

Thought leadership scaled to suit



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Firms operating in today's legal sector must have an eye on the horizon. How to match up to increasing levels of customer expectation; how to engage multiple generations in the workplace; and understanding the big technology themes like Artificial Intelligence shaping the future.

SME-sized law firms need to find scaled-down solutions that will work for them and within LawNet, collaboration is the route to exploring such opportunities. At a strategic level, the network is focused on identifying the changes and challenges ahead, to deliver intelligence and solutions to the membership.

Embracing such innovation is one of the most important drivers of law firm growth, and that is demonstrated across our network, from the smaller firms through to the biggest members, such as IBB Solicitors. Their firm is an inspirational model of taking a leading edge strategic approach to competitive differentiation; IBB is breaking the mould in law firm leadership and demonstrating how to change the face of law through a truly client-centric focus.

The firm has been a member of LawNet since 1993.

A soft revolution in strategy setting

IBB solicitors

Joanna DeBiase talks about making the journey from a numbers-focused approach to a client-centric living strategy

"Our firm has a strong and successful track record, steadily growing year on year, with well regarded, highly ranked lawyers and satisfied clients. When I took over as managing partner, the strategy could easily have been more of the same, set on increasing turnover and scaling the last few rungs of the ladder into the Legal Top 100 rankings. But instead, I wanted to look at the vision and mission and come up with something that truly reflected where the partners wanted to take the firm."

"We realised that our previous measures of success had not reflected why our people chose to work in the legal industry, which was to solve problems and help clients. From this understanding, we distilled a new vision, centred on making the law work for clients by listening, caring about what they want to achieve and being innovative in helping them achieve it. We want to be bolder and better at solving their problems. We want to be a trusted adviser, inspiring loyalty, and use that to drive competitive advantage."

"We are focused on making the transition from being a firm of lawyers to being in the business of law. Reflecting that commercially-driven ethos, our senior

team take part in leadership development. Two of the leadership team, including myself were able to draw on our MBA learning. Being able to draw on such experiential learning is invaluable, particularly when it involved interacting and learning from outside the industry.

"Also, we draw on being part of LawNet. The network's ethos is aligned with our purpose, and the thought leadership they provide on what is happening in the sector, and where things are going, is invaluable."

"The value of being part of LawNet comes at many different levels, from such vision right through to the relationship with other managing partners, sharing knowledge and know-how. A common pride in quality is what underpins our relationship with LawNet, and how one creates a sustainable business with a competitive advantage. So, if you want to put quality and the client at the heart of your firm, as we do, it's a no-brainer to do that through their ISO standard, with its associated training and support."

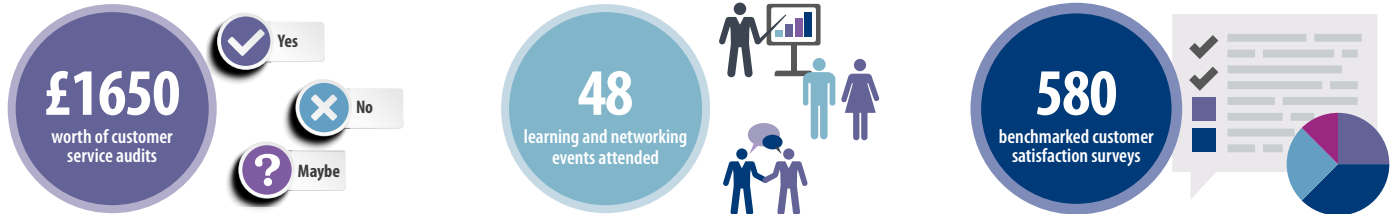
"With our previous strategic approach, we had great plans and made sure to write them down, but too often things were not revisited until the end of the financial year. This time, I decided we would not write down 'the strategy' until everyone truly understood it and it was embedded in the day-to-day of the business. We've achieved that by working on three themes: resilience, efficiency and brand, talking





THE ETHOS OF LOWNET IS ALIGNED WITH OUR PURPOSE

HOW IBB SOLICITORS USES LOWNET (usage over a 12 month period)



about them at every team leader meeting and every board meeting over many months. Suddenly, when partners were discussing new ideas, they were referencing how such a move might support one or other of the themes. Now, we can see our people are clearly aligned around them.

"In terms of resilience, we are asking, for example, would we have greater resilience if we moved away from a traditional partnership? That's at firm-level, but it's also about people development, such as whether we have proper succession planning in place for every team.

"Efficiency means making the most of our margins, and the slog of aged debt and WIP, but alongside we're shifting to using gross profit as a KPI, rather than net profit, and aligning productivity with billing and cash collection, instead of hours-billed time targets. The objective is greater efficiency and exploring the ways in which new technology can support our service and our client experience.

"And for brand, the focus is on winning and growing sustainable, competitive business. We're looking at different approaches, such as key account management, with the client journey at the heart, to ensure we deliver a holistic strategy, where the process works for them, as well as the outcome.

"Having a strong vision and mission has given us a clear compass for direction. It is helping in attracting and retaining talent, as people

LawNet in 3 words



can see exciting opportunities, combined with interesting clients and an emphasis on work/life balance. It has galvanised the partners and helps us to challenge our decisions and how we interpret what we are going to do.

How IBB Solicitors makes use of free member services and discounted supplier arrangements



"Whatever new threats and challenges appear, we know that LawNet will be looking down the road and guiding us on where to focus. One recent example would be in artificial intelligence and technology developments, where LawNet brought us in direct contact with world-renowned experts to give insight. Even in a firm of our size, we would struggle to talk to such people on our own.

"And it's not just a one-way feed, as in effect LawNet does our R&D. If we have an idea, we can talk to the LawNet team, knowing they will come back with a way of moving it on. Effectively, the network adapts to give a suite of bespoke support that will personally resonate with your firm.

"We know, also, that we are within an organisation that has power to stand up to big suppliers who use their dominant position in their pricing strategy, and we have significant group purchasing power in areas such as the PII, which is an amazing benefit.

"This is the start of a journey, but there's a sense of confidence, which I believe reflects the living vision, beating at the heart of the firm. And we know that LawNet will be with us on the journey, supporting our ambitions."



Joanna DeBiase, IBB Solicitors

IBB Solicitors is a 230-strong firm, generating £20m turnover across its three offices.

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Recognised in the Legal 500 as a regional heavyweight, IBB has a strong geographical presence across West London, the Thames Valley corridor and Western Home Counties. its client base includes individuals and businesses based nationally and internationally.

Joanna joined IBB as a know-how lawyer in 1999 and became managing partner in 2016. She was previously the firm's operations director and holds an MBA from Cranfield School of Management. She has also headed technology, information and compliance services within IBB.

ABOUT IBB SOLICITORS



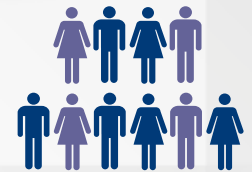
*combined turnover post merger IBB and Turbevilles



31
partners:
19 male, 13 female,
2 non-lawyer (finance
and marketing)



230
staff across
3 offices



19
teams
25% working flexibly
(part-time) including
9% men



20
specialisms
ranked



21
named individuals



Mix of work

