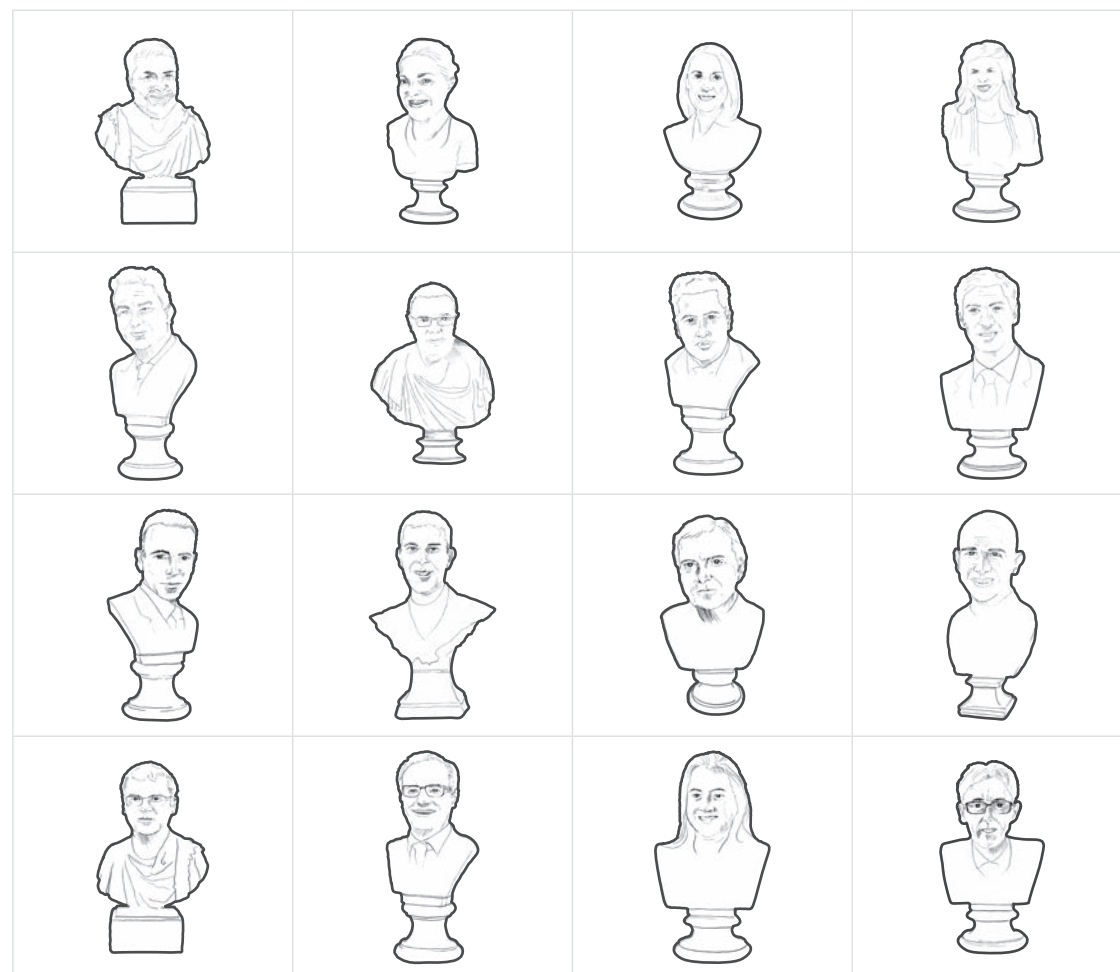


# Innovation and the Bar



## Profiles



> Absolute Barrister  
**Simon and Katy Gittins**

> Bar Council Direct Access Portal  
**Prudence Beever**  
**Mike Whyatt**

> Briefed  
**Orlagh Kelly**

> Clerksroom  
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## Absolute Barrister

### Simon and Katy Gittins

Founders and Barristers

*Husband and wife team disrupting and reinventing the legal industry*



### Innovation

Absolute Barrister was the first company formed to take advantage of the direct access rules and its goal is to continue to drive innovation to allow better access to legal services. Husband and wife team first founded Absolute Barrister under a different name in 2011.

