

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, a red skirt, and black high-heeled shoes, is sitting on a white ledge by a large window. She is looking down at a tablet computer she is holding in her hands. The window provides a view of a city skyline under a cloudy sky.

# Anywhere Operations: the evolution of law firms

# Introduction

It isn't a new phenomenon, but remote working during the pandemic gave many people their first taste of a better work-life balance; the chance to do the school run or go on a run at lunchtime. Understandably, many aren't willing to let it go; a [survey by Acritas](#) found that 77% of senior lawyers wanted to retain elements of remote working, whilst 22% said they may leave if their firm wouldn't accommodate their wishes. In the same report, which surveyed almost 2,500 lawyers, it was revealed that fewer than one in ten want to return to working regular office hours and on average, they would like to spend at least two days a week working from home.

The message is clear: the pandemic has changed how – and where – people want to work. And those firms who have responded by continuing to adapt their business models out of desire, rather than necessity, will be able to stand up to further disruption, pandemic-related or otherwise.

As law firms continue to look at ways to adapt and develop for their future success, they now have an opportunity to put their people front and centre – both employees and clients – of their operations. According to [Gartner's 2021 Report](#) into leading technology trends, this can be realised through a model known as "Anywhere Operations", which it cites as being critical for businesses in order to emerge successfully from COVID-19.

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# What is Anywhere Operations?

The concept of Anywhere Operations focuses on using technology, processes, and teams to enable a dispersed workforce to successfully serve customers, no matter their location. The 'digital-first' model provides more than just enabling remote working or connecting with clients virtually. Anywhere Operations is about building an adaptable and resilient foundation of technology solutions, internal procedures, digital tools, and the right skillsets to seamlessly run your business without a physical infrastructure and no matter the location of employees and customers.

Anywhere Operations challenges the traditional ideas of how to run a law firm, removing the need for an office location and face-to-face client interactions. It utilises technology to run a seamless and unrestricted operation that drives efficiency and enables a frictionless collaboration between clients and lawyers digitally.

A successful digital-first operational strategy relies on changes to management structure, internal processes, and implementation of software solutions and digital tools. But importantly it requires a change to the technology infrastructure. Some of the key things to consider include:

**Team communication & collaboration** – internal meeting solutions, digital client collaboration tools, access to the same database of information, document collaboration.

**Secure remote system access** – two factor authentication, secure hosting, data, and cyber security training.

**Cloud database system** – accessible securely from anywhere, integrated platforms, centralised solution for data and processes; and

**Visibility and monitoring** – retain control of processes and progress, reporting and data to track success.







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Acritas Report Oct 2020

As the Gartner report suggests, the digital first, remote first model should focus on several key areas:

#### Digital approach to work

The default approach to all work carried out by law firms should be digital and virtual.

#### Remote first solutions

The primary delivery model for law firms should focus on the provision of a range of remote working solutions for staff and clients alike.

#### Digitally enrich physical spaces

Where physical space or analogue solutions are necessary, look to enhance these through the provision of digital components, where possible.

#### Dispersed business capabilities

The delivery of remote digital services and capabilities should be carried out seamlessly and, crucially, across both physical and virtual spaces.

Strikingly, Gartner's report predicts that 40% of businesses will have applied anywhere operations to deliver improved and collaborative virtual and physical client / employee experiences by the end of 2023.

# Benefits of an Anywhere Operation for law firms

There are several distinct benefits to be realised from adopting an anywhere operations model, including:



## Anywhere talent

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of adopting anywhere operations is the scope of candidates you can attract and retain from a much wider geographical area, which is no longer a barrier to recruiting the right people. And by offering greater flexibility within your firm, it's likely that you'll attract – and retain – people with the necessary skills and expertise for the role. With a great talent pool, you're far more likely to realise increased productivity and therefore exceed client expectations.



## Operational freedom

being digital first means having the freedom to manage your firm and workers remotely. There's the obvious advantage of potential cost savings too, as it's unlikely that you will need to provide a dedicated space for each staff member.



## Freedom and flexibility

It isn't just about achieving financial targets. Anywhere operations recognises that people want the power of choice to work where, when, and even how they deliver client work. Now more than ever, they value having choices such as where they live, and being able to shut down from work over the weekend. Anywhere operations facilitates this.



## Secure business continuity

It isn't just about achieving financial targets. Anywhere operations recognises that people If your firm is already an anywhere operation with cloud infrastructure, it is unlikely that you will need an alternative disaster recovery plan for unforeseen challenges that stop you from having access to your physical office and files. When you're not restricted to a physical place of work or operational structure then you can reduce the risk of downtime. However, it's crucial to consider data and security risks that can be increased during remote work and ensure there is effective tools and training in place for staff and a cyber-attack recovery plan in place if the worst should happen.



## Poised for growth

Where the anywhere operations model has been adopted, firms are in a hugely advantageous position to seize opportunities and experience growth, as the world continues to open up to a digital mindset.



## Enhanced client service

Client expectations are at an all-time high – they expect transparency and quick response times on their legal matters – but the delivery of a high-quality service to your clients can be achieved by digitally connecting and streamlining your operations, while also improving efficiencies and the profitability of your firm.





## The digital foundation

A cloud-based, fully integrated practice and case management system (PCMS) is the cornerstone of any law firm looking to operate a digital-first strategy. Connected in real-time and available 24/7 a PCMS is the centralised, single platform that helps you to effectively run your firm and manage your cases and clients. With your documents, processes, and data unified and available from the cloud, your firm can effectively operate anytime, anywhere, and successfully manage clients digitally.

A PCMS provides the digital tools to significantly speed up legal matters by reducing manual administration and taking advantage of efficiency-boosting features and automations. The solution also makes it incredibly easy to share and collaborate with all parties, including your internal team, so your business can operate seamlessly through the cloud-hosted platform.

Importantly, a PCMS enables law firms to offer client-centric solutions. A client web portal, automated text messaging, real-time updates and eSignatures ensures clients are kept informed and provides a convenient and frictionless service from all team members to any client, regardless of location.



## A people-first approach



This is arguably the cornerstone to the success of the anywhere operations model: recognising the importance of people. Without retaining and attracting the right people, it is difficult to understand how the model can succeed. After all, people are not only critical to your success, but are also central to the adoption and use of new technologies.

Although a people-first approach may be interpreted in different ways by different law firms, all firms should recognise its importance in the post-COVID world. Whilst the Anywhere Operations strategy focuses heavily on having the right the tech in place, it is people who are critical to its successful adoption for the benefit of staff and clients alike.



## Final thoughts

When looking to adopt an Anywhere Operations approach, it is important to recognise that it isn't just about technology, or working from home, nor is about going paperless or paper-lite. It is about looking at your entire business – including your people first and foremost – and removing any physical elements that could limit your operation. The Anywhere Operations mindset removes physical barriers to enable freedom and flexibility to utilise and maximise technology for the benefit of your firm and clients.

Your business will be unincumbered by the physical but being digital-first doesn't ignore the preference for office-working or face-to-face meetings, it simply provides options and the choice to successfully and effectively carry out either. When the foundation of all processes is built on an Anywhere Operations mindset, adapting is easier, and opportunities are increased.

By looking at the whole business you will identify any barriers to driving efficiency and identify ways for your firm to offer a truly seamless operation, which facilitates a smooth partnership between clients and lawyers digitally.





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