# Briefing

## SMARTER LEGAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

# *Don't leave us this way*

*Many tactics are used in the battle for new top business talent – but what keeps the people you want to retain most actively engaged?*

# Move on the dial

Steve Flavell, co-CEO of LoopUp, says it's high time for professional services to hang up on the conventionally chaotic conference call

I t's one of the most instantly recognisable scenes of modern business life – an important conference call that descends into rather embarrassing farce. Repeated enquiries about who's on the call, while hanging around awkwardly for late joiners. Perhaps something is said that somebody else isn't supposed to hear. Then everyone seemingly can't help but talk over one another. Before you know it the individual most critical to progress of the opportunity has already reached that 'hard stop'.

Steve Flavell, co-founder and co-CEO of LoopUp – formerly in engineering and strategy consulting – is on a mission to make a difference – and cut the average 15 minutes that's wasted every time one of these things is scheduled (costing the business world approximately £26bn in 2017, finds LoopUp, up from £14bn in 2015).

The big change seems surprisingly simple. And of course, that's very much the idea: a less confusing experience for all involved. Instead of dialling in, invitees to a call receive a single link to a page, where they enter their number – and then it's their phone that rings. A screen pops up with a list of who else is also present and who's speaking.

"Dialling into conference calls using numbers and access codes is still very much the norm in the enterprise business world, but it just isn't a good experience," says Flavell.

"There are so many classic frustrations: first and foremost, just getting all the various numbers right. You're going back and forth to your calendar to look them up, only then to find it isn't recognised. Then it's on to working out who else is 'on', who's speaking, and who's still missing."

## Remote prospects

Emotions may be running high for a business day in any case. In law firms, of course, the content of many of these conversations won't be straightforward at all, while taking place with highly valued existing or prospective new clients.

Ironically, that's likely to be a reason people fall back on the calling status quo. "The one thing you generally can be sure of with dialling in is that the audio quality will be reasonably reliable," says Flavell. "Also, it's universally recognisable and doable – you usually don't need to download extra software, and so on."

However, over the last 13 years Flavell and his co-founder Michael Hughes MBE – who he met at business school – have persuaded a decent chunk of larger law firms to dispense with dial-in. "It's ultimately built to appeal to callers with business-critical, but nevertheless day-to-day, remote meetings," he says.

"Law firms do have a certain reputation for being slow to change, but I think that can be unfair – in my experience they're among the most proactive at exploring technology changes that might improve process or productivity. There are just some situational factors that can make it more difficult, such as security and reputation. The cost of getting things wrong is just too high."

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For more information, visit:
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In fact, risk management is another real concern with basic dial-in calls – if you don't know who's on, you can't possibly know who could be listening to potentially sensitive information, says Flavell.

### Face up to it?

One way to increase some transparency at least would be some faces – and of course, many firms have some technology in place to allow people to videoconference. Although LoopUp has just introduced functionality for video streaming itself, however – on the same pay-as-you-use basis – Flavell says the business is "audio first" to ensure the user always has reliable audio quality and also has the best experience by remaining in control and with minimal interruptions.

"First, most other video products in the market encourage you to download some software – and some absolutely require it," he explains. That's automatically one more thing to think about as a potential barrier. "Second, there are some ways around it, but you will also be encouraged to speak into your computer." Whereas LoopUp makes a point of separating audio and video streams. The audio is not carried over the public internet, so isn't at the mercy of connectivity for sound quality.

Finally, there's how people themselves prefer to behave (and yes, perhaps find it hard to change). "Many products encourage – or even force – you to turn your camera on when you join. There's an argument this helps engagement, but we believe video enhances some meetings but is neither needed nor wanted for others. The person best placed to decide is the meeting host." However, parties can share and collaborate on documents at a click – part of a focus on all of this calling for zero training. "You have to make a change like this really easy. In the heat of an important call there just isn't time for picking up feature-rich software.

"Moving the mainstream is a big job, and nothing's as likely to make people default back as something new that appears intimidating when they can't afford it." We say that's probably not a bad call.