



## **Are Lawyers Early Adopters?**

A study identifying how lawyers use technology

**November 2010**

## About the report

This study was commissioned by LexisNexis and undertaken by the legal research company Jures.

### ***About Jures***

Jures is a new independent research company dedicated to the legal services market. It combines expertise from a number of different disciplines: journalism; research; PR and communications; as well as publishing in both traditional and new media. The people behind Jures are the journalist Jon Robins and Gus Sellitto and Richard Elsen, directors of the legal PR specialists the Byfield Consultancy ([www.byfieldconsultancy.com](http://www.byfieldconsultancy.com)).

The idea behind Jures is to become a leading source of considered, independent-minded and thought-provoking commentary on the law in a way that informs and influences debate within the profession and beyond.

### ***About the author***

Jon Robins is director of the legal research company Jures, freelance journalist and author. He has been writing about the law for the national and specialist legal press for over 12 years. Jon also wrote the *Big Bang Report: Opportunities and threats in the new legal services market* (Jures, November 2009) and edited *Closing the Justice Gap: Some new thinking about an old problem* (Jures, March 2010). Both are available at [www.jures.co.uk](http://www.jures.co.uk). Jon also wrote *The Justice Gap: Whatever happened to legal aid* (Legal Action Group, May 2009 with Steve Hynes).

### ***Methodology***

Conducted in October and November 2010, the research is based upon the view of 100 lawyers – including barristers and solicitors in private practice and employed in High Street and City firms. All respondents took part in the survey confidentially.

## Executive Summary

This is a survey which measures the receptiveness (or not) of lawyers to technological innovation. When the consumers of legal services - ordinary people, not corporate clients - think of a 'solicitor' the image that presents itself is of a pin-striped lawyer in some a fusty old office on the high street, sitting on the far side of a large wooden desk with a telephone, book-lined walls behind him. It is a largely unfair image straight out of the last century, as this report suggests. The profession is as wide and diverse as any other. This report reflects that breadth drawing on respondents from the Magic Circle firm in the City with a worldwide network of offices to the one-man band sole practitioners on the High Street... and all points in between.

The profession is going through a seismic shift. Technology is key to firms surviving the shake-up. Change is being driven by the liberalising agenda of the Legal Services Act 2007, opening up the law to external investment for the first time as of next year and the economic downturn that has hit certain sectors hard. Currently ministers are looking at the implementation of Lord Justice Jackson's landmark *Review of Civil Justice Costs* as well as radically altering the legal aid scheme. Whilst investment in the kind of new technologies that we discuss in this paper is not the sole answer to any of the various challenges that beset the profession. Undoubtedly, adopting such new technologies is part of the solution to all of them.

This report broadly asks lawyers about their relationship with the new breed of technology – smartphones, mobile applications, eBooks and the like – which make access to information and advice instant for both lawyers and their clients. It also creates expectations on the part of clients and fellow professionals about the speed of response of lawyers.

### *The findings at a glance*

- Almost half of all respondents (47%) considered themselves as either 'early adopters' or 'at the cutting edge' of new technologies
- Two-thirds of respondents have a BlackBerry (66%) handset
- About one in 10 have bought an iPad (11%) since they were available for sale

- Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) were either 'constantly' or 'at least once an hour' picking up emails when out of the office
- Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) favoured online or digital resources to 'traditional paper-based law libraries'

## Analysis

### *Luddites... or early adopters?*

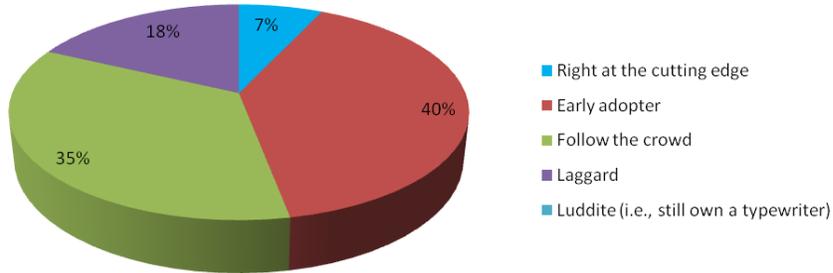
*'I do not know whether we lawyers are in the vanguard or whether we are bringing up the rear when it comes to IT. I suspect the latter. I am convinced though that the practice of the law and our professional lives has been fundamentally changed through technology over the last few years.'*