Absolute Barrister is an innovative, award-winning online service connecting consumers and businesses directly to affordable barristers for a wide range of legal matters, including divorce and family, finance, wills, property, and personal injury, employment, and IP.

Their revolutionary user-friendly online platform allows clients to manage their cases on any device.

Absolute Barrister claims to be able to halve the costs of some legal matters, addressing the demand for affordable, expert legal advice.



Clients need to be made aware of the choices they have and the options available to them in the legal market.

The typical chambers model does not allow for long term thinking.

If you draw a map of legal services now, it doesn't work structurally.

We're going to make the market.

—Simon Gittins, Absolute Barrister

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## How they did it

Formed from a belief that the big law hourly rates model of legal advice is expensive, outdated, and does not put the needs of clients with legal issues at the epicentre, Simon and Katy launched Absolute Barrister. Absolute Barrister is looking at ways to offer the best, most cost effective advice to clients via technology enabled automated processes.

Automating all existing legal functions through market-leading technology, Absolute Barrister have designed a system to enable clients to access their case anywhere, anytime. They are AI ready and looking at next generation technology to provide more cost-effective solutions.



## The future

The industry needs to change – at present there are too many structural and regulatory barriers to innovation. Regulators should focus on fairness rather than prescriptive rules. Lawyers should be on the hook for only reserved legal activities and not for administrative support tasks such as photocopying.

Cost recovery is a barrier to technological investment. Cost recovery needs to return to fair principles rather than specifying limits. While a client pays less for an innovative legal service, they can be prevented from recovering those lower costs because the method by which these costs were incurred is not a traditional hourly rate. Further, if a service reduced the cost for legal advice to a couple of hundred pounds, the user would currently only be able to recover at court the transactional cost. How would providers recover the extensive capital needed to innovate to reduce the cost of these services?

Clients should be able to move between legal providers as clients become informed on the legal market and identify the right lawyer for their case.

Absolute Barrister will continue to challenge entrenched working practices to allow better access to expert cost effective legal advice and representation in court.

As part of that process, Absolute Barrister have been working closely with the BSB before, during, and after the regulated entity pilot. It sees a number of barriers to innovation that are without foundation in regulatory risk and which should be challenged in the interest of enabling better competition in favour of the consumer and which it says have already 'to some extent' been recognised.

The future is in open law – businesses and consumers should have access to the law to conduct their own legal research.

absolutebarrister.com



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## Bar Direct Access Portal

### Prudence Beever

Barrister, St Johns Buildings

### Mike Whyatt

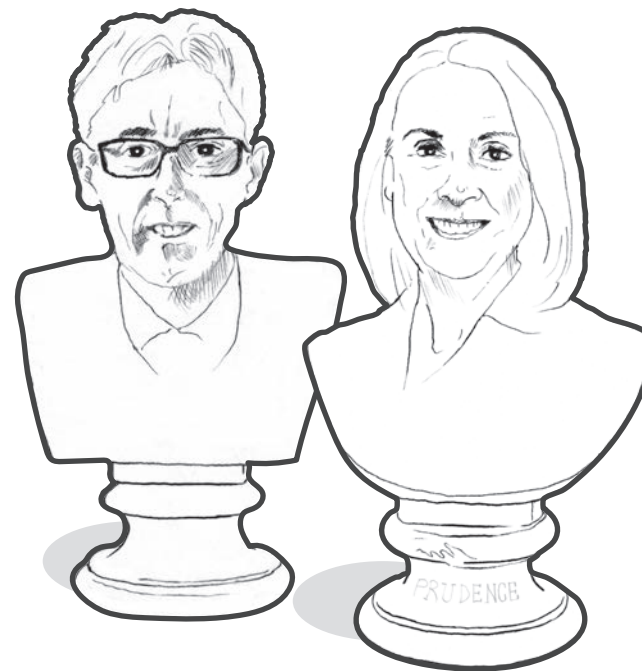
Barrister, 15 Winckley Square

*Founders of the Direct Access Portal, the largest directory of public access barristers*



