

# **Legaltech & new law: Branding in the digital age**

Ellis Hockin-Boyers / May 2021



## Legaltech & new law: Branding in the digital age

Typically seen as closely guarded and highly traditional, top legal firms and institutions across the UK have faced increasing pressure to modernise in the last decade. One of the key drivers has been the rise of legal technology, or 'legaltech', a previously tiny sector that has seen investment rise by over 4000% over the last seven years.

In the present day, we find ourselves at a potential brand inflection point for these closely entwined sectors: For law firms and institutions, it is those who are able to show they can keep pace with the change in modern life and business that will capture the client of tomorrow. For legaltech firms, those who can make themselves feel established and familiar will have the best chance to fully break into the mainstream.

From a brand perspective, it would seem that both have something to learn from one another, and so we've taken the time to explore some of the key challenges for both going forwards.

4000%

A large, bold, black graphic of the number '4000%' is centered on the page. The '4' is composed of a slanted bar and a square. The '000' are solid, rounded shapes. The percentage sign is a simple outline. Below the percentage sign is a solid black upward-pointing arrow.

According to Thomson Reuters 'Legaltech' has seen investment rise by over 4000% over the last seven years.



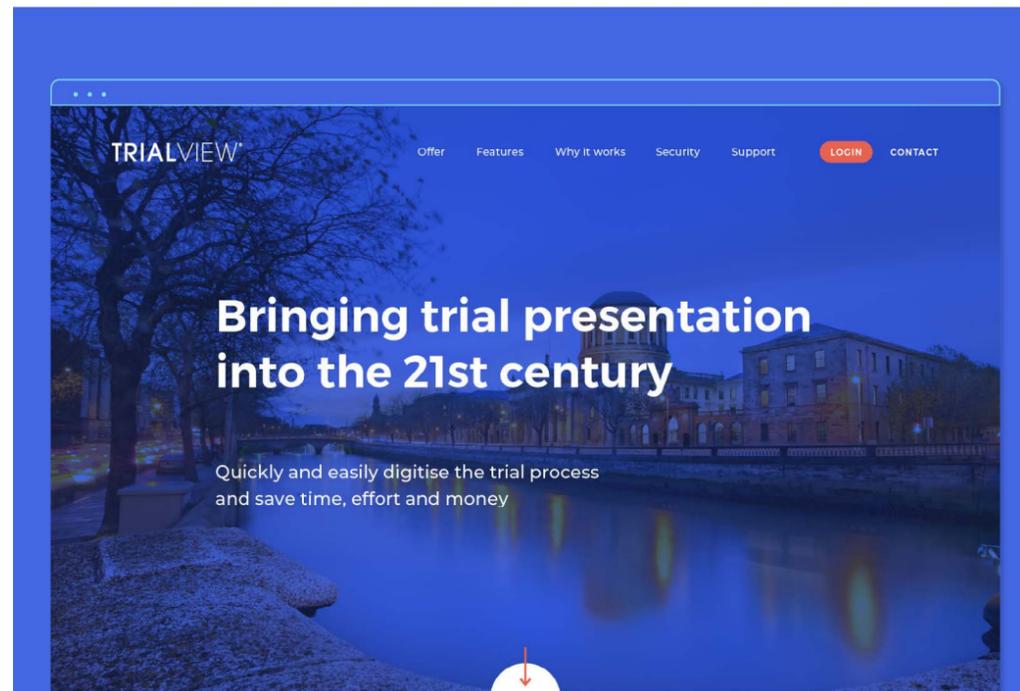


**As a practising barrister, there was a strong feeling on my part that the way we do things needed to move on.**

**Stephen Dowling**



## TRIALVIEW®



### **LEGALTECH: GROWING FROM NASCENCY TO MATURITY**

Legaltech is a sector faced by both great opportunities and great challenges. On the one hand, there is clear scope for significant improvement in the ease and efficiency with which legal work is conducted. On the other hand, there can still be great difficulty in getting people on board.

We spoke to Rowdy Studio client Stephen Dowling, the Founder and Managing Director of TrialView, a secure platform for the management and presentation of digitised court documentation, who explained the impetus behind starting his business:

**“As a practising barrister, there was a strong feeling on my part that the way we do things needed to move on. Litigation, the area that we focus on, is by its nature extremely document heavy, and digitisation offers the opportunity to improve efficiency in so many areas from the ability to search, index and annotate documents, to cost savings on eliminating printing and delivery.”**



Recent surveys reveal that 47% of consumers lack trust in AI technology when used to deliver legal services.

