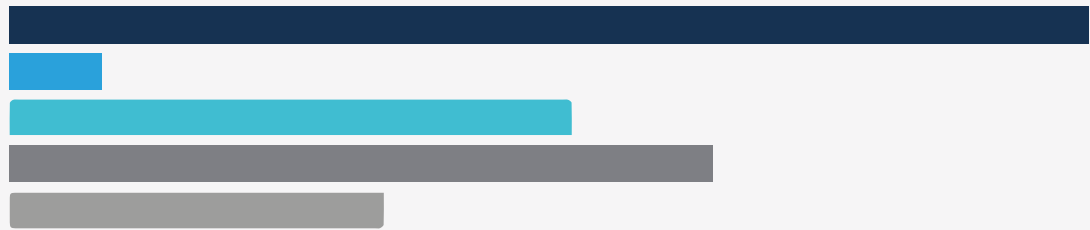
“ *Three in four Top 100 firms are expecting to reconfigure remaining spaces as priorities change towards collaborative, team-friendly spaces that encourage relationship building, client interaction and coaching / learning.* ”

2021 Law Firms' Survey, PwC

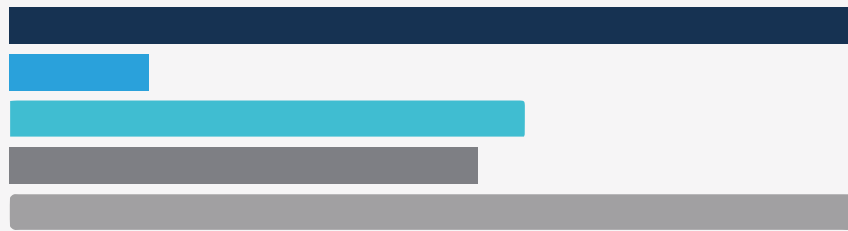


MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FUTURE*

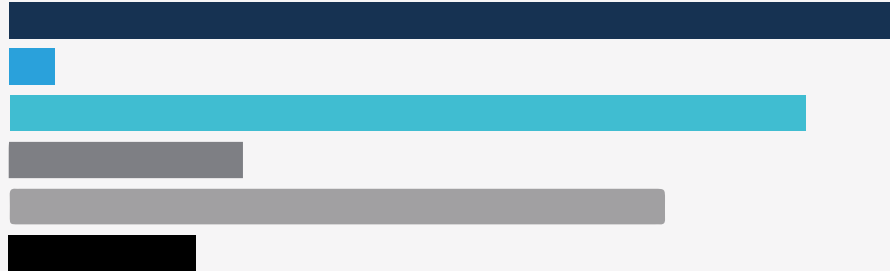
Top 10



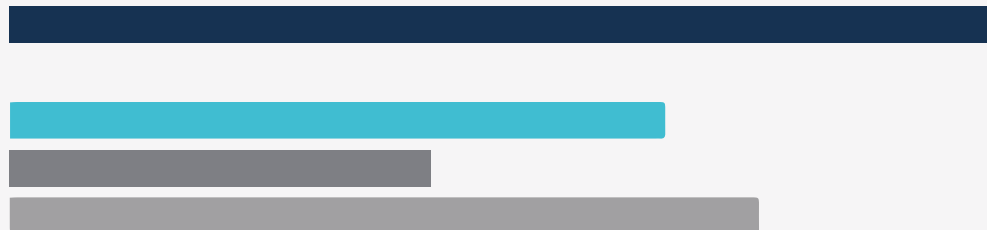
Top 11-25



Top 26-50

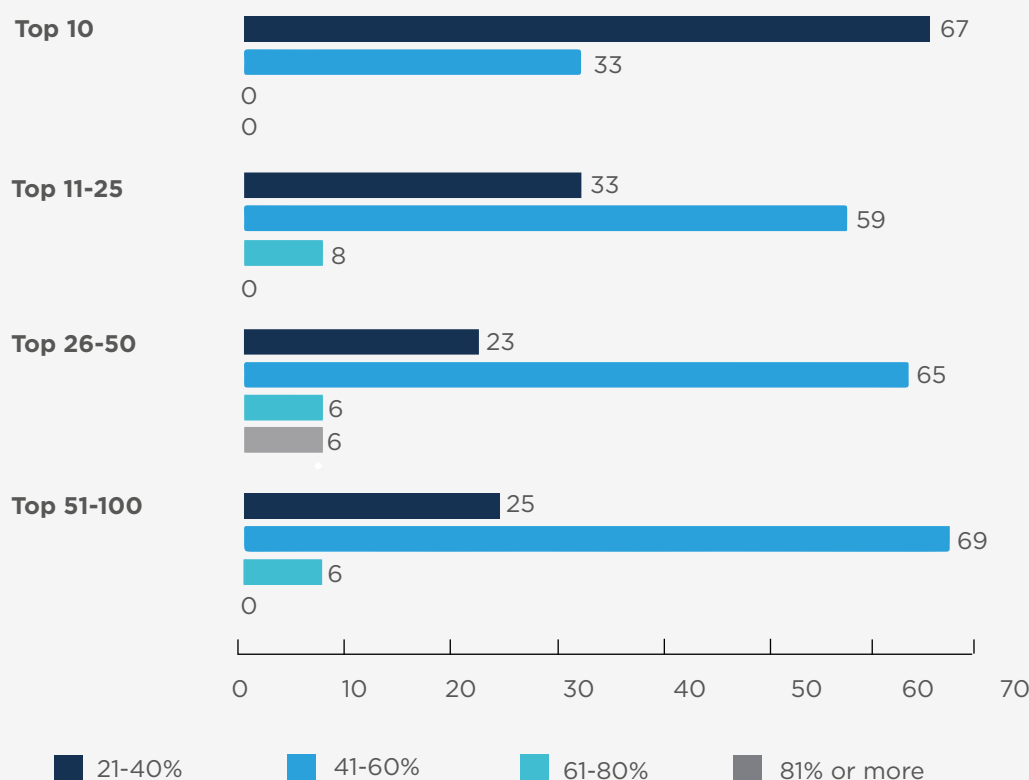


Top 51-100

