

Customer Success Spotlight: Fox Williams

First UK Law Firm to Switch to 3E Cloud from Elite

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Financials First with Fox Williams

Jeremy Gubbay, chief operating officer and partner at Fox Williams, explains why his firm has become the first in the UK to get heads around [3E Cloud](#) from Elite.

In June 2020 it was announced that Fox Williams would become the first UK law firm to switch to 3E Cloud from Elite, the new software-as-a-service version of the well-known financial management solution that runs on the Microsoft Azure platform.

Chief operating officer of this £28m-revenue, 35-partner firm, Jeremy Gubbay, explains that on one level the driver of this significant investment was quite simple—there was no alternative to finding something new. “Our current system is at the end of its life in 2021, so without a new one we simply wouldn’t be able to run the practice,” he states plainly.

“However, while we don’t have the scale of resources of some of the larger firms, we are keen to innovate and invest in new technology where it’ll add value by making us more efficient or competitive than others. In 2019, we transformed our infrastructure and support for mobile working, and this move also fits into that category. At the same time, we need the result to be a very big step up for the large investment in time and effort to be worthwhile.”

Profitability Motive

The most significant area he’ll be looking for that return, he says, is new visibility of financial information. “I see huge benefits in our partners having a deeper dive into finances—all the different drivers of work profitability, both firmwide and on individual matters.” The dashboards available through 3E Cloud promise to push metrics into many more displays to aid profitability analysis, where currently the firm still relies on working such things out in spreadsheets. “With a better

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understanding of where we make or lose money, that can only make us more efficient," he says.

Needless to say, this could be particularly useful for navigating the economic climate of the next few years. The city-focused firm covers quite a few bases—corporate, financial services, and technology, but also partnerships, natural resources, travel, and fashion—requiring a disciplined sector-focused strategy. Gubbay continues: "We also spend a lot of money on marketing but can't always attribute it as well as we'd like to the return in terms of clients or sectors. We should be able to be more granular there as well, and put more BD and marketing spend into the areas that make most sense."

The cloud is in fact a secondary factor. Even though the firm has several other systems hosted this way, including client relationship management, he says each is considered on a case-by-case basis rather than this representing a 'cloud-first' strategy. "The advantage is the scalability. I don't need to worry about painful upgrades, and it's very easy for additional users to be signed up. It made sense for this product, but we would have gone with the 3E on-premise solution as well." On the other hand, the choice of cloud here was a "short conversation" with stakeholders, he adds. "Previously putting our email in the cloud was a much longer conversation about security, as you'd expect."

He says he'd also rather a supplier was managing the system than be dealing with it in-house with the help of the firm's outsourced IT provider. "Inevitably, anything very challenging needs to go back

to a supplier to look at in any case—so it might as well deal with everything." But in terms of workload efficiency, he says it's accounts and administration roles that stand to gain the most. "We expect improved workflow will transform both the billing and credit control functions—for example, providing automated reminders about outstanding debt, which is still a manual process at the moment."

Time of the Essence

The system Fox Williams is replacing is itself one from Thomson Reuters (Elite's previous owner), but that didn't make the choice of successor a foregone conclusion, says Gubbay. A meaningful list of six solutions was reduced to two, after which followed many workshops and presentations. And in the event, a key deciding factor was the timescale Elite would work to in implementation—essentially, less than a year from the point of agreement.

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"We've a fairly small team, and I didn't want this to take 18 months," says Gubbay. "A short, sharp project really appealed." The intention is to be complete and have some breathing space in time for the firm's 2021 year-end in April. "Of course, Elite also understands our current system well, so the migration may also be more efficient."

Does he anticipate any impact from the circumstances and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19? "There's nothing like being in a room together for serious discussion, but our workshops on Microsoft Teams are

working well. I did go back to the board to discuss whether the investment was still a comfortable one in light of lockdown, but it turns out the business has still been doing well financially in the recent period. We also have the foundation of an excellent relationship with Elite to build on. Its senior management have been really attentive and open to our feedback, and any frustrations are quickly handled. I feel we can call a spade a spade with them and am confident that can continue throughout the project."

To learn more, contact your account representative or visit www.elite.com.

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