



Uniquely
different, but all
facing the same
challenges



Elmhirst Parker is a great example of how maximising available resources can help smaller law firms realise their vision"

Member profile

 Elmhirst
Parker
SOLICITORS

Uniquely different, but all facing the same challenges

All our member firms are uniquely different, and range in size from £2m to £25m, but learning from each other is a fundamental part of the LawNet ethos and it's often the differences that help drive the most interesting dialogues. And when it comes to the resources and infrastructure needed to run their law firms, all our members, whatever their size, benefit from the group purchasing power that lies behind the extensive range of member services and supplier agreements.

One example is the LawNet group professional indemnity scheme, which buys more than £1 billion of cover for members, with premium rates. For many in the sector, that's what we are best known for, but it's the full array of services that members say opens the door to greater opportunities for their firms, as they would be unable to access or afford many of the services on their own.

Elmhirst Parker joined LawNet in 2002, and the firm's journey during their membership demonstrates how being focused on making best use of available resources can help smaller law firms realise their vision.

How **sharing** can open the door to new opportunities



Barry Legg talks about how learning and sharing with others can help smaller firms raise their game

"Our firm has a long-standing heritage, with two of our branches having been home to lawyers since the 1870s, but while our strategy is 'more of the same', that is not about standing still or being held back by traditional ways of working.

"It's a strategy focused on geographic growth and talent acquisition, and it has seen us acquire our fifth branch office, although we're very selective and reflective when we look at the prospects that come along. We actively seek opportunities to acquire, but only go ahead when we're confident of grafting on something that will feel like organic growth, because it's such a good fit.

"Each of our market town branches are close to major cities - such as York, Leeds or Sheffield - which are heavily serviced by lawyers and tend to be a big draw for legal talent. Our niche is to provide services

in communities that are typically under-served by the sector, and look to build strong, personal relationships with our clients.

"We are set on avoiding any race to the bottom on cost. Instead, we focus on providing quality services, which is very much the LawNet way.

"Achieving the obligatory ISO standard, and more recently doing Lexcel through the LawNet dual accreditation route, has provided us with the right framework to deliver on quality, while also easing the demands of SRA compliance and the increasing risk management challenges for the sector.

"When we first joined LawNet, it was for one single, defining reason: the network's professional indemnity insurance scheme. As a group scheme, it brings members together to secure better terms than we could each expect to achieve on our own. We were confident it would pay off in terms of money saved and reduced resources, and we were right. Since then, we have enjoyed many other benefits from membership, but renewal has always been a rubber stamp exercise because the PII continues to





IT ALL STARTS WITH LAWNET; IT OPENS THE DOOR

HOW ELMHIRST PARKER USES LAWNET (usage over a 12 month period)



deliver significant and tangible benefits. There's less stress around in October, and we get continuity with A-plated insurers.

"At the time we joined the group scheme, the professional indemnity proposal form was so much simpler than in the open market, which was an attraction on its own, combined with there being no need to shop around. While the proposal form has got a bit longer over the past decade or so, other aspects have become increasingly important, such as the standard and speed of claims management, the quality of the insurer, and the strength of our relationship with them, which enables frank conversations if necessary.

"Certainly, knowing that we were members of the LawNet PII scheme gave us much needed peace of mind during the market turmoil that followed the economic crash of 2009 and the subsequent recession. But membership of LawNet delivers many other valuable things on top. One example would be the support in getting our risk management and compliance right, reducing the pain wherever possible, which is crucial, whatever your size. As well as the process being driven by the ISO and Lexcel accreditation, LawNet identifies the right providers for firms, such as VinciWorks - which provides risk management and compliance training across a range of topics including anti-money laundering. This is operated through a learning management system so we can track and run reports on who has completed which course. We also have access to Qrisk, an audit portal provided by QBE, our group insurers.

LawNet in 3 words



"Another example would be the marketing services, which give us access to things like *Business First*, a magazine for business customers that is published every six months and can be personalised for each LawNet firm. It means we have a professionally written, designed and printed publication that carries our brand, but it costs us nothing, as it's free as part of our membership. It's simply not something we could possibly put together, nor justify the cost, if we were to do it ourselves.

How Elmhirst Parker makes use of free member services and discounted supplier arrangements



"And for training and development we wouldn't go anywhere else, and not just because most of the sessions are free for members. It's difficult being a law firm on your own, and when you go to the CPD sessions, or to major events like the LawNet conference, you have frank discussions with others who are not competitors. Within LawNet we are one of the smaller firms, but we learn so much from sharing with our bigger peers. They may be bigger, but we share a common ethos and our interactions give us aspirational ideas.

"Looking to the future, we're looking for more opportunities to grow beyond our current geography, but in a careful, considered way. It's not about expansion at any cost; we're looking for acquisitions that will be a good fit with our existing operations and ethos, and that's what counts.

"More of the same is the aim: that means steady growth based on a strong infrastructure."



Barry Legg, Elmhirst Parker LLP

Elmhirst Parker is a 50-strong firm, generating £2m turnover across its five offices.

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Elmhirst Parker is a five-branch firm, delivering a traditional mix of high street legal services for the local community in market towns across Yorkshire, stretching from Selby to Barnsley. Alongside well-regarded private client and family law departments, it offers a range of support to small business customers and has a large residential and commercial conveyancing department.

Barry Legg is managing partner with Elmhirst Parker, a role he has held since 2012. A non-lawyer, his previous background is in HR and training, and he has worked internationally. He joined in 2002, shortly after Elmhirst Parker became members of LawNet, and he took the lead in the firm's work towards achieving the obligatory LawNet ISO9001 standard.

ABOUT ELMHIRST PARKER



Strategy: talent acquisition



5

offices across
Yorkshire

Strategy:
geographic growth



- Barnsley
- Royston
- Selby (Finkle Street)
- Selby (Abbey Yard)
- Sherburn-in-Elmet

Mix of work