Almost half of all lawyers (47%) regard themselves as either 'early adopters' or 'at the cutting edge' when it comes to embracing new technologies (such as smart phones and mobile applications). Taking the purchase of an Apple iPad (which only became available on May 8<sup>th</sup>) as an indicator of lawyers as early adopters, we asked respondents if they had bought the latest technological wizardry and found that slightly more than one in 10 respondents had (11%), a similar proportion to those respondents who had an eBook reader, such as Kindle (10%).

How would you describe your take-up of new technology? (e.g. smartphone, ebook, mobile applications)

Right at the cutting edge	7%
Early adopter	40%
Follow the crowd	35%
Laggard	18%
Luddite (i.e., still own a typewriter)	0%

**How would you describe your take-up of new technology? (e.g. smartphone, ebook, mobile applications)**



***The full kit***

*'I'm never without my BlackBerry. I check it so often it's become like a form of OCD [obsessive compulsive disorder].'*

Most lawyers regard the mobile phone and laptop as utterly essential components in the range of modern communications kit. However it comes as a significant surprise to discover slightly over one in 10 of our respondents (11%) did not possess a mobile phone and more still did not have a laptop (18%). The majority of the profession had embraced the use of smart phone technology and, in particular, two-thirds of our respondents owned a BlackBerry handset (66%).

Do you have one or more of the following?

Mobile phone	89%
BlackBerry handset	66%
Laptop	82%
iPad	11%
eBook reader (such as Kindle)	10%

The image of the lawyer in his book-lined office looks set to be a thing of the past. Over three-quarters of our respondents (77%) favoured online or digital resources to 'traditional paper-based law libraries'.

### **Remote access**

*'The law changes all the time, clients expect us to be available if not 24/7 then not far off it. We need to be accessible.'*

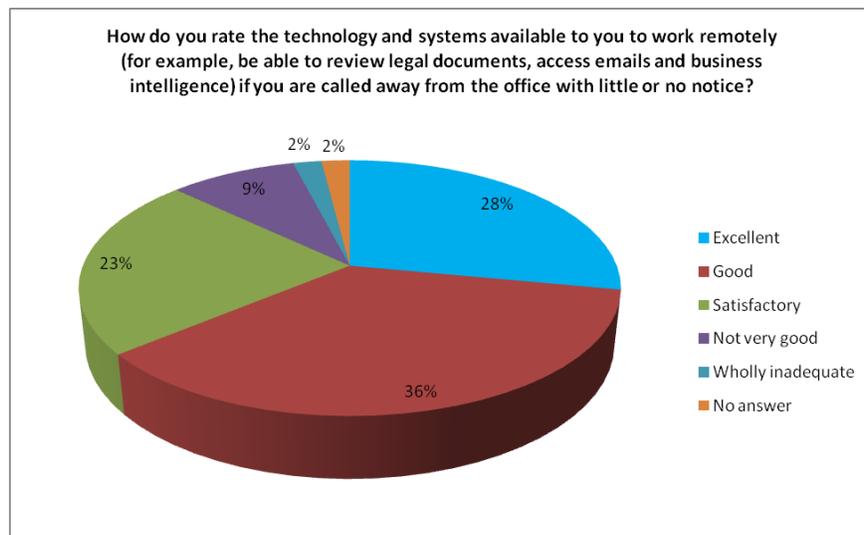
We then tested the ability of our respondents to work remotely and, in particular, whether they had the technology to pick up emails, review legal documents and accessing other business intelligence whilst away from the office.

Our survey illustrates vividly the dependency of the profession upon instant accessibility. Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) were either 'constantly' or 'at least once an hour' picking up their email when out of the office. We asked separately how often respondents were retrieving information from other digital sources (such as via smart phones or through downloading e-books). Almost nine out of 10 of respondents (87%) were doing that on a daily basis.

