

The importance of creativity in law firms

How modern law firms can remain competitive by fostering a culture of innovation



Episode 5
of the
**Build Better
Habits Series**



RIDGEMONT



THE **CS**
PARTNERSHIP

Build effective **continuous improvement** habits

For episode five of the [Build Better Habits webinar series](#) we were joined by Sarah Keegan, co-founder of The CS Partnership, and John Wallace, Managing Director at Ridgmont Solicitors to discuss the importance of creativity and innovation in SME law firms. Our expert panel shared their practical tips and advice on how law firms can successfully implement a culture of creativity.

The discussion highlighted the importance of having a creative mindset to avoid the dangers of sticking to the status quo. As well as impacting your internal efficiencies and bottom-line, prioritising creativity across your firm helps to empower employees and improve retention, but crucially helps you to enhance the client experience.

Having a creative and innovative approach to running a law firm and delivering legal advice is required for long-term success. Creativity is a focus on experimentation, which can sometimes involve failure. So a cultural shift in attitudes towards testing ideas is necessary to successfully foster a culture of innovation. All firms can make progress today simply by encouraging questions to be asked and ideas to be shared.

In this guide we discuss exactly what creativity is and its benefits to law firms, how law firms can prioritise creativity, and the habits firms should adopt to implement a culture of innovation.

In this guide we cover:

What creativity means

Why creativity is beneficial to law firms

Habits firms should adopt to help implement a culture of innovation

How law firms can prioritise creativity and continuous improvement

Meet our panel of legal experts



Sarah Keegan – Co-owner

The CS Partnership are consultants for law firms that help teams create harmony between technology and legal practice management. Helping practices run a modern law firm and incorporate new habits that streamline operations to meet their goals.



RIDGEMONT

John Wallace – Managing Director

Ridgemont are construction and real estate solicitors that simplify and resolve complex legal issues for investors, developers, main contractors and sub-contractors. Their experienced, expert lawyers provide pragmatic advice, clarity and a way forward.



1

What does **creativity** mean and what can that look like **within a law firm?**

We began by asking our panellists what creativity means and what that might look like within a law firm. Both speakers agreed that it's about considering new ideas that don't follow the status quo.

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What does creativity mean?



“So, I believe that creativity means to think and to do differently.

“And that’s always been something which law firms have struggled with, and I think that historically, that’s because of the traditional partnership model.

“Creativity in law doesn’t need to mean being daring in marketing. Creativity can be in the way that we give legal advice.

“Law firms have been pretty good at getting their lawyers’ CPD to continue their personal legal development, but actually, we want lawyers who are great marketers and who understand business. For example, our whole team has access to a business coach and are encouraged to read business books and take online courses.

“Law firms are a business like any other; the principles are the same. What’s really important is giving people the freedom to being creative. So, enabling changes to be made, accepting that with creativity, there is the risk of failure.

“Failure can be a very positive thing because you learn from it and then you do something different, which can be more successful.”



“Lawyers are so busy that they’re not lifting their heads to have a look at how they could do things differently.

“There has to be time to pause. To come away from your desk and have a think about what you’re doing and why you’re doing it. Ask yourself, “could we do this differently?”. John makes a very good point about how the structure of the firm has to lend itself to that creative flow.

“In order for creativity to thrive, the first thing that you really need is the attitude of the people running the firm to reflect that.”

2

Why is **creativity** beneficial to law firms?

Creativity directly helps to tackle the legal sector's top two challenges: attracting clients and recruitment. This is because creativity can help to refocus and look at the problem from a different view point, to better understand what it is that our clients and employee want, expect, and need.

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Why is creativity beneficial to law firms?



"The world is changing. There is a lot of evidence that prove people's behaviours rapidly change after major life events – a pandemic included. So if law firms can't adapt and consider change then they'll be left behind."

"The biggest benefit of creativity I can think of is how a firm's clients will love the creativity of the service you deliver. Anything that makes it easier to do business with you. They'll then want to tell everybody else, and recommend your firm – which is priceless marketing."

"Then there's the talent wars. Money packages can only go up so far. It's important to attract and retain talent and staff want places they can work that they enjoy and make a difference."



"This all comes down to two things: attracting new clients and their expectations, and employee recruitment."