## Innovation

Pru and Mike, together with their partners, launched the Bar Council Direct Access Portal, the only nationwide directory of public access barristers. They founded the portal themselves, before entering into an equal partnership with the Bar Council. Pru and Mike continue to work in close collaboration with the Bar Council to provide a fully comprehensive service to the public, the largest directory and therefore choice of public access barristers. For barristers, the Bar Council Direct Access Portal is a rich source of high quality work in all areas of law.



Clients need to be made aware of the choices they have and the options available to them in the legal market.

We are moving towards a different legal environment with more choice for consumers.

Public access clients pay for work up front, and only then does it get done.

We need to unclog the court service from Litigants in Person.

The sky's the limit for the Bar.

—Prudence Beever, St Johns Buildings

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## How they did it

Pru and Mike saw a need for the portal when they were in chambers and saw the opportunities for public access work, in a climate of cuts to legal aid and the reduction in private law children work. However, chambers were still resistant to public access given the understandable worry about losing goodwill from loyal solicitor clients. As such, rather than setting up individual direct access websites for their own practices, they identified an opportunity for a national website showcasing direct access barristers nationally, on which they would also have profiles.

A defining principle was that the website should be free to barristers and to the public – and this remains the case to this day. Barristers can now be included if they pay the Bar Representation Fee, and the site already includes between 3,500 and 4,000 barristers, mediators, and arbitrators nationwide, and is continuing to grow rapidly.

Next steps will include further expansion, and the inclusion of carefully selected advertisers relevant to the Bar and public.



## The future

The legal market is starting to move fast. While government changes and funding cuts make the climate challenging, regulatory change has opened up new opportunities. Barristers can now qualify to undertake public access work and to conduct litigation, and ABSs will bring new opportunities.

There will be a further rise in virtual chambers. Individual barristers who do not want to be part of a physical chambers structure can work from home. Most work can be done digitally online, via eBundles, online case management systems, and online library resources.

Will we end up with a converged, US-style legal system? There is movement in this direction, but solicitors and barristers currently play different roles. Solicitors hold hands, barristers retain their objectivity to provide the best possible representation.

Consumers should have access to the best representation to meet their needs – public access barristers can save clients money. Where clients require more handholding and benefit from the service of a solicitor, barristers can refer them to solicitors.

How do we free the courts from litigants in person given the lack of public money to fund representation in courts? The rise in litigants in person is changing the court system and slowing down processes. We also need to review the position of unregulated services like McKenzie friend, and ensure that consumers have access to the best representation.

[directaccessportal.co.uk](http://directaccessportal.co.uk)

[stjohnsbuildings.com](http://stjohnsbuildings.com)

[15winckleysq.co.uk](http://15winckleysq.co.uk)

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## Briefed

### Orlagh Kelly

CEO and Barrister

*Technology entrepreneur and data protection specialist founded Briefed practice management and data protection compliance tools for barristers...*



## Innovation

A barrister since 2003, Orlagh's extensive experience representing clients in almost 2000 cases led to her single-handedly founding a legal technology company and developing Briefed, the first mobile practice management platform for barristers. Available in the Apple iTunes store since 2003, Briefed is used by barristers throughout the UK and Ireland. In 2017 Orlagh expanded the Briefed offering to include the Barrister Data Protection Compliance Bundle, helping barristers meet their regulatory requirements under data protection legislation, the first of its kind on the market.