However, it is the vast scope for change in areas like these that can also bring about challenges for adoption—with lawyers often hesitant to break with ways of working established over a career, per Dowling:

**“The legal industry tends to be reasonably conservative and hierarchical in approaching new ideas, and that can make it wary of adopting tech into their processes. We all know things are going to change, have to change, but it’s still a significant challenge at this moment for brands in legaltech to build trust with firms and institutions.”**

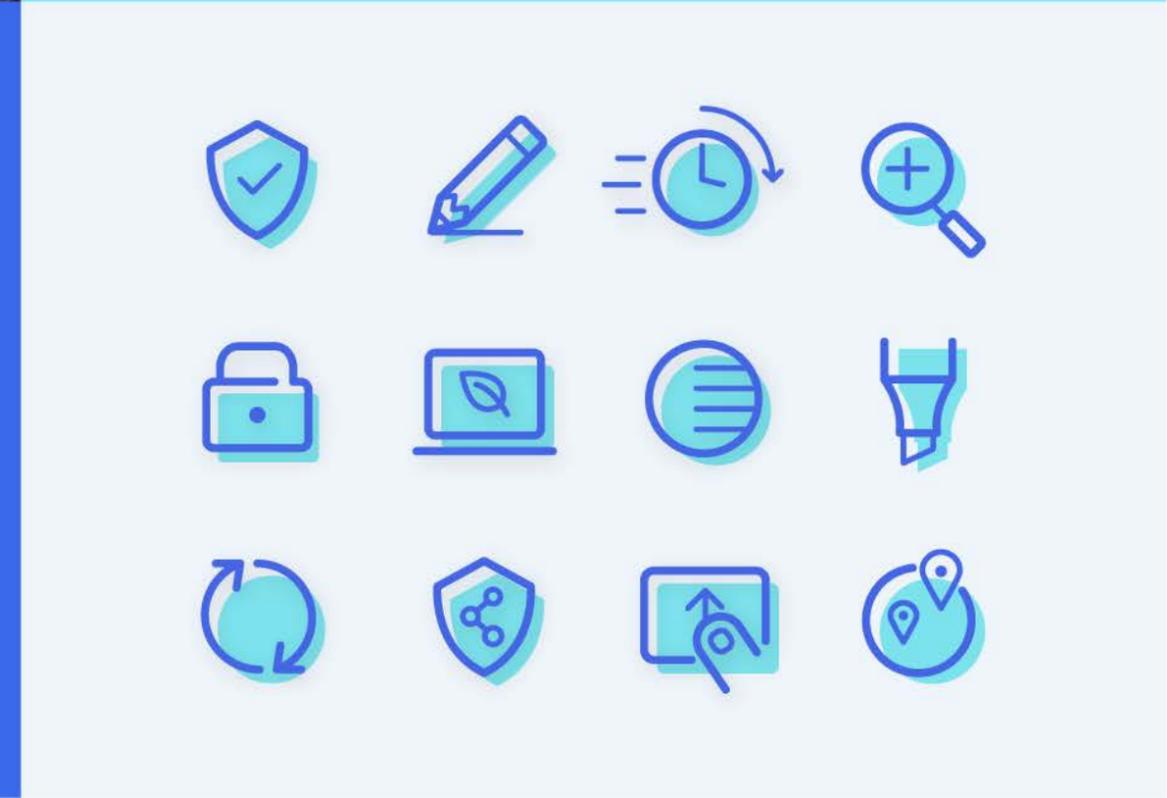
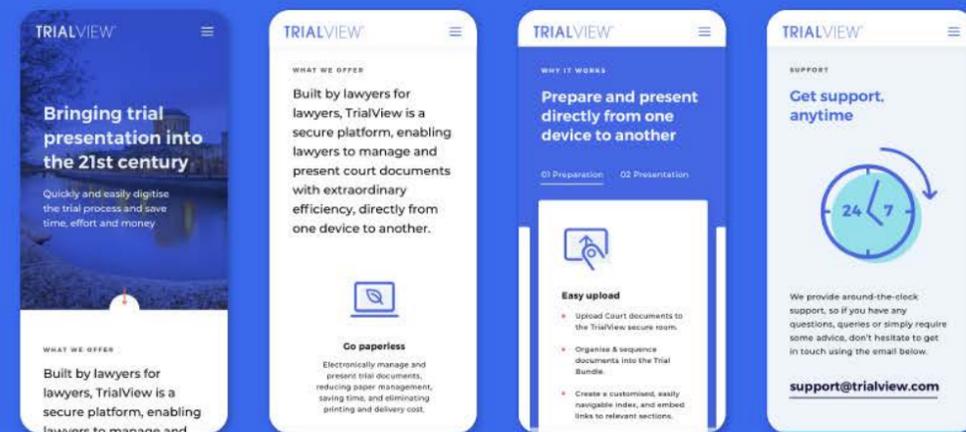
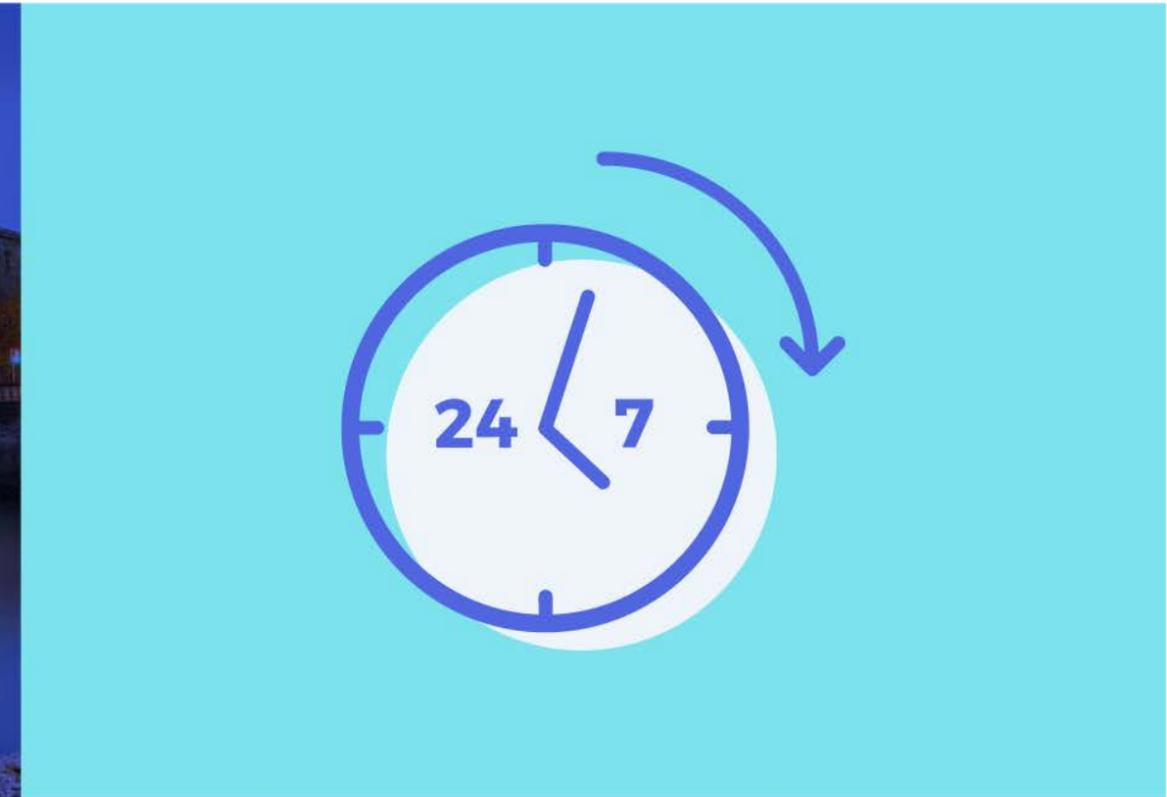
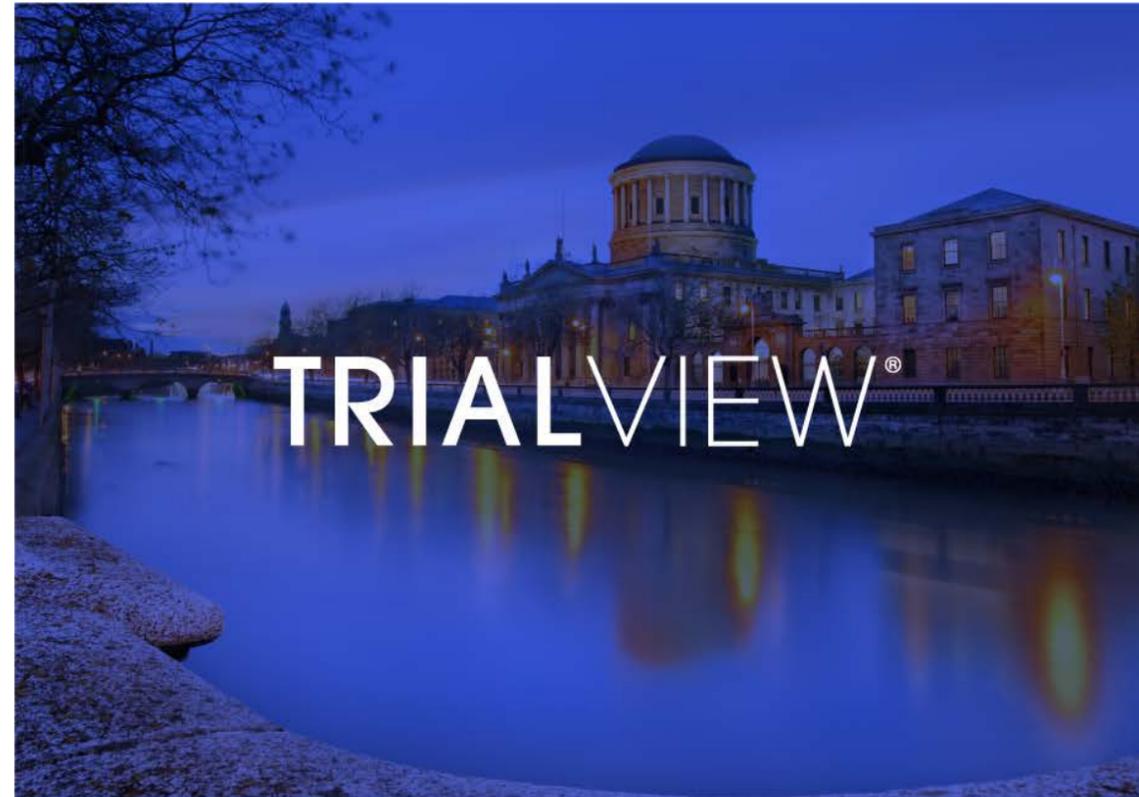
This challenge seems to extend over to the B2C side of the industry, with recent surveys finding that 47% of consumers lack trust in AI technology when used to deliver legal services, and that 55% still want face-to-face time with lawyers, even for processes that don’t necessarily require it.

