



The Value of True Mobility

**WHY FIRMS SHOULD GO BEYOND
REMOTE WORKING TO EMBRACE
MOBILE STRATEGIES**

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When COVID-19 arrived, law firms did one of two things. Either they were caught off guard and scrambled to put remote working provision in place, or they made small adjustments because they were already there. So the first impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on law firms was on the way it exposed the firms that had not innovated or kept up with reality. Dynamic firms, with a proactive and innovative mindset and the capacity to make timely decisions, had already adopted a remote working model as standard because of the strong advantages it confers in today's highly competitive legal environment.

That said, a second impact of COVID-19 has been in the way it has forced the less technologically savvy firms to catch up with respect to working outside of the office. While initially they may have been caught flat-footed and may have lost ground and clients as a result, by now, the laggards have pretty much drawn level in terms of being able to work remotely. And whether they know it or not, are now in a position to exploit its intrinsic advantages and stay remote going forward, if they choose to do so.

The consequences of this rapid acceleration should not be lost on dynamic firms. The risk they face now is that the competitive edge remote working gave them will be eroded. To counter that, we believe that their next strategic play should be to go beyond remote working. Remote working is a great foundation, but true mobility – that is, working from any location – should be where firms are headed.

Why remote working works

But first, why is remote working such a game-changer? The firms that were forced into it might not yet recognize its advantages beyond sheer necessity, but recent data has underlined the benefits. Remote workers are up to 40% more productive, produce 40% fewer quality defects, have 41% less absenteeism, and are 12% less likely to change jobs.¹

In the context of law firms, alongside these gains, remote working makes firms more competitive by significantly lowering fixed costs—including the need to spend so much money on Class A real estate in expensive cities. Remote working also enables firms to recruit further afield and thereby from a bigger and more diverse talent pool, which further increases the quality of the firm's legal product and its capacity to dynamically adopt new and better working models. Furthermore, it also allows for workers to balance the work life metric by having the flexibility during the work week.

It's important that clients also benefit from remote working, and they do. It turns out they do not have much interest in visiting your prestigious downtown address or paying for the artwork on your walls. They want law firms that are value-driven, offering accessible lawyers and excellent service and efficiency.

Remember that clients are representative of the general working age population; and that within the next five years, Millennials and Generation Z will constitute the majority of the workforce. They have grown up in a digital world. They don't need to see bricks and mortar to believe their law firm is substantial. They would rather work with firms that embrace all the advantages that modern technology can supply.

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurelfarrar/2020/02/12/top-5-benefits-of-remote-work-for-companies/#405a71916c8e>

Clients remain rightly concerned about compliance and data security. But these days, they are smart enough to know that cloud-based services can supply defense-grade encryption, so the integrity of confidential and sensitive information is not compromised by remote working. Indeed, client files are much more secure in the cloud than they ever were in an office filing cabinet.

Clients also want high levels of interaction between themselves and the firm and amongst their lawyers. But again, that is not hard to achieve using apps that let people have virtual faceto-face contact, like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Facetime; and cloud-based document management systems that enable collaboration and controlled document sharing.

Finally, lawyers are also happy with remote working as long as they are empowered with the right tools for workflow efficiency, compliance, and collaboration. It gives them more opportunity to optimize productivity by allowing them to create the work environment they find most conducive to concentration. Likewise, with more control over their schedules, lawyers can boost their performance by working at the time of day, and on the days of the week, when they are at their sharpest, free from the old nine-to-five demarcations. They also get back the time that was spent commuting. All told, then, everyone stands to gain from remote working. But they stand to gain even more if it is converted into true mobility.

Remote working vs true mobility

To be clear, remote working is working remotely from a hub. While it might include some elements of mobility, the remote worker is still typically tied to a single location. Meanwhile, true mobility is being able to work seamlessly and compliantly across devices, from any location and at any time, without needing to go to a desk or home office or landline to do so. The key is not to swap being tethered

to an office desk for being tethered to a home office desk. Instead, lawyers should be empowered with technology that's seamless, powerful, easy to adopt, and easy to use in any setting.

True mobility is enabled by today's technology: cloud and sophisticated apps, which accomplish day-to-day tasks quickly and efficiently. But the point is that these apps aren't just pale imitations or clunky workarounds that just about match the functionality of their desk-based predecessors on smaller screens. These are apps that use AI, NPL and automation to outperform preceding desk-based solutions and indeed do things that weren't previously possible.

Most of these apps can function anywhere, irrespective of if the user is online or not, and will synchronize data when a connection is reestablished. The best of them will be intuitive to use, with a uniform interface across devices, thus encouraging high rates of adoption. So lawyers and associates are empowered to be mobile, efficient, flexible and compliant at all times. There are no trade-offs to being truly mobile, it delivers genuine added value to the firm and its clients, no matter where lawyers are.

On the road again

In the present circumstances, true mobility will translate into giving lawyers the option to escape the kids and the bustle of family life by stepping into the back yard to review a contract, or giving them the means to do some essential "housekeeping," such as filing emails into the firm's DMS while standing in line outside a supermarket. These might seem like small things, but small things add up. And it's a lot about enabling people to do short duration tasks – checking in, filing emails – that fit into the rest of life. It's giving people the tools with which they can achieve immediate work goals and at the same time a balanced existence.