



INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Meeting a new normal

Rob Jardine, chief marketing officer of LoopUp, explains why the legal profession deserves remote-meeting technology designed with its specific needs in mind

The remote meeting has become symbolic of life under the coronavirus lockdown for many. For legal professionals, conference calls may already have been commonplace, but they have become more frequent, more important, and used for more things.

The potential for remote meetings to replace many face-to-face meetings has been highlighted, but the shortcomings of much of today's technology has been exposed. Use of VoIP over the public internet has led to audio quality issues, while new users have struggled to get to grips with the technology. And security issues with some widely-used conferencing solutions have been widely reported.

Even before coronavirus, analysts were forecasting rapid growth in the use of remote meetings. Changing workplace demographics, increased remote working, and pressure to reduce business travel as a response to climate change as well as efficiency, are all driving demand; as are improvements in conferencing technology itself. And as social-distancing rules are eventually

relaxed, and workers return to their offices, we think the shift from face-to-face to remote meetings will continue to accelerate.

This potential benefit to law firms is considerable – meeting remotely can improve productivity and reduce costs by eliminating the need for business travel, as well as increasing the frequency of client engagement. But in order to do this effectively, law firms need remote-meeting technology that meets their specific needs.

Today's requirements

Remote-meeting technology has advanced significantly since the days of dial-in audio conferencing. Participants can share their screens to view things together in real time, and videoconferencing can increase engagement.

This technology has democratised the remote meeting by making it more effective. It has evolved from a specialist tool, used mostly by professional services firms and senior executives, and is now used by a wide range of workers across many industries. But this can be problematic for law firms. As the technology has evolved, it has

become increasingly focused on the needs of the general enterprise, rather than the specific needs of law firms.

At general enterprises, the majority of remote meetings occur internally between colleagues. Consequently, meeting guests are familiar with a particular solution. Any software required is already installed on their devices. And VoIP audio stays within the corporate network, where quality of service can be managed.

By contrast, law firms need conferencing technology for important meetings with clients and other external guests. These calls really matter – all of them. Participants are typically senior executives, and many will be using the software for the first time.

At LoopUp, we understand that a simple, intuitive experience is essential for law firms – there's just no room for time wasted while guests struggle to join the meeting. And security and reliable audio quality are non-negotiable. Our technology promotes client engagement, reflects well on the firm, and drives better business outcomes. The requirements of law firms are best met with a specialist solution, rather than technology that was developed for the mainstream.

Increasing effectiveness and productivity

While the right remote-meeting technology can already generate a competitive advantage for law firms today, we believe it has the potential to be transformational in the future. At LoopUp, we see a number of opportunities to make remote meetings more efficient and productive. They include:

- **Helping legal professionals to generate more value from meetings** – at present, the effectiveness of a meeting is dependent on the way it is managed – setting an agenda, sharing content, taking notes and agreeing next steps. Some meeting hosts are naturally better at this than others, and everyone does it differently. Technology can be used to standardise and automate these processes to make meetings more consistent and effective, and to reduce manual effort.
- **More effective and secure capture and sharing of information** – similarly, many pieces of the information and the 'artefacts' from a remote meeting – attendees, minutes, content, meeting recording, action items – are not used

effectively after the meeting. With artificial intelligence technology, this information can be analysed, indexed and stored to make it accessible and useful. And access by internal and external users can be managed and tracked to maintain data security.

- **Deeper integration with commonly-used workflows and tools** – law firms share many common processes and solutions, from scheduling and time recording to case management and practice management. Thoughtful integration of remote-meeting technology with these solutions can make processes more efficient and aid the flow of information, as well as making it more secure.

To deliver these benefits, law firms will need remote-meeting technology designed specifically for their industry – with the audio reliability, ease of use and security required for important meetings with external guests, and advanced features that integrate with their workflows and tools. The large collaboration software goliaths are (rightly) focused on the bigger prizes – more generic tools targeted at general enterprise use – creating an opportunity for specialist technology providers to the legal sector.

Looking to the future

LoopUp is partnering with **Briefing** to conduct research into the attitudes to remote meetings of big law firms – how they use technology today, how they expect their needs to evolve over the next three to five years, and what they expect from technology vendors. This will be published with the June edition. ▴

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Rob Jardine, chief marketing officer, LoopUp



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