This puts UK legaltech in an interesting moment in its development. Notwithstanding the effects of the pandemic, which have shifted attitudes up to 10 years forward from where they were according to Dowling, legaltech still has the feeling of an industry finding its feet when it comes to brand.

Whilst there have been several success stories already, we are still waiting in some respects for this industry’s ‘Monzo’ moment—a brand that can make a traditionally complex industry, like banking, feel clear, simple, and accessible for average person.

This thinking was at the core of our own work with TrialView. As a digital platform designed to help efficiently manage and present court documentation, it was crucial for TrialView's brand to cut through the clutter and communicate with clarity: ensuring the platform was accessible and its services were well understood by all.

To accomplish this, we revitalised TrialView's visual system. Across each asset and touchpoint, our revised identity enabled the brand to be more scalable and engaging across its core digital touchpoints, whilst also ensuring its proposition was communicated in the simplest, most direct way possible. We refreshed the logomark with a punchy, digital blue and added a vibrant supporting colour palette for freshness, then developed a suite of unified icons to highlight each key benefit of the platform for increased clarity.





A 2019 study by Altman Weil found that in 69% of firms, partners' resistance to change was viewed as an embedded drag on progress.

### NEW LAW: PIVOTING TOWARDS INNOVATION

In contrast with legaltech, the sense of their industry being 'established' enough isn't a brand challenge that law firms typically face—that's just the benefit of hundreds of years in business.

Instead, the challenge for conventional legal services businesses is to show how they are meeting the challenge of adapting to both changing market conditions, and the evolving demands of the modern client, partner and future employee.

Factors including the advent of alternative business structures and the consequent entrance of major new players into the market, plus the rise of technology in other professional services sectors, have placed increasing pressure on legal businesses to shed their reputation of being innovation averse.

