

Accesspoint[•]

Why your lawyers *still* hate the new system and how to fix it[•]

Best practice advice on managing implementations.

By Richard Higgs



What's inside •

Introduction	3
It's Not the Tech – It's the People	3
Understand Your Audience	4
The Common Mistakes Firms Make	4
Case Study in Failure: Lidl's €500m Misstep	5
What Actually Works: The Four Pillars of Adoption	6
Supporting Change Beyond Day One	6
A Firm That Got It Right: Burnetts	7
The Big Takeways	9
Final Word	9

Introduction[•]

Technology is everywhere in the modern law firm. From case management and document automation to AI-driven research tools, the promise is always the same: greater efficiency, smoother workflows, better client service.

And yet, ask almost any IT Director in a law firm about their last major system rollout, and you'll hear the same frustrated refrain:

"We bought it, we trained them, and they still don't use it."

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. Despite the huge investments law firms make in new systems, many lawyers continue to resist, bypass, or outright ignore them. The problem usually isn't the software itself – it's the people.

This blog explores why adoption is so difficult in legal environments, the common mistakes firms make, and most importantly, the practical steps that can turn resistance into real engagement.

It's Not the Tech – It's the People[•]

Software rarely fails because it's badly designed. More often, it fails because the people who were supposed to use it don't.

For lawyers, **resistance often stems from three things:**

1. Friction

If a tool adds extra steps or disrupts established routines, it will be seen as a burden rather than a benefit.

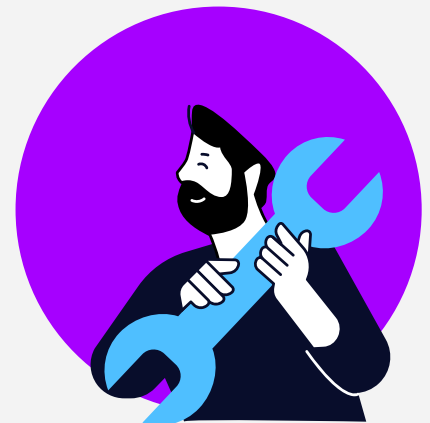
2. Habit

Lawyers are highly trained professionals who rely on familiar workflows. New tools threaten those rhythms.

3. Perceived Value

If the benefits aren't clear, the investment of time and effort to learn something new simply won't feel worthwhile.

It's easy to underestimate how much cultural and behavioural change is required for adoption. But unless people see the value in their daily work, the best technology in the world will sit unused.



Understand Your Audience[•]

Lawyers aren't like other knowledge workers. Their professional mindset, shaped by years of training and client pressures, makes them uniquely resistant to change.

Risk-averse

They're trained to spot flaws, minimise risk, and avoid uncertainty. **New systems look risky.**

Detail-focused

Precision is paramount, so even small system quirks can feel intolerable.

Time-conscious

Billable hours drive their world. Anything that takes time away from clients is suspect.

Client-first

Client demands always trump internal initiatives, meaning adoption can easily fall to the bottom of the priority list.

Understanding these drivers is essential. Without empathy for the legal mindset, even the most sophisticated change programme will miss the mark.



The Common Mistakes Firms Make[•]

When system rollouts fail, it's often because firms approach them as purely technical projects. In reality, they are people-and-process projects. **Here are the most common pitfalls:**

Treating it as a like-for-like swap

Simply replicating old systems and processes in a new tool fails to take advantage of improved workflows.

Excluding lawyers from selection

If end users have no input, they're far less likely to feel ownership of the outcome.

Overly technical training

Dumping features on users instead of showing real-world workflow benefits is a recipe for confusion.

Late communication

Lawyers who only hear about a new system at rollout will see it as an imposition.

Weak in-house support

Without embedded support after launch, frustrations fester and adoption drops.



These mistakes reinforce the perception that "IT just doesn't get how lawyers work."

