



Case Study

Penningtons Solicitors LLP

“Lexcel helps us differentiate our firm within the local, regional and national markets”

Background on Penningtons Solicitors LLP

Penningtons Solicitors LLP is a top 100 UK law firm, providing a broad range of legal services tailored to the needs of businesses and individuals. With a track record dating back 300 years, it has 360 members of staff, over 200 of whom are lawyers.

Penningtons' head office is in the City of London. There are further offices in Cambridge, Hampshire and Surrey. As a member of Multilaw and the European Law Group, Penningtons has close links with law firms throughout the world. Clients range from private individuals and owner managed businesses to multi-national corporations, public companies, professional partnerships, banks and financial institutions.

Working in a Lexcel practice

Marcus Shepherd, Risk Manager at Penningtons Solicitors LLP gives his opinion on working for a Lexcel practice:

“Lexcel practices are much better organised in training new staff, clarifying what is expected in terms of service, providing information that needs to be given to clients and delivering local support to ensure that this is achieved. This allows a consistent level of service to be provided to all clients across all areas irrespective of whatever else may be going on in a busy, competitive, modern solicitors practice.”

How has Lexcel impacted on the business?

“Lexcel requires that business, recruitment and business development plans are in place and joined up. At Penningtons, they are but Lexcel provides an effective way of checking, reviewing and ensuring such plans cover what they need to. In my experience everything that Lexcel requires is critically needed to run a successful partnership. If you think any of the requirements are unnecessary or over the top, you need to seriously consider your management strategies and approach.”

“Compliance requirements have become and continue to be significant and ever more complex. Without a common sense set of guidelines/procedures to work with and refer to for each client and instruction something is bound to be missed. Working with Lexcel guidelines and, perhaps even more importantly, improving these and tailoring them to the way your teams like to work. This ensures that your clients are served effectively and your business is able to successfully recover its costs for the work it has done.”

“The implementation of Lexcel has led to Penningtons creating a dedicated Risk & Compliance Unit that supports the fee-earning teams. It has also resulted in more effective ways of obtaining client satisfaction information. These other initiatives may have happened without Lexcel, but I don't believe this would have happened quite as quickly or as effectively. It would be more accurate to say that the combination of Lexcel and these other initiatives have had a positive effect on the frequency of complaints and to the resolution of those complaints that do occur.”

Benefits of Lexcel

Why did the firm seek Lexcel accreditation?

“Consistent, high quality service for our clients. To increase our ability to recover the costs of the work we have done. Lexcel has enabled us to achieve this”

“We achieve all of these, but it is difficult to validate. We have less complaints and claims, we recover more of our fees than we otherwise would, our clients are happier, they instruct us more and recommend us to others. To



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determine which proportion of the above is directly attributable to Lexcel, is not reasonably possible. We are all very, very busy, we all want to be compliant and provide the highest service to our clients. Having Lexcel, and being independently audited means that we must find time to ensure that we are doing what we need to meet Lexcel requirement (and be compliant). Without it, there is much less of an incentive to pause the day to day frenzy of work and pay attention to such matters."

Tips for practices interested in Lexcel?

"Be straight with your auditor. The audit does not prove how brilliant everyone is (we aren't!), it determines where you can do better, and how. Take this approach with the application and your auditor - you will get much more benefit. For the first 3 years we employed an independent consultant to carry out a mock audit ahead of the Lexcel audit. This helped us identify weak points and correct these. Since the formation of the Risk team and Risk Manager this is now carried out internally."

"It took 2 months for us to consider then decide to seek Lexcel accreditation. It then took 9 months to go from the point of deciding to reach the point where we felt that we were sufficiently compliant with Lexcel standard to apply for accreditation."

"The application and audit is managed by the Risk Manager who is responsible for compliance processes. Compliance representatives in each practice area are interviewed to determine whether there are any potential problems or required improvements. A spread sheet of policies and procedures that need to be implemented or updated is worked from, and work delegated to the relevant support head or team. All people selected for interview are provided with extensive guidance notes as to what the process entails and are offered a meeting for further support if they want it."

"And remember, Lexcel is an ongoing process. Don't stop when you've been awarded, keep developing your systems to make sure they're effective and relevant for you."

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