The profession largely has the systems in place and the technology to support their remote working needs. Almost two out of three of our survey respondents (64%) described their ability to work remotely with little or no notice as either 'good' or 'excellent' – that was even higher, over seven out of ten (71%), when respondents were given notice. Slightly more than one in 10 said that described their systems as either 'not very good' or 'wholly inadequate' – and almost one quarter described them as 'satisfactory' (23%).

How do you rate the technology and systems available to you to work remotely (for example, be able to review legal documents, access emails and business intelligence) if you are called away from the office with little or no notice?

Excellent	28%
Good	36%
Satisfactory	23%
Not very good	9%
Wholly inadequate	2%
No answer	2%



We also asked our respondents whether firms had used investment in new technology to create 'greater opportunities for flexible working over the last two years' - an overwhelming majority (78%) replied in the positive.

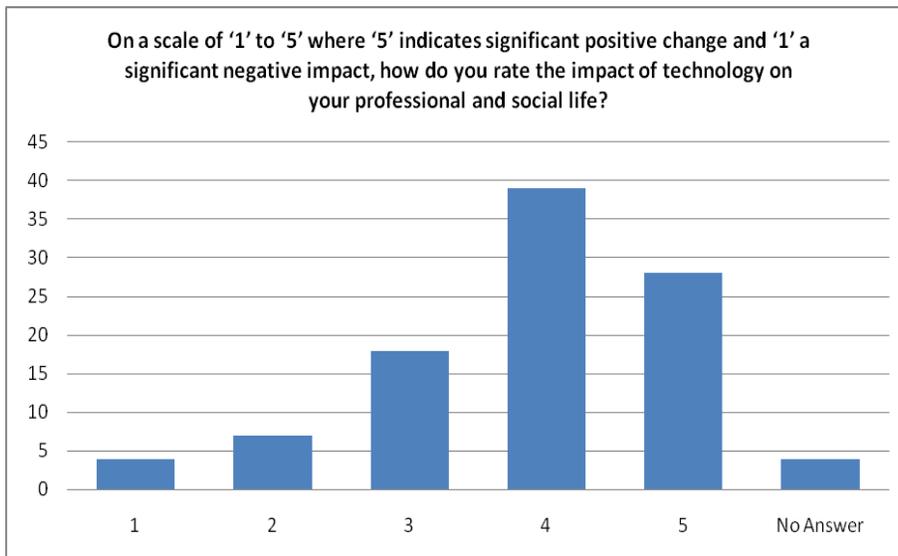
We also wanted to discover whether our respondents felt that such technological innovation (and the instant accessibility that it delivers) enhanced or diminished the quality of their professional life.

Whilst some professionals bemoan the advent of smart phones and the increased expectations that clients have of their advisers owing to greater accessibility, lawyers were overwhelmingly

positive. More than two-thirds (67%) scored the impact of the new technology as either '4' or '5' out of a possible '5' indicating 'significant positive change'.

On a scale of '1' to '5' where '5' indicates significant positive change and '1' a significant negative impact, how do you rate the impact of technology on your professional and social life?

