

# Briefing

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SMARTER LEGAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

## PUBLIC FLOAT

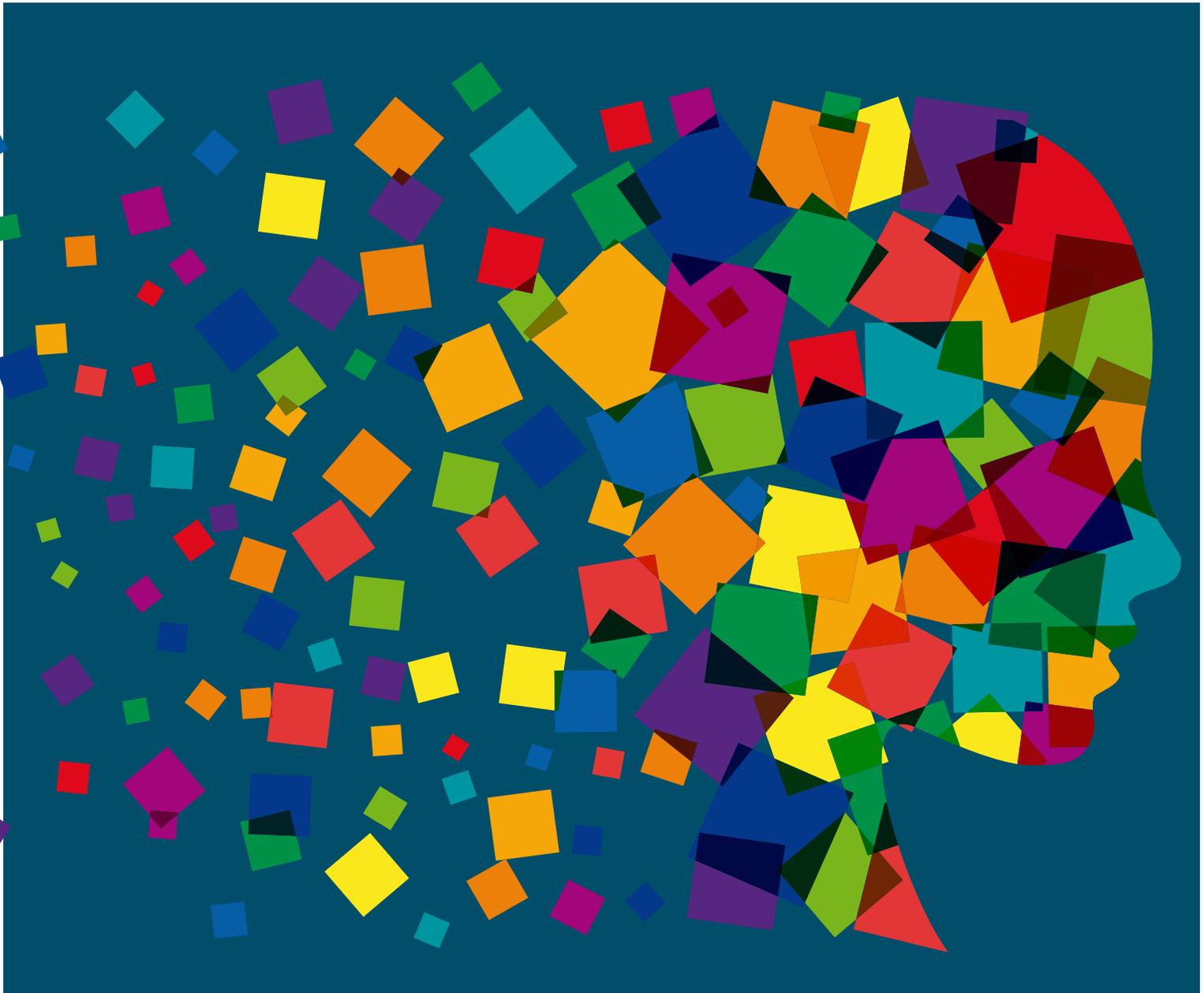
Kristina Oliver at Keystone Law on  
co-ordinating comms for the markets

## ALL MINE?

Karim Derrick, R&D head at Kennedys,  
reviews data dilemmas and opportunities

## BUZZ OFFICE

The crazy jargon you already just  
can't wait to return to in 2019



## *Better innovate*

*Innovation comes in many colours – leading law firms tell us about the projects they're most proud of, and how they made them happen*



INDUSTRY INTERVIEW

# There's AI in teams

Nick Thomson, general manager of iManage RAVN, says the business is transforming to help firms better distinguish themselves in the next stage of legal AI evolution

It's now some 18 months since iManage acquired RAVN Systems to create a new force in the world of applying artificial intelligence to the organisation, analysis and classification of law firms' fast-flowing streams of documents and unstructured data. And in September 2018, the business also began a new phase in its own organisation, recruiting former Workshare chief revenue officer Nick Thomson to be general manager as horizons expand.