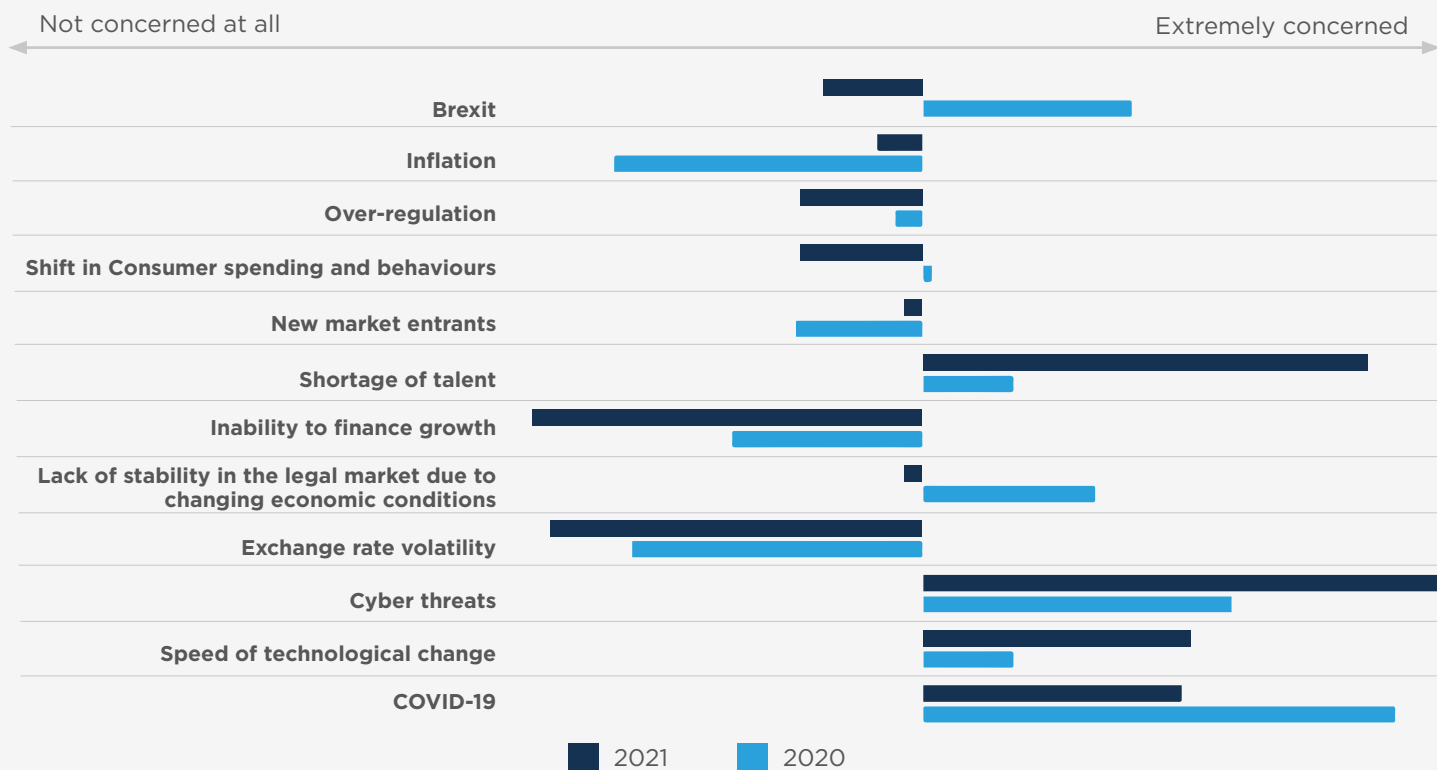


*Source: [PwC Law Firms' Survey 2021](#)

EXPECTED LEVEL OF VIRTUAL WORKING ONCE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ARE FULLY LIFTED*



EXTENT OF CONCERN OVER SPECIFIC THREATS TO FIRMS MEETING/EXCEEDING THEIR AMBITIONS OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS*



*Source: [PwC Law Firms' Survey 2021](#)

Knowledge is power: call in the workspace experts

Aura is the only workspace specialist in the market to provide a complete end-to-end, integrated service, ensuring maximum benefit in the outcomes delivered, with minimum hassle.