1	4%
2	7%
3	18%
4	39%
5	28%
No answer	4%



### ***Future shock...***

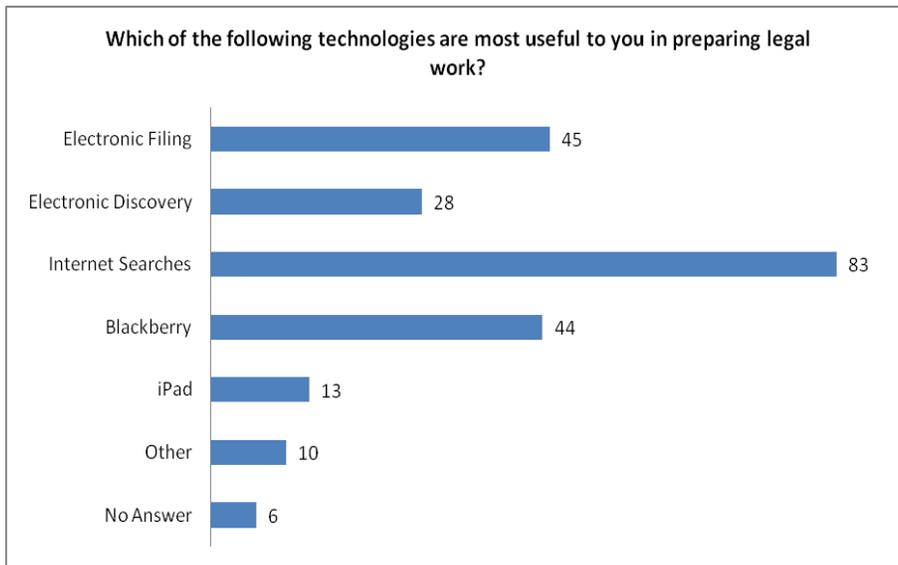
Finally, respondents were asked which of the new technologies were most useful in the context of legal work and how they perceived future IT developments would change their legal practices.

Unsurprisingly, searches on the Internet were identified by more than eight out of ten respondents (83%) as useful – also electronic filing and electronic discovery scored highly (45%

and 28%). Interesting to note that the iPad was being used by more than one in ten respondents specifically for 'legal' work.

Which of the following technologies are most useful to you in preparing legal work (multiple answers were allowed)?

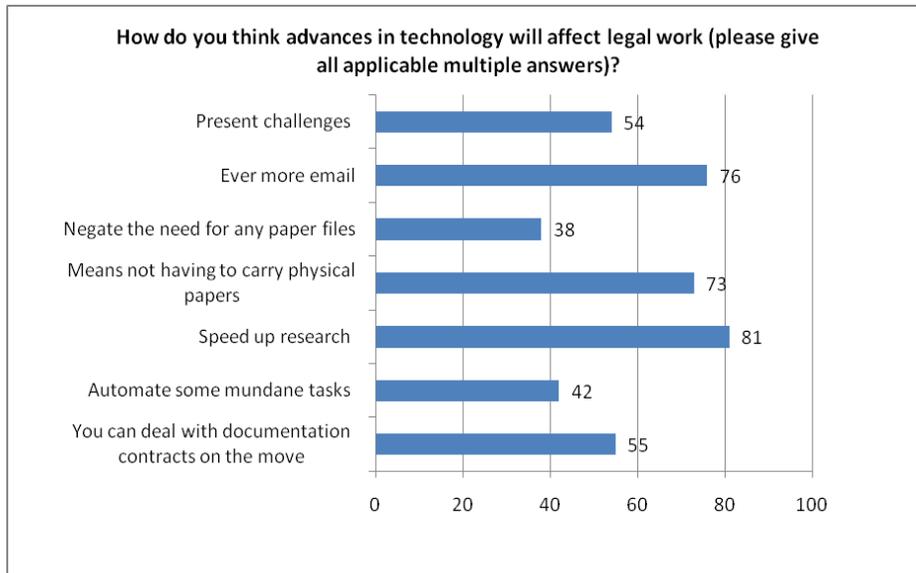
Electronic Filing	45%
Electronic Discovery	28%
Internet Searches	83%
Blackberry	44%
iPad	13%
Other	10%
No Answer	6%



Again, a significant majority of the profession saw the changes in a positive light – over eight out of 10 saw advances in IT as speeding up legal research (81%) and almost three-quarters (73%) identified not having to carry paper work (73%) as benefits – with a significant minority (38%) saying it would 'negate' the need for any paper files.

How do you think advances in technology will affect legal work (multiple answers were allowed)?

You can deal with contracts on the move	55%
Automate some mundane tasks to free up time for business development	42%
Speed up research	81%
Means not having to carry physical papers	73%
Negate the need for any paper files	38%
Ever more email	76%
Present challenges as you always have to learn how to use new technology	54%



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