



Enabling the modern workforce to work from anywhere

ALTERNATIVE INSIGHTS : LEGAL & ACCOUNTANCY HANGOUT #10
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NETMOTION & QUISS

Top 3 takeaways:

- 1 A 100% mobile workforce will expect a consistent and seamless user experience; and meeting this expectation will require more sophisticated solutions.**
- 2 Any cost savings from a 100% mobile workforce will depend on reliable connectivity such as that offered by NetMotion's VPN – designed for remote workers.**
- 3 A 100% mobile workforce means heightened security concerns. A managed IT services provider such as Quiss can offer security solutions, along with user training.**

The remote working revolution continues, and our first hangout of 2021 brought together our Alternative Legal and Accountancy IT communities for a fuller perspective on professional services workforces going 100% mobile.

Our panel of IT leaders shared their thoughts on what this could mean for the professional services market, and how they planned to maintain a good user experience for both clients and employees. Our sponsors, Quiss and NetMotion, are also harnessing the power of partnering. As a well-established managed services provider, Quiss draws upon extensive experience advising law and accountancy firms on how to successfully deploy cloud solutions and associated technologies. Their relationship with NetMotion (which offers a security platform and solutions specifically designed for remote workers) helps them to deliver the enhanced user experience now expected by a mobile workforce.

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Quiss
Excellence through experience

The New Workplace

The new 'working from anywhere' reality will undoubtedly require changes to existing workplaces in order to support employees. What will the office look like in the near future?

Ali Jones, Partner at Sagars accountancy practice, envisions that offices will increasingly be used for collaboration. However, from a working point of view, she sees it as important for Sagars to have the team in the office at certain points. "From a training perspective, people get more from overhearing their managers' conversations with clients in terms of what they need to talk about, how to look after clients, and having that immediate feedback," she said.

Jas Bassi, Head of Solution Delivery at Gateley law firm, similarly thinks that offices will become collaboration spaces. In addition to tools such as Teams becoming more prevalent, he thinks that there will be more digitisation to support 'working from anywhere'. "Within law firms, there are a lot of manual processes – such as signatures. This has presented an opportunity to drive a digital signature approach," he said.

Jonathan Swan, Operations & IT Director at Roythornes law firm, predicted that firms will question the need for so much floor space. "I can imagine organisations reducing office space in preference for more agile working areas," he said. He also expressed doubts that current tech stacks would be enough for a 'work from anywhere' approach.

"Homeworking is not the same as truly agile or hybrid working. We're all at a fixed location with reliable broadband, but when people start to get back on the move - in cars, showrooms, coffee shops, client meeting rooms - we might see some of the technology come under strain. I'm not convinced that a traditional VPN will provide us with the continuity of connectivity that we will need," he said.

Given the unprecedented changes of the past year, Bishop Fleming's pre-pandemic commitment to opening a new office in Bristol – designed around flexibility - proved to be fortuitous. "It has round tables for people to sit around, booths, and different places to collaborate," said Andrew Yearsley, CTO at the accountancy practice. "We moved from a Citrix-based environment - everyone tethered to a desk with a terminal - to a mobile workforce where we've given everybody a laptop," he said. Leaving nothing to chance, the firm also took steps to ensure that employees had backup options for connectivity at home: "We put SIM cards in all the new laptops so if they haven't got a stable connection, they've got some sort of connection," he said.

One audience member raised the question of how to make everybody feel equivalent when collaborating in a 'hybrid' environment where some

people are remote, and some are on-site. Jas stressed the need to first understand the type of engagement staff actually want with colleagues and clients when they come back to the office. "So, you'll want meetings where you have a number of people in a room over a screen, being able to share documents and communicate with people in different locations. You'll also want quiet spaces to enable one-on-one collaboration with somebody working from home," he said.

Jonny Watkinson, who deals with Enterprise Sales at NetMotion, asked the panellists what their firms had saved money on. The responses included stationery budgets going down due to people doing things electronically, reductions in printing, and catering costs coming down. Jonathan noted the huge amount of time saved in convening meetings, and decision-making. "Our organisation is more agile because we can get key people together for a meeting now, or this afternoon. You can find 30 minutes for a Teams call; previously you had to look for a window of opportunity in calendars and consider travel time," he said. Of course, these time and cost saving outcomes depend entirely on reliable connectivity – which makes NetMotion's commitment to providing a seamless connection experience absolutely invaluable.

“FROM A TRAINING PERSPECTIVE, PEOPLE GET MORE FROM OVERHEARING THEIR MANAGERS' CONVERSATIONS WITH CLIENTS IN TERMS OF WHAT THEY NEED TO TALK ABOUT, HOW TO LOOK AFTER CLIENTS, AND HAVING THAT IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK.”

ALI JONES, PARTNER, SAGARS

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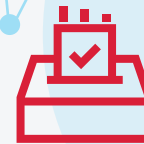


Redefining the Working Week

A “normal” working week used to involve leaving the office in the evening, and counting the days to ‘Friyay!’. But this familiar pattern has been upended by the move to a completely mobile workforce – and the main challenge centres around employee wellbeing.

Jonathan noted that the lockdown has led to an improvement in productivity – “even some of the diehard fee-earners and partners locked behind their desks with the door shut recognise that it works” - but it has been achieved at the expense of wellbeing. “A lot of us are struggling to bookend the day,” he said. At the end of a hectic working day, activities such as going to the gym or a meal out used to provide what he calls ‘mental diversification’, enabling people to get away from work and come back refocused. He has noticed that the conversation lately has been about the tech underpinning all of this: “If we could put some metrics around wellbeing, such indicators would be useful to help us cope with what the working week currently looks like.”