"iManage RAVN clearly has an excellent reputation for innovation in the market – and I'm familiar with that personally joining from one of its long-term partners," he says. "As well as a company with a great culture and values, I feel I'm joining the work of a product set with the potential to change an entire industry. We are in a unique position to combine the power of AI with world-class document and email management to

transform how professionals get work done."

Thomson sings the praises of his new home's long-term emphasis on respect, fairness and support. However, any innovative business also needs the right structure to channel fresh thinking into tangible results, he says. A top priority for those first 100 days in office has therefore been to realign his resources both for growth and to take the AI opportunity for law firms to another level.

"There's no shortage of good ideas, but 99% of our work is the execution," he says. "With so much potential, it's critical to identify the most effective way to harness and deploy it in line with the vision and goals for clients."

## Team talk

His change is a bold one – establishing smaller cross-functional teams for specific projects, which cut right across traditional departmental lines. Each team has new levels of autonomy, collective



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group objectives instead of personal ones, and a specific business problem to solve that is mapped directly across from law firm conversations.

“Critically, our people can judge for themselves the resources needed to solve the problem,” Thomson explains. This strategy supports employee engagement efforts – reinforcing collaboration and accountability as cultural values – but also with measuring and managing return on investment. “Investment is now linked to a group’s work, and the greater transparency in a structure of smaller teams means we can accelerate our delivery of solutions.

“Every team includes a combination of our customer success managers – all former lawyers, and focused fully on the law firm end users – professional AI consultants and engineers.”

Moreover, by distinguishing the teams investigating and building use cases from those building the tools, Thomson is also addressing one of law firms’ top concerns, he says.

“Clients tell us they don’t want as many technologies in their stack as they have now, so from a technical perspective the constant goal is to develop iManage RAVN as one toolkit on one infrastructure. Then it becomes the firm’s platform to manage – their RAVN – which they can enhance with additional use cases in line with budget and other timelines to scale as is comfortable.”

### Empowering principles

The agility all of this offers will be extra important if firms embark on the next phase of AI work that Thomson now anticipates

“Artificial intelligence has already matured, and is now being put to more practical use, for example to mitigate risk and improve professional productivity.” Examples include identifying legal information that is privileged or subject to

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compliance, and automating document classification for more efficient search and improved governance, he says.

And the potential stretches further. “The first wave of legal AI projects was fundamentally all about cost reduction – rightly so, but the reality is that rapidly becomes a zero-sum game,” he says. “Now we want to work with our clients on long-term strategies that leverage the AI engine to help them differentiate by redefining services.

“Rather than merely reducing business cost, AI should be enabling law firm business operations to add more value to service design, as people are no longer labouring with as much lower-value, repetitive and often monotonous work.”

An example already in action is the opportunity for firms to analyse their clients’ contract banks to help revenue assurance, he says.

“Assessing clients’ agreements for weaknesses such as missed billing opportunities is currently beyond most firms, because of the sheer volume of contracts involved. But assisted by AI it becomes a client service that may significantly increase firms’ revenues as they help clients do the same.”

In 2019, he says, the business will be releasing more solutions that can “transform a task considered administrative today into revenue-generating work tomorrow.”

However, in doing so firms must also protect themselves in their machine-learning endeavours. “As more and more of the work firms make money from can be codified, it’s a risk management essential that they’re safeguarding their intellectual property effectively. That’s why we want to provide them with the best of what’s publicly available, but also the opportunity to customise and religiously protect a RAVN that fully belongs to them.”

Of course, that comes with practical support along the way – not least, necessary guidance as to why your machine has learned what it has.

“In any walk of life – and certainly legal – you still need humans to understand why machine learning is deciding and recommending its next steps,” Thomson says. “That auditability is all built into the platform as standard, getting firms to the point of fullest possible confidence in their AI investment in the shortest possible time.” 