



Case Study

Brethertons LLP

“Practices without Lexcel are missing out hugely.”

Background on Brethertons

Brethertons celebrated their 200 Anniversary in 2010. Specialising in both private client and commercial law, the firm is one of the largest practices in Warwickshire and Oxfordshire with over 150 employees across four offices.

Services include: Agricultural Law; Wills; Trusts and Probate; Civil Litigation; Personal Injury and Spinal Injury; Commercial Mediation; Information Technology; Conveyancing and Family Law; Debt Recovery; Commercial Debt Recovery and Property Management Debt Recovery; International Child Abduction; Corporate Commercial; Commercial Property and Insolvency. Many service areas have national and international clients. The firm has been Lexcel accredited since 4 July 2003.

Working in a Lexcel practice

Linda Jones, Partner at Brethertons LLP gives her opinion on working for a Lexcel practice:

“Having worked in the same practice when it was both non-Lexcel accredited and now accredited I can say that there are significant amount of benefits to an individual working within an accredited practice.”

“As a fee-earner I have confidence in knowing that the procedures have been devised by our compliance/Lexcel team. If I was not also compliance officer and responsible for Lexcel then I would find the regulations daunting but the procedures give me comfort to know that my files are all compliant files. Also as a fee-earner I know that the procedures are there to assist me in giving an increased level of client care thereby avoiding and minimising the risk of complaints which is a much more pleasant way of working. As a Partner and a Manager of the firm, Lexcel gives me confidence that the firm is being run properly, our IT allows us to determine whether teams aren't following procedures as to file reviews and the various checks and balances that we have. It makes the Management Team sleep easier at night knowing that the firm is a compliant well run firm.”

The impact that Lexcel has had on the firm:

“Very positive. I strongly believe that Lexcel provides practices with tools that they require to improve their business. Team morale has improved since accreditation and management are happy knowing that the practice is running correctly and all activities are being adequately supervised.

We are now able to deliver unrivalled customer service and Lexcel has had a large part to play in this. We have also witnessed an increase in positive client feedback with our overall complaints reduced by 68.2 per cent.

Client care information has been hugely impacted by Lexcel. This stems from client engagement letters, to costs updates to communication methods to closing procedures. This has had a hugely positive impact in terms of bringing clarity to issues for clients such as costs and steps to be taken, which has resulted in a huge reduction in complaints and an increased level of our positive feed back.”

“Members of staff are very proud of our accreditation and our Law Society Excellence Award.”

Benefits of Lexcel

What the firm wanted to achieve through Lexcel:

“Having been a Compliance Officer at Brethertons for some time, I had had experience of implementing the Code of Conduct (2007) and realised that it was imperative that we, as a practice, looked at ways in which to improve the business, especially in terms of client care and business management.

I felt that the next logical step would be to implement Lexcel within the business as, appeared to be a perfect fit, in that it not only ensured we were compliant with standards but also ensured quality assurance within the practice.

Now that we are Lexcel accredited, and have achieved the core essence of what we set out to achieve, we are driving forward and looking to improve our practice further. We would like to devote more attention to improving client service and feel that this is the next key area we would like to focus on.”



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How the rest of the firm view the benefits of accreditation:

"Generally, very positive. All members of staff are proud of our accreditation and are happy to adhere to the standard. This feeling was significantly increased when we won the Law Society's Lexcel Award for Excellence in Practice Management in October 2011."

"It has benefited the practice in terms of overall management and the service we provide to our clients, so definitely outweighs the financial investment."

"As a practice, we have gone from strength to strength and I'm not too sure what we would do without the Lexcel framework. Lexcel encourages us to seek continuous improvement in the way our business is run and the services we deliver to our clients. In the current market, practices without Lexcel are missing out hugely."

Tips for applying for Lexcel

"I felt that I needed the support of an assistant compliance officer to help me with procedural tasks such as conducting file reviews."

"I also sought the assistance of a Lexcel Consultant who was key in ensuring that we set out to address all potential non-compliances within the practice. I felt that by having the Consultant at hand throughout the two year period, we were able to attain an impartial perspective of our business operations and improve any areas of concern with her guidance."

I also felt that it was important that we invested in our existing IT team. As a business, it is vital that case management is performed accurately to ensure that there is consistency and supervision. The team were therefore asked to prioritise case management over other areas of work."

"We initially considered implementing Lexcel within our practice in 2008 but did not apply for the accreditation until 2010. It took us approximately two years to become accredited."

"For us, it was not important to achieve Lexcel within a set time frame. As a practice, we felt that it was more important that we all felt confident in the knowledge that all systems and procedures had been put into place ensuring the smooth running of the business, prior to applying for Lexcel."

Additional tips:

"I think one of the most important pieces of advice to any practice considering applying for Lexcel would be - be sure you are 100 per cent ready."

"Make sure you give yourself plenty of time between final implementation and application. Don't underestimate the technicalities of getting the go-ahead from the Law Society to proceed to assessment. I.e. get the go ahead before you book the assessment."

In order to ensure that the entire process runs smoothly, I would recommend practices spend time ensuring all members of staff are thoroughly prepared for the process. The project manager should also be completely confident that all elements of the standard have been applied correctly."

Also, it would be very helpful for practices to ensure that they have all the relevant documentation at hand for the assessor to review."

The Lexcel Office

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