Case Study in Failure: Lidl's €500m Misstep[•]

It's not just law firms that get this wrong. In 2018, supermarket giant Lidl scrapped a seven-year SAP implementation and returned to its legacy system.

The reasons read like a checklist of change management failures:

Misalignment with business processes

The SAP system's core functionalities, such as its retail price-based inventory valuation model, did not align with Lidl's established purchase price-based model.

Resistance to change

A significant factor was Lidl's internal culture and a resistance to adopting new processes, characterized by a "this is how we always do it" mindset.

Lack of executive alignment

Inconsistent and misaligned leadership led to shifting priorities and a lack of strategic clarity regarding the project's goals and operational models.

Late communication

Instead of changing its business processes to fit the SAP software, Lidl opted for extensive customization, which added significant time and cost and ultimately failed to integrate the system effectively.

Over-reliance on consultants

Lidl outsourced too much control to external consultants and failed to build strong internal expertise.



The result? Seven years lost and €500 million wasted.

For law firms, the lesson is clear: **no amount of investment can overcome poor adoption strategies.**

What Actually Works: The Four Pillars of Adoption[•]

So how can firms get it right? **Successful adoption is built on four critical pillars:**

1. Early buy-in from senior lawyers

Without partner-level champions, adoption will never gain momentum. Need relevant stakeholders present from the very beginning to ensure alignment with key objectives and no nasty surprises down the line.

2. Workflow-based onboarding

Training should be about how work gets done with the tool, not technical functionality.

3. Ongoing feedback and adaptation

Rollouts aren't one-off events. Listening, tweaking, and improving is essential.

4. Publicising quick wins

Celebrate early successes to show value and build confidence.

These pillars transform adoption from a forced initiative into a shared journey.



Supporting Change Beyond Day One[•]

Real adoption is a marathon, not a sprint. Firms that succeed don't stop at go-live — they build structures that support ongoing change.

Some practical tools include:

Adoption checklists

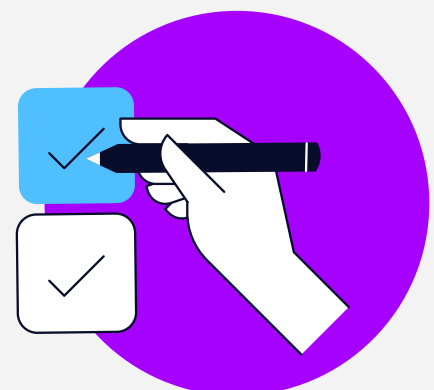
Clear, practical steps for each user and checklists per Team/Department to highlight progress against objectives.

Microlearning

Bite-sized learning modules fit into busy schedules. Short (2–5 minutes) task focused videos work really well for users to tap into when it suits them.

Nudge emails

Timely reminders and contextual tips keep new habits alive. *“Hi James, noticed you haven't tried the new file opening tool yet — why not give it a spin on your next matter?”* or *“80% of the Private Client team has onboarded a matter using the new file opening tool. Want to be part of the next wave?”* Keep it short, friendly, and relevant to the recipient's work. Avoid sounding like compliance — **think guidance, not governance.**



Anonymous suggestion boxes

Encourage honest feedback without fear and act on those suggestions that can add value; then publicise them.

Usage dashboards

Make adoption visible to leaders and teams so they can see the return on investment starting to materialise.

Follow-up training

Reinforce learning as confidence grows. Users can come to training 3–6 months after rollout armed with practical knowledge of what works for them and maybe what doesn't, so they can gain real value from further training. You'll be working with the chosen solution for the next 10 years plus.

Revisiting supplier demos

Seeing the tool again during the implementation and/or after some **real use** often sparks fresh ideas as well as re-enthusing teams as to how the finished project is going to look.

Maintain contact with Reference Site(s)

The firm(s) you visited or spoke to during the selection process are already using the new solution you're implementing, so **reach out to them for advice** when you encounter any blockers and challenges. The chances are they've been there and can tell you how they managed and the ultimate outcome.

These measures keep the conversation alive and the momentum going.

