

From: [REDACTED]
To: [legalservicesreview](#)
Subject: The Changing Legal Market - Review and Call for Inputs
Date: 05 October 2020 12:35:20

Hello,

I understand you are looking for views and inputs regarding the changing legal market in the UK. I hope this response reaches you in time.

Hybrid Legal are an unregulated law firm providing non reserved legal activity support to SMEs. We are different to most traditional law firms in three main ways;

1. We have a distributed delivery model. The majority of our legal advice / drafting is delivered via a team of freelance solicitors or other legally qualified individuals who we sub-contract to. However, the client still contracts with us and is covered by our professional care and PII cover. This is the essence of 'Hybrid' – the advantages of a platform which connects freelance legal professionals with clients but the ownership and accountability of a law firm overseeing and taking full responsibility for the client experience.
2. We operate almost exclusively on fixed fees and our preferred method of working with clients is to support them on an ongoing basis by means of a fixed monthly retained fee.
3. We have a culture and brand which aims to be as far away from a traditional law firm as possible – in particular we work hard to be accessible, responsive and to use simple and uncomplicated language to communicate with our clients whenever possible.

There have been several advantages to our firm and model from the recent changes introduced in November 2019;

1. We have been able to refer or hold out our solicitors (who are on the role and have a current practising certificate) as solicitors in our communications with clients. 'Solicitor' is an important brand for legal services in the UK. Previously it was nonsensical to have fully qualified, experienced solicitors working for our clients who were unable to refer to themselves as such. Note – that we had already applied for a waiver (via the SRA's innovation hub) to call our solicitors as such, some 18 months before the reforms came into effect.
2. We now work as a virtual office having made the early decision to close our physical office about 6 weeks ago, prior to the latest government guidelines on office working and coronavirus.

We use cloud technology and are basically a paperless law firm.

We are also investigating how we can further use technology to deliver inexpensive legal support and document drafting to SMEs and submitted an entry to the SRA / NESTA Legal Access Challenge last year.

3. The combination of our distributed delivery model and use of technology allows us to deliver flexible support to our clients at a value point which we believe is better than many traditional law firms. We simply do not carry the overheads that they do.

We now confidently hold our highly experienced solicitors out to be comparable with those who are employed within regulated law firms, something we were unable to do previously. Our view is that the market reforms have allowed firms such as Hybrid Legal to compete much more

effectively. This type of competition in the UK legal services will, over time, create better value for money for SMEs and consumers by reducing inefficiency, cost and forcing many law firms to improve their service offering – even if they continue to adopt a traditional model.

We should bear in mind that consistent research shows that the majority of UK SMEs see traditional law firm and legal services in the UK as;

- Expensive / not good value for money.
- Legal documents and jargon complicated and hard to understand.
- Difficult to access and unresponsive.

In our opinion continued innovation encouraged / brought about by regulatory and legislative change can improve how legal services are viewed and consumed in the UK.

On a two final points;

1. we would welcome further investigation into a reduction of the number of reserved legal activities – particularly conveyancing.
2. We are open minded about the idea of extending the Ombudsman powers to include unregulated firms. In some respects, one could argue it might give our clients / prospective clients further comfort to engage us.

On the other hand – we haven't had a single formal client complaint since we began Hybrid Legal in 2013 and it is very rare that we are asked about our complaints procedure.

I hope this helps your thinking.

I'd be delighted to expand on any of these points further.

Kind regards,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted contact information]



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