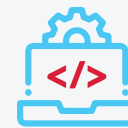
Nick Hayne, Head of Professional Services at Quiss, has found that users are particularly stressed about the security aspects of working from home – such as the security of endpoint devices, and what is done with sensitive data when it is printed. He asked the panel how they control what people access on their technology and what they print. According to Andrew, Bishop Fleming has made incremental changes to security – such as to password policies. “It used to be that users had to change their password every six weeks – so you got weak passwords. We introduced two-factor authentication and a more complex password policy, but they only have to change it once a year so the hope is that they use a stronger password,” he said. Of course, firms can take a number of such measures to help ensure security but partnering with a Managed IT Services provider such as Quiss can provide extra peace of mind. In addition to cloud deployments, Quiss offers a range of services such as cybersecurity and disaster recovery. And equally important is their IT Training, so users are aware of how their use of tech impacts the organisation.



PROFESSIONALS WHO ATTENDED THE SESSION

Poll results:

1 To what extent has the 2020 lockdown increased the burden on your organization’s IT department?



46%
Moderate increase

- 6% large decrease
- 7% Moderate decrease
- 7% No change
- 33% large increase

2 From an IT end-user perspective, ie tools and technology, do you prefer working remotely or from the office?



42%
Prefer home

- 23% Prefer the office
- 35% It’s the same

3 Does your organization currently use monitoring tools to better understand employee experience?



58%
No, we do not monitor employee experience

- 36% Yes, we use a variety of tools
- 6% Yes, we use one dedicated tool

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Enhancing the Digital Experience

When we polled attendees on the biggest IT priority facing their organisation in 2021, an overwhelming 66% pointed to improving the end user experience. How do firms ensure connectivity, access, and security while providing a seamless and positive experience for their people?

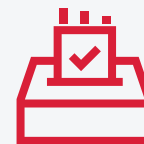
Andrew highlighted how user experience needed to be consistent. "They should use the same method to connect to our system whether they are at home, in a coffee shop, or on the train. Otherwise, it's confusing to work out what they should do in different places," he said. Bishop Fleming has rolled out laptops to everybody and made sure they're all accessing everything the same way. "We created an environment that blends legacy applications and modern SAS-based applications onto a Windows 10 desktop," he said. Jonathan agreed. "The expectation going forward will be 'it worked for nine months while I was locked down at home, so why can't it work from Central London in a client's meeting room'," he said. He thinks that this will require more industrial strength solutions – beyond those such as Microsoft Direct Access (which the firm used until recently).

Jonny asked the panel whether, due to a post-pandemic surge in mobile working, firms would need to revisit their remote working strategies, and how this could impact the user experience. Jonathan pointed out how with people becoming truly mobile they don't want to reboot every time they come off a train and get onto a wifi. "The market is in need of additional tools to make that user experience what they expect it to be," he said.



Jas was of the view that people would start to take the 'always on VPN' route. It makes sense – 'always mobile' will require VPN access of the sort offered by NetMotion – seamless remote access that also allows users to get improved performance when the VPN is on slow networks – and enables them to stay online even when the network drops. Unlike traditional VPNs, NetMotion's is software-based and its Digital Experience Monitoring feature provides IT teams with real-time data about how devices, applications, and networks are performing, providing valuable insight into mobile workers.

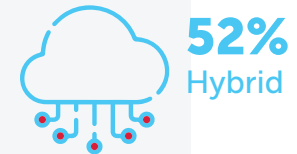
What became clear from this extremely revealing discussion is that the move to a 100% mobile workforce comes with both challenges and benefits. The combined impact of NetMotion's singular focus on the remote worker, and Quiss' depth and breadth of expertise in tech adoption and implementation, and management of critical business infrastructure, can help firms overcome the challenges, and realise the benefits. And, perhaps most importantly, help firms meet the higher user experience standards that remote workers will come to expect.



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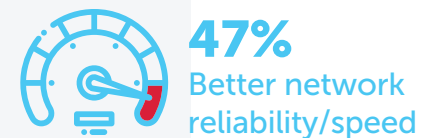
Poll results:

4 What is the preferred cloud delivery service model for your organisation?



- 9% Public
- 34% Private
- 5% On-premise

5 What do you think would be the single biggest improvement for fee earners working remotely or in a hybrid environment?



- 6% Better device performance
- 5% Better security software
- 42% Better application performance

6 What is the biggest IT priority facing your organization in 2021?



- 13% Updating remote access strategy
- 6% Embracing zero trust
- 16% Transitioning to the cloud



Quiss Technology are a managed cloud specialist working in the UK legal space.

Many law firms are now looking to technology that adds further value to their business proposition, technology that can support their ambitions. In many ways as we work with so many law firms not just as clients, but holding regional think tanks and events we get exposed to what is working and what areas firms are struggling to find value from.

www.quiss.co.uk

NetMotion is the only cloud-first, secure remote access platform that actively improves the remote working experience.

Our relationship with Netmotion is a prime example of a partnership that delivers to law firms in unexpected ways. The recent pandemic has highlighted key challenges around remote working, user experience and security that 12 months previously weren't on the agenda – the poll results in this survey has highlighted these challenges. If you would like further information please feel free to contact us about a zero risk free proof of concept.

www.netmotionsoftware.com

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