

As you may know, Lexington advises law firms across the fast-changing and frontier markets. COVID-19 is posing a number of challenges and we wanted to share with our recent thinking on the challenges and also opportunities we are seeing globally. We would of course, greatly welcome your own reflections on the points below.

### 1. Solving the “pyjama problem”

As lawyers we typically confuse leadership and management (and see management as administration). What our clients have been calling “the pyjama problem” is less about working from home but living where we work. Teams have had to work remotely but this has created additional challenges for Partners, moving from the “command and control” approach so common as we work under pressure and to strict deadlines, and taking a more human approach: understanding the personal situation and motivation of each team member.

Our on-line workshops for Partners explain how leaders help their people succeed and managers put the processes in place to make that happen. We are also seeing the dangers of making assumptions about associates and business professionals and have been helping firms design simple and powerful surveys which identify their true needs.



[Tony King](#) was a tax lawyer then head of learning and development at Clifford Chance. As the leader of the Lexington Academy, Tony helps firms develop their people.

His article on [“The New Normal”](#). Highlights a key threat to law firms – that the greatest risk of remote working is the “disconnection” of lawyers.

### 2. Pursuing the new opportunities

Despite the initial shock, firms are proving more financially resilient than we would have dared to believe back in March. Of course, some areas of work within specific sectors have gone for ever, some are on-hold until things improve while others are booming. We are delivering a number of on-line workshops helping Partners review these opportunities and sign-up to a plan of action.

In parallel, we are also helping partnership groups to stress-test their organisation and governance. In part this is about understanding their optimum shape and size in this “new abnormal” – with clarity over their practice focus and priorities.

In preparation for the IBA 2020 – Virtually Together Conference, we are assisting the IBA Law Firm Management Committee with examining the pros and cons of the various remuneration systems and how to balance appropriate rewards for Partners with the creation of a culture which supports the objectives of the firm. Please take 20 minutes to complete the survey and we’ll send you a summary of the results. You can do that [here](#).



Before becoming a management consultant, [Moray McLaren](#) assisted one of the global firms in their international development.

In this video Moray and Richard Macklin, Global Vice President, Dentons, outline "[Winners & Losers: How the current crisis is accelerating changes in the market for legal services](#)"

### 3. Taking the heat out of partner disputes

Sadly, recent months have seen a rise in disputes between Partners. Of course, it is only human that people fall-out with each other but as co-owners and co-leaders this can have a tumultuous effect on the business as a whole.

Law firm partnerships need to face their internal differences before ill-feeling escalate into legal disputes. Well-structured conversations between Partners – with clear ground rules - can save anxiety, leadership time and successful careers. Peter is available either as a sounding board behind the scenes or hands-on in resolving disputes.



[Peter Cornell](#) is our Chairman and a qualified mediator. He was Global Managing Partner at Clifford Chance before joining the boards of a number of highly successful private equity funds and partnerships.

See Peter leading a leadership panel on the benefits of listening to clients during the [Law Firm Marketing Summit](#).

### 4. Digital transformation is about more than technology

Moving the firm overnight from an office to individual homes – literally overnight – is putting an unexpected strain on law firms' systems (and also its people). However, our experience working with law firm Knowledge Management systems has shown some culture gaps on Project flow and operational processes. We believe that the key is to invest in leadership and people first to ensure success on digitalisation and culture transformation

Developing and sharing knowledge is one major challenge that just became harder. We are assisting a number of firms by passing an external eye over their technology and people. On more than one case, we have stopped firms from investing in technology that they didn't need (could already do better and easier with their current systems).



[Stuart Hopper](#) has recently joined Lexington from Dentons where he was Director of Practice Development and Innovation.

In our video on "[Developing efficient digital service delivery](#)" he explains how firms can utilise the latest technology to respond well to GCs' expectations.

## 5. Keeping close to clients when we can't meet them

There is no doubt that the leadership role in law firms has changed. Micro-management is no longer possible so firms must find other indicators to make sure that Partners focus their energy on providing an excellent service to their clients.

We are working with law firms to make them more client centric through Key Account Management, Client Feedback projects and the development of sophisticated Partner performance metrics.



[Mari Cruz Taboada](#) was CEO of Iberian Legal Group before joining Lexington. She is a faculty member at IE Business School and the Financial Times IE Corporate Learning Alliance (London).

Watch [El In-House navegando en plena tormenta. La gestión legal frente al Covid-19](#) where she addresses the Covid-19 crisis with a group General Counsel.

## 6. Identifying the risks which threaten your business

We have also had several conversations with law firm leaders expressing surprise that it is the senior leadership team who ends up responsible for risk and risk management. There is little upward reporting, with too much box ticking and a lack of useful analysis. Proper process is absent so leaders cannot discharge their obligation. So, at a time when the risks facing law firms are at their most extreme, change is on the cards.

No law firm wants to see a headline saying “senior partner prosecuted for risk mitigation failings”.



Stephen Revell was a Partner at Freshfields for 33 years in Hong Kong and Singapore. He helps law firms put in place effective structures and risk mitigation strategies. In collaboration with Lexington, he is developing a risk audit process specifically designed for law firms.

See Stephen outline his views on [Client relationships don't stop with lockdown – a practical look at business development.](#)

## 7. Winning new clients on Zoom

The current situation has been very challenging for corporate legal departments. They've had to react to sudden regulation from governments, ups-and-downs in market demand, changing of business plans and a lack of cash. Many law firms have reacted very well in general terms, supporting their clients in “crisis-mode”.

However, the reality of virtual rather than face-to-face contact, has made it vital for lawyers to develop the skill of selling and pitching online – this is a whole new art.



Lexington is working closely with law firms to make sure they are still serving their clients well and winning new work.

[Katie Dignan](#) (formerly of Pinsent Masons and Herbert Smith) summarises some of the key issues in an interesting article called [“Crisis pitch: Are clients changing the way their external providers are competing for work?”](#)

### Recent Lexington know-how (available [from our website](#)):

- Rethinking leadership approaches in-light of Covid-19. Individuals matter!
- Management challenges for African law firms during and after Covid-19 crisis
- Now or never: Developing efficient digital service delivery for Legal departments
- Leadership Insight: Time for leadership, not a leader

### Future events:

- Law Firm Marketing Summit 2020 ([Click here](#) to find out more)
- Legal Vision 2020. Strategies for Success: Don't waste this opportunity to reinvent your firm and rebuild it ([Click here](#) to find out more)



## Helping the **best** get even better

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