

TALKLAW: LEGAL SERVICES BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT

By Gary McFarlane

Society is moving toward a 24 hour culture, requiring services and shops to alter and/or extend hours of business to meet the demands created by the change in the way we live our lives today. The shift in culture has forced many businesses to re-think the range of services they provide and the way those services are delivered.

The very complex nature of the lives we lead today and the increasing influence and dominance that legal services play in the business world and in our daily lives are just some of the factors fuelling the demand for legal services. The trend towards moving home more often, the high rate of marital break-up and immigration are just several examples resulting in the increased demand. There is an "instant result" attitude prevalent in society and much importance attached to "success" in business, resulting in early good outcomes.

Tesco law has become a reality and no longer just phraseology. The RAC may be out, but Halifax, CIS and others have entered the legal services market in a major competitive way. Statistics of one in seven smaller firms seeing merger as a way of coping with the future, is a reality.

A recent on-line survey of 1,385 consumers and 240 small business owners bear out TalkLaw's experience, that people are more willing to interact with a provider through email or telephone, than face to face; suggesting that contact centres and websites will play a key role in the future delivery of legal services.

The Talklaw concept is a simple one to understand and administer. Putting aside any inherent objection and prejudices against "pay as you go", it might be understandable that obtaining telephone legal advice in this way appeals, especially where the advice is available outside of normal office hours. Having already served some 250,000 callers since 1998, many of whom continue as repeat callers, the service is mature. It is reasonable to suggest that the service is seen as less intimidating, more convenient and cost effective.

The legal advisors are solicitors and barristers of a high level of experience, covering most areas of legal practice and law and work from home. Advice is available wherever the caller is throughout the country, including Scotland and Wales, as well as the ability to access legal advice from various international jurisdictions, to which the caller can be transferred at the same rate as an internal call transfer.

From the comfort of their own home, workplace or car (you name it, it is possible), the caller connects to skilled call operatives for just a few minutes to provide basic information; they will identify the nature of the issues, then allocate the caller to TalkLaw's own experienced solicitor or barrister. The rate is £1.50 per minute, equating to a competitive £90 per hour. Repeat caller business is an endorsement that may be the service is meeting a desired need.

Compliance issues have to be of the highest standards, where regulation by the professions and telecoms industry are centre stage in all of TalkLaw's services. The hi-spec telephone platform is such that all calls and advice being provided can be monitored. Testimonials and appreciations from clients are frequent.

The brainchild of its CEO Mr Tito Singh Bance, Talklaw is soon to open High Street and London Underground outlets – the first in January 2007. Rather than remain with its traditional marketing outlet of yellow pages adverts, those premises will boast visual images that will communicate a strong brand, appealing to shoppers and commuters alike. Some shops will have luxury booths for callers to walk-in, make their calls and leave to continue with their other activities.

TalkLaw already in operation in the USA and India launched its franchises at the NEC on 6 & 7 October 2006. The message is a clear one in its managers minds – the ideal franchisees

will be those that already know the legal sector, are experienced office managers and desire to compete in the legal market, earn a good financial income and still be hands on by providing telephone legal advice, as well as casework handled from their home environment, if they desire.

The next phase in the development is to allow potential franchisees to be part of this revolutionary experience and of course to earn money as successful franchisees. To make this happen Talklaw believe in developing and maintaining a strong relationship with its franchisees, to whom strong support is given every step of the way.

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TalkLaw's website is at www.Talklaw.com