Barristers inevitably work very long hours delivering excellent service to their clients. However, the right technology can help them with some of the heavy lifting, freeing up time they can spend taking on more profitable work, or indeed simply to have more free time. Clients of Briefed tell us they save around eight hours per week. That's an extra four days a month they can make better use of.

—Orlagh Kelly, Briefed



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## How they did it

Faced with the challenges of the administration surrounding running a barrister's practice – paperwork, tax, credit control, and client care – as well as the core fee-earning and advocacy of the job, Orlagh created Briefed to free her up to more effectively practise law. Briefed is an online system for barristers to manage their cases and practice from their phone, tablet, or computer.

Orlagh identified a gap in the market for a solution specific to the Bar. Matter management solutions existed for solicitors and for other professions but there was nothing specific to the Bar. Existing chambers solutions serviced the clerking team well, but barristers were inevitably left with little or nothing to help them manage their VAT, tax, legal drafting, or CPD activity.

Defining features of Briefed are its intuitive simplicity and ease of use. Orlagh ensured a clear, easy to use approach remained key.

In developing the technology for Briefed, Orlagh learned about the data protection requirements of technology solutions which led to the idea to provide data protection training and compliance products. Briefed now provides barristers with a Data Protection Compliance Bundle with all the tools barristers need, such as training, risk assessment, document templates, and formal accreditation, to become data protection compliant. Due to its innovative online delivery, again using bespoke and easy to use technology, barristers using the Briefed product are able to meet their regulatory requirements in an efficient and extremely cost effective manner.



## The future

Competition at the Bar, along with the pressures caused by extensive change, continue to increase pressure on barristers. However, there are significant opportunities for savvy barristers who see technology as a secret weapon helping them do more, better, and faster. Orlagh is keen to continue to find new solutions to help barristers deliver their legal expertise while running profitable, efficient businesses, and Briefed is now integrated with some chambers management solutions to create a seamless end to end working relationship between a barrister and their clerk, increasing profitability for both the barrister and their chambers.

briefed.pro

thinkdataprotection.com

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## Clerksroom

**Stephen Ward**

Managing Director

**Harry Hodgkin**

Barrister

*Founded unique award-winning chambers and built the only purpose-built public access chambers software, now used in over 200 chambers*



## Innovation

Formed by a clerk and two barristers out of the frustration with the traditional chambers model, Clerksroom is a unique award-winning chambers offering civil barristers for all courts and tribunals in England & Wales. Operating from a purpose-built headquarters in Taunton, it blends the traditional chambers model and the unique independence of the Bar with first-rate client care and innovative IT. It has developed the only purpose-built public access IT system in existence, which is now used by over 200 other chambers.



## How they did it

Clerksroom continuously consider all areas of their business model and approach to plan for the challenges and opportunities of the future. They have different brands: Clerksroom, Clerksroom Direct, and Clerksroom Mediation to cater to their different services and different market segments.



Innovation is something you do in order to survive.

Innovation is adapting with eyes wide open.

Over the last three to five years, there has been huge change at the Bar. As such, every chambers in the country is looking at what to do.

Mergers are not necessarily a sign of decline. People are still doing the work, just in a new structure.

Traditional structures are flawed and not designed for innovation.

Mediation is a growth area.

—Stephen Ward, Clerksroom



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They structured Clerksroom as a limited company, leaving the barristers to focus on the law and the directors to focus on running the business. This makes decision making quicker. It enables clear systems for investment and growth, and makes it easier to implement strategy. Whereas the traditional chambers structure focused on how to limit liability, their approach leaves them free to focus on growth.

Clerksroom focus on client service and continuous improvement. They have written an operations manual for their barristers. They use data to provide effective management information and to focus on client service. They place client service at their heart, focusing on service levels for tasks, and to report to firms, and make decisions about management of the business.

They adapted their structure for public access work. While the average time from solicitor call to instruction is eight minutes, for lay clients it is 30 minutes. This necessitates different resourcing and they have recruited specific staff then trained to assist members of the public.