A Firm That Got It Right: Burnetts[•]

Not all stories end in failure. Regional firm Burnetts; with 165 users across four offices, shows what's possible when adoption is done well.

They **implemented NetDocuments and Mozaique** with a carefully structured rollout:

Beta testing with 15 fee earners

Ensuring real-world feedback from day one. Their feedback shaped refinements before full rollout.

Training with live client scenarios

Making sessions relevant and practical. Helped fee earners visualise how the tools would enhance their daily workflows.

Departmental "tech champions"

Each team nominated a Tech Champion to act as a local expert and first-line support. This peer-led model boosted confidence and reduced reliance on IT.

Burnetts
Law. People. Business.

Post-launch tech clinics

Weekly drop-in clinics were held for the first six weeks after rollout; offering hands-on support and troubleshooting. These were well attended and helped surface early issues before they became blockers.

The results were striking: **82% active usage within five weeks**, with lawyers themselves suggesting new use cases.

What Burnetts Did Right •

Empowered users by upskilling them

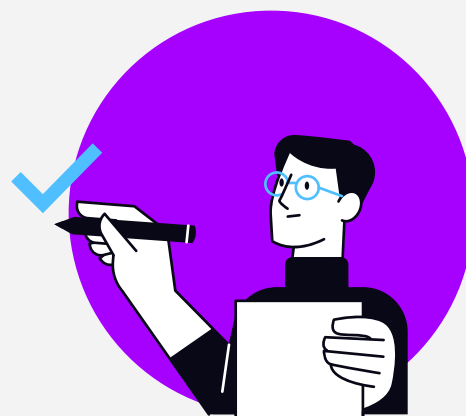
Training focused not just on functionality but on building confidence. Reduced friction and improved efficiency.

Built feedback loops into the rollout

From beta testing to post-launch clinics, **Burnetts created multiple channels for feedback**, which helped them iterate quickly and transparently.

Integrated compliance and learning & development from the start

CPD tracking embedded into Mozaïque from the outset, aligning with SRA expectations and internal goals.



What They Learned •

IT and compliance must communicate continuously

Early alignment on data handling and regulatory expectations helped avoid delays and ensured smoother integration.

Support tickets don't always reveal the full picture

Some usability issues persisted despite ticket closures. They have since implemented a more **proactive monitoring approach** to catch intermittent problems.

Vendor responsiveness matters more than you think

NetDocuments support was helpful but not always as quick as users needed on the ground. Burnetts have now **built stronger escalation paths and internal admin capabilities**.

The Burnetts' story proves that with the right approach, adoption isn't just possible — **it can thrive.**

The Big Takeaways[•]

If there's one lesson to remember, it's this:

Technology projects in law firms are never just about technology. They are a business-wide transition that should be managed with care, consultation and transparency.

- If your tech doesn't work for lawyers, it doesn't work.
- Good software + poor rollout = guaranteed failure.
- Adoption happens when tools are both relevant and easy to use.
- How often do you get software updates and are they adding material value to the solution? Do they make sure that you are informed about what's in the update?
- Collaboration builds confidence and consistency.
- Progress starts with participation, and results in lasting change. Lasting change happens when everyone has a seat at the table. If users feel involved, valued and that their opinion matters, then they will be much more welcoming of the transition to a new solution.



At the end of the day, the goal isn't simply to install a system — it's to **embed a new way of working that lawyers embrace** because it helps them serve their clients better. And that's where firms need guidance, empathy, and persistence.

Final Word[•]

Rolling out new technology in a law firm is hard. It challenges habits, billable time pressures, and a deeply risk-averse culture. But it's not impossible. With the right approach — grounded in empathy for lawyers, structured around workflows, and supported with ongoing reinforcement — adoption can succeed.

At **Accesspoint**, we've seen first-hand how firms can move from frustration to success when change is handled the right way.

Because in the end, **technology isn't about features or licences — it's about people, confidence, and lasting change.**