

# MatterSphere CASE STUDY NABARRO LLP

MAKING MATTER MANAGEMENT WORK  
IN A "BIG LAW" ENVIRONMENT

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## MAKING MATTER MANAGEMENT WORK IN A “BIG LAW” ENVIRONMENT

### ABOUT NABARRO LLP

Nabarro LLP is a major UK commercial law firm specialising in corporate, commercial property, environmental, litigation, and dispute resolution. Nabarro has 121 partners leading approximately 420 lawyers offering a broad range of corporate legal services to major national and international clients. The firm’s headquarters are in central London with a network of offices in Singapore, Sheffield, and Brussels.

### THE CHALLENGE

In late 2010, Nabarro was presented with two separate business drivers. The first came from specific client demands for a new approach to the way the firm’s managed high-volume personal injuries claims. Complicating the situation, the firm had the added pressure of implementing a solution by 1st July 2011.

The second driver was the innovative agenda of the firm’s corporate real estate practice which, conscious of the big changes set to take place in the UK legal market in the wake of the Legal Services Act reforms, was intent on restructuring its internal processes to increase lawyer efficiency and productivity.

Tasked with sourcing and implementing suitable solutions to address both issues, the firm’s Director of IT Andrew Powell also had two additional factors to consider. The first was that the firm was scheduled to upgrade from Enterprise® to 3E® in June 2011, so any practice and financial management system selected would have to be capable of not only integrating with both platforms, but also be able to migrate from one to the other with minimum disruption to the firm’s business processes.

The second factor was user adoption. As Powell explains, “One issue often arising when larger law firms consider the implementation of matter and case management systems is a belief the technology is inappropriate for the type of work they do. Such systems may be relevant for high volume, low margin work typically processed by paralegals and support staff where they need to operate within a tight prescriptive framework—but not for high-value bespoke work conducted by qualified lawyers, who

need flexibility to handle matters where no two cases are ever exactly the same. What we needed was a system that provided management oversight and a light touch to supervision.”

### THE SOLUTION

After carefully evaluating the market, Nabarro selected MatterSphere®, an industry-leading practice and matter management platform that was created by FWBS and acquired by Thomson Reuters Elite in 2011. MatterSphere made the top of the list because it has the ability to easily integrate with the firm’s existing systems (including both Enterprise and 3E practice management systems, the Hewlett Packard Autonomy iManage® document management system, and Microsoft® Outlook®), to maximise the firm’s current technology investments, connect siloed applications, and to unite front and back office operations.

In addition, MatterSphere was open and flexible enough that it could adapt to other work groups within the firm, a factor that ruled out discrete departmental systems from other vendors. As Powell explains, “MatterSphere sits within our core set of technologies, in particular Microsoft Windows, Office®, and SQL Server®, which means we only need a single footprint of IT resource skills. While initially being rolled out to just 150 users in three work areas, we have at least five more areas on the way, with a total potential seat-count of 1,000 users.”

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**Andrew Powell**  
Director of IT

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles Christian is a former barrister and Reuters correspondent turned independent commentator and journalist who has been writing and reporting on developments in law office technology for over 30 years. He was described in one UK national legal magazine as “one of the top ten key individuals who act as movers and shakers in the legal IT world today.” After a career at the Bar in London, he worked as an IT PR consultant, including having responsibility for the UK launch of the Commodore PET, one of the first generation PCs. He was then a freelance journalist for a number of years, working for all the UK’s leading legal magazines and in 1994 was the winner of the National Newspapers Technology Journalist of the Year Award. In 1995 he formed his own business that operates as independent provider of legal technology information. This publishes the Legal Technology Insider newsletter—described in *The Times* as “the invaluable monthly whose bright orange pages adorn the desks of most serious legal technologists,” the America Legal Technology Insider newsletter, and The Orange Rag breaking-news blog. His 1998 book *Legal Practice in the Digital Age* was described by Professor Richard Susskind as “essential reading for every lawyer in the land,” and he is currently writing the sequel.

Finally, there was the willingness of the MatterSphere team to work with Nabarro to meet tight deadlines, including the 3E migration. The contract negotiation and implementation process, from the first meeting between the Nabarro and MatterSphere teams to the system go-live, took place within six months. As for the Thomson Reuters Elite integration and migration, "MatterSphere was running with Enterprise one day and 3E the next, which was impressive!" says Powell. "Having it up and running so far ahead of schedule was regarded as a huge success."

## THE RESULTS

Nine months after going live with MatterSphere, Powell says a number of valuable lessons can already be drawn from the experience. "Because we are not running the system in a 'factory environment' where users are guided through the legal process step by step—our staff know what they are doing—we have been using the MatterSphere workflow to implement more advanced processes. One of the biggest benefits is the system removes the hassles and time-consuming delays that used to be associated with the routine aspects of matter management.

"For example, staff now live in MatterSphere but for all practical purposes it appears they are still working in their familiar Outlook desktop. Staff can access any information they want, including document templates and time recording from within one environment whereas previously they would have been jumping between Outlook, Enterprise, and document management applications," says Powell. "We're also seeing staff spending less time dictating routine correspondence. Instead, they now just select a template, key in any amendments they need to make, and move on to the next task. Document turnaround times have definitely been reduced." In addition, MatterSphere offers mobile capabilities so case files, action activities, and time records can be accessed from smart phones or iPads® and can also share files and updates with clients, so staff have more options for where and how to input work and can keep clients up-to-date easily.

Powell says another benefit is because the look and feel of the system is so familiar, implementation has not meant imposing a new way of working on staff, with the result that "MatterSphere training takes less than an hour."

The implementation of MatterSphere has also resulted in the introduction of electronic matter files, with the solution bringing everything together in a central location that can be accessed "in just one click." Powell adds, "We are becoming a 'paperless' office since we no longer use paper-based matter files or have to print out emails to store

in manila folders." Staff are still permitted to print out documents for convenience, but Powell says the introduction of MatterSphere has seen a 10 percent reduction in paper consumption by the departments using it.

Another incidental benefit of MatterSphere has been improved risk management and compliance—a hot topic in the UK at the moment in the wake of the SRA's (Solicitors Regulatory Authority) new compliance and risk management regime (the COLP & COFA provisions). "With MatterSphere we can supervise every file from anywhere on the network. There is also a clearly defined system audit trail which helps with compliance," says Powell.

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Andrew Powell

## CONCLUSION

Along with addressing specific client demands, MatterSphere also supports Nabarro's future plans for process innovation by giving the firm a quickly deployable means of influencing the basic process but without being prescriptive.

"Given the type of work this firm does and the people we employ," says Powell, "this level of matter management is totally appropriate. MatterSphere removes time-consuming and routine administration delays. It is flexible enough to cope with the unique aspects of our work, yet still supports management supervision. And it allows us to realise more billable hours from our lawyers while reducing the service costs of supporting them."

Turning to the future, Powell says the metrics the firm can capture via MatterSphere will deliver better project management and capacity planning data, which in turn will help the firm compete in the coming era of alternative fee arrangements (AFAs).

## AN INNOVATIVE AND GLOBAL LEADER

Thomson Reuters Elite offers an end-to-end Enterprise Business Management Solution that allows law firms and professional services organizations to run all operational aspects of their firms, including business development, risk management, client and matter management, and financial management.

For over 60 years, we've demonstrated we understand the business and financial aspects of firm operations with proven tools that streamline processes to increase visibility and workflow efficiency across the organization and provide the flexibility to change and grow your business.

For more information about MatterSphere, please visit [mattersphere.com](http://mattersphere.com).

