

Case Study

Mason Baggott & Garton

A Case Study in the application of modern legal software technology

Formed in the 1870's Mason Baggott & Garton specialise in Conveyancing, Criminal and Family Law.

Operating from their three offices across North Lincolnshire the firm used PC networks and basic practice accounting and case management systems for a number of years.

Although these served them well the firm realised that in this increasingly competitive world their current IT systems were holding them back in terms of internal efficiency and being able to offer clients the highest possible level of service.

Their quest to improve their business led them to the decision that they would need to change from their existing IT provider, even though they had been with them many years. The problem was they did not appear to be committed to developing their software in line with modern thinking and new technology.

After an exacting and exhaustive selection process, which included studying the Law Society's Software Solutions Guide and the Internet, the firm chose Linetime Limited as their preferred software supplier.

A major factor in Linetime's favour was the ability, via their Liberate software suite, to provide an integrated practice and case management system built around a single relational (Microsoft SQL server) database. This helps improve operational efficiency, as data only needs entering once. As a 'full service' provider Linetime was also able to deliver associated products and services in the areas of desktop e-mail, web access and firewall/virus protection.

Liz Turner, the firm's Practice Manager commented, "The Linetime e-conveyancing system was a particularly important criterion in our choice of Liberate, as was the company's reputation. The professionalism of its staff, the comprehensive application training and the technical efficiency with which they handle data conversions were also vital aspects in our eventual decision.

“We heard all of this from their existing users and I’m pleased to say that we are delighted with our selection of Linetime as our IT partner.

“The way the company and its representatives did business was also an important factor in our choice.”

The successful implementation of Liberate Practice and Case Management system has brought many benefits to Mason Baggott & Garton.

Liz Turner again, “For example the use of pre-defined procedures and the document precedent bank within Liberate Case Management has ensured that work produced anywhere in the practice is consistent in appearance and of a high quality. From the partner’s perspective this allows greater control in areas such as risk management, whilst from the fee-earners perspective the pressures in producing standard (often repetitive and mandatory) documentation is removed, allowing them to focus on the legal aspects of their work, which they find much more enjoyable – leading to excellent staff retention. Plus, all Mason Baggott & Garton clients receive a consistently high level of service and excellent value for money.”

In addition to their private client work the firm also services several mortgage brokers. To help service this competitive ‘ bulk-conveyancing’ market Mason Baggott & Garton communicate with these brokers via the STARS interface which is supported by the **Liberate** system.

Following the implementation of the **Linetime** software the firm is now in a position to take on work from a range of other panel managers and so expand their business even further.

To further develop in the internet arena Mason Baggott Garton now use of the state of the art Linetime web access module - **Liberate Online**. Using this software suitably authorised third parties can send new instructions and monitor case progress over a secure Internet connection. This reduces the need for repetitive telephone calls and lessens the risk of errors caused through misunderstandings. Clients and brokers alike need no special software to check their case details, just a PC with Internet access.

It was recognised by both Linetime and Mason Baggott & Garton that the introduction of any new computer system is often met with a certain amount of trepidation and staff resistance. Working closely together to create an individualised training plan was key to the success of the project. Liz Turner again, “The training was vital to help our staff understand and have confidence in the new system and where necessary, adapt to new working practices.

“Because of the excellent and comprehensive training the Liberate Case Management system was easy to learn and we very rapidly began reaping the benefits. These included the fact that the fee earners required less secretarial support and all aspects of compliance and conflict checking were automatically taken care of within the system.

“One of the many benefits of the Liberate Practice Management system was the excellent financial reporting system, the use of which made it much easier to cost individual jobs and hence ensure maximum profitability.

“The installation of the desktop email facility was another boon to the firm’s day to day operation. Not only did it reduce the mountain of internal paperwork, but as we operate over three offices it reduced the travelling time for partners involved in staff supervision, improving efficiency and reducing costs.

“In fact without the new Liberate system I’m not sure we would have been able to departmentalise the firm into separate profit centres with the appropriate management reporting facilities.

“As far as the future is concerned thanks to the Liberate system from Linetime we plan on implementing HIPs in June 2007, integrating our systems with even more ‘work providers.’”

The firm recently underwent an assessment from Investors in People and was delighted to receive feedback that highlighted how positive staff felt about the new solution. The whole firm have embraced the new system and are delighted with the way Liberate assists them in their daily work. Liz Turner again “People no longer fear and dread new IT systems or system changes, but actually look forward to the improved efficiencies and working methods.

“Even the Legal Services Commission commented upon how well our new computerised systems operated, during their audit of our Family & Criminal departments, as did the Law Society.”

A forward thinking firm like Mason Baggott & Garton do not see the installation of the Liberate system as the end of their IT investment. “We recognise it is vitally important to maintain a close working relationship with our software supplier. This is essential for both day-to-day support and ongoing system development” so stated **Sir John Mason, Senior Partner**. “We are very pleased with the new systems supplied by Linetime, the post-sales support they provide and the on-going relationship we have developed. We view this latter point as key to our continued success.”

LIBERATE

Tony Klejnow **Linetime** Managing Director, 'We value greatly the relationship with Mason Baggott & Garton and recognise the major part they have played in the success of this particular project. Projects of this nature and scope need a partnership approach and we are pleased to have such a forward thinking partner in Mason Baggott & Garton and in particular their practice manager Liz Turner.'

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