"Starting with clients: I think we're at the start of an evolution in the profession. Not just in law, but in professional services in general. I think that the models are going to change and tech and specifically AI are going to have a massive impact on our business in the next 50 years, and we'll have a downward pressure on fees, without doubt. So, law firms will have to be thinking differently."

"The other challenge is attracting talent. Younger generations who are coming into the workplace have different expectations on their career. They're not going to work their whole career at one firm, they don't want to work weekends, or be stressed at work. And so, I think law firms are going to have to think creatively and recruit differently."

"The key thing that relates to both recruitment and attracting clients, is thinking differently and creatively about what is attractive to both your prospect clients and employees."

"For example, we are going through the process of becoming B Corp registered. We were a member of green litigation and all these things. And so, these are things which I guess traditionally wouldn't be seen as important, but you have to change with the times and you have to be the business that your clients and potential employees want to work with."

“What’s really important is giving people the **freedom to be creative. And accepting that with creativity, there is the risk of failure.**

But **failure can be a very positive thing when you learn from it and improve.”**

John Wallace, Managing Director
Ridgemont Solicitors

3

What are the **key habits** law firms should adopt to implement a **culture of creativity**?

The panel agree that modern law firms should focus on the following habits when implementing a creativity and innovation mindset:

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Six habits law firms should adopt

1 Cross-departmental communication

To encourage change, communication is key. Departments need to share their successes and failures to help encourage improvement and change across teams and processes. Sarah comments, “It never fails to amaze me how there’s no communication of success or failures across departments within law firms.” So creating a system where individuals can easily share will help prioritise innovation.

2 Regular meetings

Opportunities to share ideas as a group provides space for brainstorming which encourages creativity. John has success in Ridgmont by “regularly having a ‘What Else’ meeting. We get the whole team together and ask, ‘What else can we do to improve the client journey and make the business better?’ You’ve got to encourage people to come prepared and voice their ideas.”

3 Modelling behaviour

Team leaders, management, and partners must model the behaviour they want to see throughout the firm for the culture to change at its heart. Sarah explains, “the culture has to come from the top down. In John’s firm for example, he embodies creativity and therefore it’ll be reflected in everyone he hires.” Attitudes and behaviours are contagious, so you have to model the behaviour you’re hoping to encourage.

4 Set expectations

Clear expectations of behaviours need to be outlined with accountability in place to ensure the right actions are being encouraged. Sarah recommends that firms set clear expectations “by putting them in people’s appraisals.” Performance measures need go beyond billable hours and should incorporate other cultural expectations to help foster the right values.

5 Action ideas

To motivate teams to share ideas and experiment you need to follow through and action plans. John advises, “You’ve got to action some of the ideas in the regular meetings [mentioned above] to drive change and motivate individuals to continue to experiment and share.”

6 Prioritise creativity when hiring

Firms should prioritise creativity right at the point of recruitment in order to foster the culture firm-wide. John recommends, “have creativity high up in the qualities you’re looking for in people, as much as you would experience.”

4

Should law firms **prioritise creativity** and continuous improvement?

We asked our panellists whether, even in turbulent and unpredictable times, law firms should prioritise continuous improvement and innovation. The resounding answer was yes because it shouldn't be considered as a 'nice to have' within a business that wants long-term success.

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How can law firms create the right culture and environment for an effective team?



“Creativity and innovation should sit alongside the kind of regular sustainable fee earning that law firms traditionally focus on. It’s not an ‘instead of’, for sure.

“In a market where there’s more and more lawyers and law firms, practices have to find a way to differentiate themselves - creativity offers that opportunity. And that’s an opportunity in respect of attracting clients and maintaining them, but also in terms of recruitment. So, I think it’s absolutely key to prioritise and should be done alongside what we would consider the ‘traditional’ law firm set up.

“No one needs to be scared about creativity; that’s the big thing. If you aren’t creative, then you’re going to be left behind. You’re going to limit your growth unless you focus on creativity.”



“The pandemic really has changed people, and I think for the first time it enabled law firms to lift their heads and say, ‘okay, we need to do something. We’re not sure what, but we know we need to start somewhere’.

“So it’s time to take change seriously and a simple thing you can start to do – as John mentioned – is have a monthly meeting to initiate discussion and share ideas.

“There is also technology that can help you achieve quick wins.”

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