And whilst the image of lawyers as resistant to forward thinking might be unfair to the profession on the whole, there is evidence that this perception persists even within the industry itself, with a 2019 study by Altman Weil finding that in 69% of firms, partners' resistance to change was viewed as an embedded drag on progress.

The attempts of legal firms to update this image has led to a slew of what we might term ‘new law’ rebrands, looking to push legal businesses verbally and visually towards a more open, global, and synergistic positioning—Simmons & Simmons rebrand with SomeOne being a prime example.

Wanting to unify their firm around the challenge of providing smarter solutions to their clients worldwide, Simmons & Simmons positioned themselves around the values of partnership and intelligent collaboration, and built a clear story showing how they suffuse every area of their practice. Visually, SomeOne moved them beyond the staid conventions of traditional legal branding, creating a visual style inspired by the organic coordination of herds, swarms and murmurations that evoked both the natural and digital worlds.

Whilst not all rebrands have been as visually striking, the above seems to reflect the overall direction of travel for top firms in the UK. Our analysis of the top 20 (by fees) revealed ‘connected, global, collaborative, and innovative’ to be the most common descriptors used in key messages.

With everybody moving to position themselves as more innovative, progressive and technologically savvy, the biggest variance is in how effectively and convincingly these messages land.

In order to do so successfully, firms can look to flesh out their high-level statements with supporting examples, and ultimately connect the reasons for innovation and the adoption of technology back to their core brand positioning and story.

- \* **CONNECTED**
- \* **GLOBAL**
- \* **COLLABORATIVE**
- \* **INNOVATIVE**

Most common descriptors used in key messages by the top 20 legal firms (by fees) as per our analysis.

**BUILDING BRANDS FOR THE FUTURE**

Having looked at some of the key trends affecting these closely adjacent sectors, we offer our thoughts on where to go next.

**1**

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**Start with why  
you matter**

**2**

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**Get into the  
business of emotion**

**3**

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**From chalk and cheese  
to two peas in a pod**

# START WITH WHY YOU MATTER



**For years, successful tech brands have focused on the 'why' of what they do, rather than the 'what'.**



For years, successful tech brands have focused on the 'why' of what they do, rather than the 'what', and this principle should extend to how legal services businesses talk about technology as well.

Rather than talking tech for tech sake, focus on the core benefit that technology is driving for your clients or employees, and make sure that this always links back to your brand proposition.

The watchword here is authenticity. Your clients, partners and employees will find it easier to understand the value of solutions that connect back to their comprehension of who you are and what you do. When this link is not established, your claims could feel uncomfortable or 'bolted on'.



## GET INTO THE BUSINESS OF EMOTION

For legaltech businesses, taking time to build more humanity into their brands could pay off in tackling the anxiety around adoption for both B2B and B2C customers.

As much as law is a process-driven business, it is also one driven by relationships and, while legaltech is still waiting for its mainstream moment, it will be necessary to work harder to build them.

Practical steps could include focusing more on your people—for instance, taking the time to shine a light on employee achievements, or having your leadership share their views and perspectives.

It should also include a commitment to storytelling—exploring the motivations, characters, challenges and successes behind your brand can make it easier for customers to connect with you and provide a more natural jumping-off point for a relationship.



# FROM CHALK AND CHEESE TO TWO PEAS IN A POD

One trend we can expect to see over the next decade is legaltech and legal services brands becoming more closely entwined, not only in terms of commercial arrangements but also in how they represent themselves visually in the market.

As mentioned earlier, there is already a significant movement from law firms away from dry corporate branding and more towards an open, digital-first look that signals them as more closely adjacent to the tech world.

In reverse, the next decade could well see legaltech explore its more serious side. Whilst UK legaltech is still predominantly a world of startups, as these businesses continue to mature it would be no surprise to see them begin to look a little more 'legal' and a little less 'tech'.

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Rowdy Studio is a full-service agency specialising in brand strategy, design and activation. Take a look at our [work here](#).



**Ellis Hockin-Boyers**  
**Client Partnership Director**

Ellis is an experienced business developer and marketing professional who thrives on building strong client relationships and long-term strategic partnerships.

At Rowdy Studio, our approach is all about blending sound strategy with loud ideas. The big thinking with the practical outputs. Generating the noise that helps you stand out, with the order that makes it tangible.

All in all, building brands that drive business objectives and make meaningful connections with audiences.



# **NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT YOU**

**READY TO BUILD A BRAND  
THAT DELIVERS?**

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