Innovative use of technology is key. They have built their own regulatory compliant software system to cater for the specific workflow for public access, including ID checking, credit checking, POCA, conflict checking, and card processing within the system so that they can track from Google search all the way to payment. They have sold this to other chambers to make it more cost efficient to develop. They are also launching Billy.Bot, a robot clerk sitting on top of their services, and with access to information via APIs, social media, and databases, including solicitors' booking preferences, LinkedIn connections, chambers linked to their public access portal, direct access qualified barristers, and barristers' clerks. Using natural language processing, Billy.Bot can find potential answers to basic questions. He can be plugged into any major website where someone is looking for a legal answer. He will also be able to directly create cases and diary bookings, without clerk involvement, and signpost people to the relevant service.

Adopting purpose-built offices and clerking operations in the cost-effective location of Taunton, they have had the space designed for maximum effect.

Mediation is a particular growth area, and over 17,000 solicitors now use their mediation service, with over 76 firms accessing it via their client portal.



## The future

The Bar must adapt to keep pace with the changing market. Chambers need to continually re-examine what the chambers and staff offer and how they can fulfil a wider range of clients' needs.

With changing fee structures, chambers must engage in a continual drive to look at new areas of work, as Clerksroom have done with mediation and public access.

Chambers will need to look critically at the make-up of their work, and support barristers' practice diversification where needed.

The biggest area of opportunity relating to public access is prepayment. This avoids the cash flow delays typical in a traditional chambers.

Public access work also opens up a huge new market, with good quality work, and in areas lending themselves to the advice and representation at which the Bar excel.

The development of its own public access software system has transformed the nature of its business. From being a chambers of barristers, they have become a hub in the marketplace – a competitor to other chambers, a supplier and provider of software to them.

The Bar has a changing relationship with the rest of the market. There is a move from the traditional referral model to being more of a hub, receiving work from solicitors and the public, referring work to solicitors, and providing software to other chambers.

clerksroom.com



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## Forum Chambers

**David McIlroy**

Barrister and Head of Chambers

**Patrick Webber**

Senior Clerk

*Founded Forum Chambers, a forward-thinking boutique chambers specialising in commercial disputes*



## Innovation

The members of Forum Chambers broke away from 3PB and founded their own boutique set to focus on commercial disputes. With a focus on streamlined client service, a small agile footprint, and technology, and with its close partnership between clerks and barristers, the set has formed a rapid reputation as leaders in the field.



Change is constant at the Bar. Sets whose cost base is too high or who can't change will be in danger.

The traditional referral structure is changing. We are seeing more alliances between solicitors and barristers, such as solicitors pitching the Bar to clients as part of their team, and undertaking joint business development initiatives.

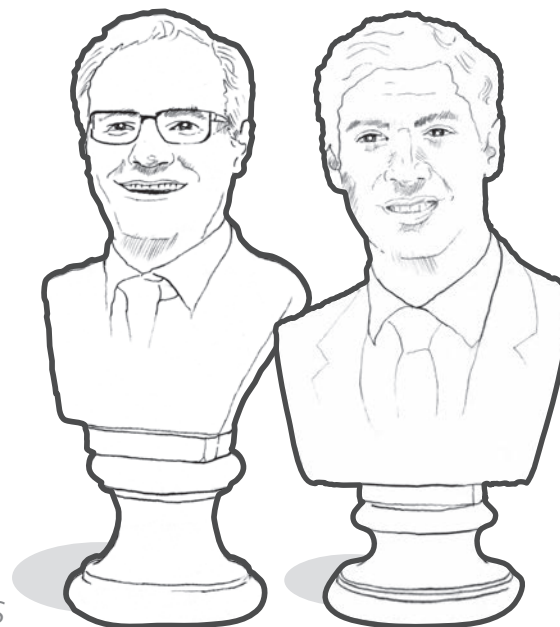
The way in which clients access legal services is changing.