We take care of the entire workspace transformation project to enable all stakeholders, from the executive board right down to the organisation's newest juniors, to focus on their own roles and deliverables, throughout the change process.

FINDING A BETTER WAY TO WORK

In contrast to other workspace consultancy options available, our integrated service means that all our consultation is done with execution in mind – we know we will be the ones who need to deliver on our promises.

So how do we do it? Our consultancy offering encompasses design, build and support solutions, delivering measurable benefits that have a transformative impact on people, productivity and performance. We commit to understanding all the complexities of our clients' organisations, with particular attention paid to challenges and aspirations, as a basis for the development of seamless connected workspaces which will serve specific objectives and unlock business potential.



68% of legal firms are considering innovation, streamlining or digitising processes or functions. Key themes include video conferencing, going paperless, and agile working.



MHA's Legal Sector COVID-19 Survey Report, summer 2020

CREATING THE OPTIMAL CONNECTED WORKSPACE

There are three key stages we use to create tailored tech-enabled environments that ultimately track and support business objectives:

ASSESSMENT

This is a high-level evaluation of the current operational environment – people, places, technology and real estate. We ascertain today's workspace status quo, and identify the factors that will influence the development of an optimal solution. We look at both short- and longer-term goals, so that we can achieve some 'quick wins' as well as taking a longer-term view for the best ROI.



DISCOVERY

We engage in detailed information-gathering and a review of the possibilities around intelligent visual communications, augmented print and workflow, workspace collaboration, workspace design and IT infrastructure.



DEVELOPMENT

First we create a blueprint, based on the information gleaned during the previous phases, and agree the desired future state operating model – which may include workspace design, IT infrastructure, visual communications solutions and augmented print and workflow solutions.

We then set out a roadmap that identifies key milestones and timescales, as well as identifying dependencies, issues and risks, and sets out mitigating actions. We also create a clearly defined organisational change programme.

The final part of the development stage is where we explain and evidence the strategic context of the future workspace change, and set out our proposal. This includes a costed business case, a defined ROI with associated costs and benefits identified, an explanation and costing of as-a-service and managed service options (where appropriate), and an overview of non-tangible organizational benefits.



Why choose Aura?

OUR EXPERIENCE

Our consulting team of specialists is focused on providing an optimal tailored solution, and delivering real value.

OUR HOLISTIC APPROACH

We engage with a broad group across your organisation, to build up the most comprehensive picture of your needs.

OUR FLEXIBILITY

The breadth of our service allows us to focus on specific priorities, or support a 'bigger picture' strategy, with the same level of skill.

OUR VALUE FOR MONEY

Our strategies deliver both 'quick wins' for initial cost-saving, as well as longer-term ROI.

OUR TRANSPARENCY AND FORESIGHT

We ensure clarity of solution and a clear roadmap for the future on all aspects of connected workspace design.

OUR END-TO-END SERVICE

We are one of the few organisations that supports from strategy planning to implementation and beyond - we're the ones delivering on our promises.

OUR INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

We work with best-of-breed solutions across workspace collaboration, visual communication and augmented print and workflow.

WORKSPACE & COLLABORATION SOLUTIONS

AUDIO-VISUAL AND VIDEO CONFERENCING
UNIFIED COMMUNICATION
COLLABORATION ROOMS
HYBRID WORKING SOLUTIONS
ROOM AND DESK BOOKING
INTERACTIVE WAY FINDING
WORKPLACE APPS
OCCUPANCY & ENVIRONMENTAL SENSORS
CUSTOM DATA DASHBOARDS & ANALYTICS
SMART LOCKERS
MICRO-MARKET SOLUTIONS

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

INTELLIGENT DIGITAL SIGNAGE
IP VIDEO & STREAMING
INTERACTIVE DISPLAYS
CONTENT DESIGN & MANAGEMENT
SMART CONTENT INTEGRATION
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
MS TEAMS COMMUNICATION INTEGRATION
COMPANY WIDE CONTENT BROADCAST
IMMERSIVE RETAIL EXPERIENCES

AUGMENTED PRINT & WORKFLOW

MANAGED PRINT SERVICES
WORKFLOW SOFTWARE
DOCUMENT SCANNING & STORAGE
CENTRAL PRODUCTION PRINT
HYBRID MAIL AND PRINT
ADVANCED DATA CAPTURE

