

Background

Established in West London in 2005, Saracens Solicitors has held the Lexcel accreditation since 2010.

The firm has been nominated for numerous awards including:

- The Law Society Excellence Awards (Shortlisted 2013)
- The Law Society Excellence Awards – Excellence in Technology (Shortlisted 2015)
- Contact Law – Recommended firm in 2013

A full-service firm, Saracens Solicitors provides legal advice pertaining to:

- commercial and company
- employment
- property
- wills and trusts
- finance and luxury goods and assets
- personal injury
- civil litigation
- family

The firm has been commended by its assessor every year with twenty or more references of good practice.

Finding a strategy to demonstrate quality

Before implementing the Lexcel framework, Saracens Solicitors demonstrated quality by focusing on delivering exceptional service to clients in a cost-effective manner. Fraz Butt, one of the firm's founding partners, states that, "as the firm grew, we adopted our own best practices, for example, creating a central register for undertakings".

There came a point, however, when it was recognised that the firm required a central framework from which to develop uniform practices, policies and procedures. "We were in a situation where we had multiple staff doing things in multiple ways. Because we had always focused on providing exceptional service at a reasonable cost to clients, inefficiencies in our processes quickly became obvious. We needed to find a way of standardising our work practices across the organisation, and bring an end to having multiple policies and procedures.

We started researching into the various accreditations available and found that Lexcel slotted in immediately with what we were trying to achieve and solved our problem for us."

Fraz states that the firm takes pride in its Lexcel accreditation and promotes it on any introductory emails to clients, the firm's website and all proposals sent out.

Life with Lexcel

Saracens Solicitors did not use a Lexcel consultant to set up the initial policies and procedures. The implementation was led by one of the partners in the firm. This was not difficult as many of the policies were already in place and Lexcel makes it easy as the firm itself sets up the policies and procedures in a way that suits their business, guided by the Lexcel framework. Therefore, according to Fraz, "your Lexcel manual is only as complicated as you need it to be".

Lexcel is now part of the culture at Saracens Solicitors and long-term staff could not imagine life without it. Fraz comments that it can take new staff, who may have come from a firm that are not Lexcel accredited, time to adjust to the systems in place. Therefore, including Lexcel training during the induction of new staff is imperative.

Fraz states that it is vital that staff buy into Lexcel. He also states that having Lexcel helps sort, “the wheat from the chaff” with regards to new employees. Those who can adapt to having organised processes and procedures that must be followed in every matter demonstrate the type of skills we want to attract to the firm, so indirectly, having Lexcel allows us to recruit and retain the highest calibre of employees”.

The time commitment

Fraz believes that the time commitment involved in implementing Lexcel is not overly onerous. “If challenges are to come, he states, it is when the policy and procedural changes take effect, which is why staff buy-in is so important from the outset”.

Saracens overcame this by ensuring everyone was trained in the new procedures and understood the reason for putting them in place – to create a more efficient, effective practice.

Benefits to the business

The main benefit Lexcel has provided to the business is the massive increase in efficiency. Fraz comments, “Having Lexcel means we now have a blueprint for money-laundering policies, we have a sound IT policy, and as a busy London practice, it helps enormously that we do not have to re-educate staff members every time a new situation comes up.”

He adds, “We have moved offices twice since having Lexcel and without the accreditation’s policies, plans and procedures in place, we would have struggled with the relocations. But because we had a communications process, and IT process, a register of key experts who could be contacted quickly if require, both moves went relatively smoothly. No one was rushing around trying to find client mailing lists or files because a process for having these contained in a central register was already in place”.

Another benefit is the firm has a disaster recovery plan in place. When we moved, the server had to be switched off. If this had caused information to be lost, all our staff could have kept working because of the procedures to manage and resolve such an eventuality occurring.

With regards to PII, the firm’s costs have remained stable since having Lexcel, even though the firm has grown considerably in the past six years.

The firm seldom receives complaints. If they do, not only does the complaints policy follow the Lexcel framework give the client confidence that the matter will be considered seriously and appropriate actions will be taken, the staff member involved feels supported and assured as they are familiar with the complaints process.

Resistance to Lexcel

All the partners at Saracens Solicitors were 100 percent behind getting the Lexcel accreditation because they could immediately see the benefits it would provide.

“New staff who have resistance to the processes and procedures we have adopted under the

Lexcel framework just have to be managed”, states Fraz.

“I advise fledging firms to invest in the Lexcel accreditation from day one because your business will run more efficiently with the policies, plans and procedures in place. I honestly do not know how people run a firm without it”.

Are you interested in becoming accredited?

Find all the information you need about applying for Lexcel online: www.lawsociety.org.uk/lexcel.

Download the Lexcel Standard for England and Wales, Scheme rules and self-assessment checklist.

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