Clients don't want to pay £50k to learn they have no case nowadays. We have become very good at triage – taking a quick look and determining whether a client has a case.

—David McIlroy, Forum Chambers

Clerks need to know what they are selling.

—Patrick Webber, Forum Chambers



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## How they did it

Leaving a larger set enabled Forum Chambers to grow and develop a specialist practice. Forming a boutique set enabled more streamlined client service, greater control of marketing, practice development, business development, and IT. It also enabled the formation of tailored service and greater agility and ability to change. Through small offices near the Inns in London and serviced offices in Bristol and Manchester, chambers can serve the major centres.

Clients expect teamwork; barristers are increasingly now part of a team. Whereas previously the Bar focused purely on intellect, now increasingly the starting point is soft skills and whether individuals can work with clients and as part of a team.

Forum Chambers are using Apple technology and looking at new technology to streamline practice and chambers. Barristers need to be able to leverage technology to run their practice effectively and efficiently. Use of electronic rather than print sources of information is key. Electronic working and eFile storage and paperless working mean that lots of space is no longer needed. But they work hard to ensure that technology does not replace the collegiality of being in chambers.

Clients are under pressure to deliver more and they have worked hard to address this in a number of ways. 'We have become very good at triage, taking a quick look and working out whether the client has a case. Clients nowadays don't want to pay £50k to learn that they have no case.' (David McIlroy, Forum Chambers)

Having a specialist dedicated clerking team – and a small focused set with a specific niche means that clerks are able to fully understand the barristers' practice, and to understand the product they are selling.

Costs are increasingly an issue – they work with ATE insurers and litigation funders to enable the client to offload the risk of litigation.

The working environment is key to talent recruitment and retention. Barristers may no longer stay with one set throughout their career.



## The future

The way in which clients access legal services is changing – there is a 'move from the traditional referral model to a more complex web of interactions with other areas of the legal market.' (David McIlroy, Forum Chambers)

The structure of chambers will change – the introduction of ABSs will mean that chambers can be structured more easily to enable barristers and staff to share in the success of the business.

Barristers need to look at developing areas of work, trends in work, and anticipate future trends. They need to position themselves as thought leaders in these areas to ensure that they then get the cases in these areas as they arise.

Future barristers will need different skills than they did a few years ago. The ability to work in teams, to leverage technology to improve efficiency and to engage in continuous improvement will be key.

forumchambers.com

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## Fountain Court

### Paul Martenstyn

Deputy Senior Clerk

*Flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and independence translate into a business model which will serve the Bar well in a rapidly changing world.*



### How they did it

The modern chambers, and the unique model of catering to self-employed barristers requires a particular deftness and lightness of touch. It is like having 80 law firms under one roof.

Specialist qualified clerking provides direct input into the strategy of chambers. Paul is Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) qualified and is one of only a small number of clerks to have achieved the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management with the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). He is also a founding member of the Russian/CIS Arbitration Network (RCAN) and an ambassador for JUSTICE.

Chambers are changing the nature of business development and marketing to communicate with clients. Fountain Court have used innovative digital marketing, such as videos, to promote niches of work, such as cyber fraud. Digital marketing also enables chambers to expand its reach.

They also reviewed their client base and conducted a perceptions survey with firms to develop and refine their offering and learn more about clients' needs.



Not even the most successful sets can afford to be complacent.

The Bar provides a glimpse into the future of law.

The chambers model is lean, conflict-free, and cost effective, a QC often costing the same as a senior associate in a law firm.

Paul Martenstyn, Fountain Court

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They responded to demand from the Magic Circle firms for white-collar crime expertise to complement their existing banking work. And expanded with Richard Lissack QC and a new team of barristers to address this need.

Chambers are rethinking the way they seek out talent, focusing on excellence above all, and looking for diversity. Chambers also focusing on talent retention, such as wellbeing, mental health, and supporting female practitioners. They place increased focus too on growing individual practices, with well-received practice reviews.



## The future

Future barristers have a different level of expectation of life at the Bar than previous generations. They want money now, benefits, and travel opportunities. Barristers also need to be tech savvy and alive to social media such as LinkedIn and Twitter.

Clients' needs are changing – barristers need to be commercial, provide value for money, 24/7 access, and added extras. Sets need to keep pace with private practice, in-house, and international clients to see growth. Fountain Court will continue to capitalise on these changing demands.

There is a movement from barristers marketing themselves towards barristers marketing chambers, although this is balanced with their independent, self-employed status.

AI will be used in business development although there will be no substitute for face-to-face interaction. But as chambers become increasingly international, and the way in which chambers communicate with law firms, clients, and current and future barristers, digital marketing will be key.

The modern referral model works very well for the top end of the Bar, fitting with trends such as the new 'gig economy'. In a world where self-employment is the future and the only jobs safe from automation are those which require uniquely human skills, the Bar is an effective model.

The fortunes of areas of the Bar may be very different – some sets will grow larger, others will merge, some will fold. There will be other competition from in-house advocacy units. So not even the most successful sets can afford to be complacent.

The traditional firm–chambers dynamic is changing, with referrals working both ways.

The role of the clerk is changing and becoming increasingly professionalised – the Institute of Barristers Clerks (IBC) is lobbying for this, as education takes on an increasingly important role. What chambers expect from clerking will change as chambers embrace trends such as public access and fresh challenges such as ABSs, and increasingly expect clerks to identify and capitalise on new opportunities.

fountaincourt.co.uk

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**Paul Martenstyn**

> Kohen Rapoport Group  
**Dr Yuri Rapoport BSc SJD**

> Murbeck Law LLP  
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**Daniel J ShenSmith**

> 39 Essex  
**David Barnes**



## Kohen Rapoport Group

### Dr Yuri Rapoport BSc SJD

Founder, Chairman and Barrister

*Trailblazing brands freeing up barristers to provide access to justice*



### Innovation

The Kohen Rapoport Group's driving force is the belief that everyone should have access to justice and high quality legal services. To make this principle a reality, the group frees up legal professionals to focus on the practice of law. They offer support in all the other areas barristers might be distracted by – marketing, business development, paralegal support – with an innovative suite of solutions covering all areas of practice life. Further to this, they help consumers finance their cases, with their flagship Legal Cost Finance Brand, as well as manage their cases in the most cost efficient way, through their innovative paralaw firm, Legal Case Management.

Their brands support all the additional areas of the legal process that lawyers encounter, from financing to paralegal support, training, and marketing. Catalyst Bar offers the opportunity to be on a list of lawyers who can receive fully-funded and legally-ready client case instructions with Legal Cost Finance. And unlike the typical public access client, with their carrier bags and the digital equivalent, the use of the P[X] Paralegal resource, an entirely UK-based Legal Process Outsourcing (LPO) service, means that barristers received perfectly prepared papers. Barristers can also use the P[X] Paralegal Services directly – a service which can save practices up to 40% on their fixed costs, and assist with profitability and client satisfaction levels. The group has recently built on these brands to launch two new services, P[X] Direct and P[X]



Each of our innovative brands supports one of the additional areas within the legal process, supporting barristers by freeing them up to provide legal services.

Lawyers shouldn't have to invest in their cases by taking on CFA arrangements. To be incentivised by a win is wrong.

Dr. Yuri Rapoport, Kohen Rapoport Group



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**Simon and Katy Gittins**

> Bar Council Direct Access Portal  
**Prudence Beever**  
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Chambers. P[X] Direct connects direct access clients with the right barristers, offers experienced paralegals to support them with the essential preparatory steps of the case, and links the client with Legal Cost Finance. P[X] Chambers provides a comprehensive range of support services to chambers and barristers engaging in direct access work. It combines traditional chambers clerking services, such as clerking, administration, and IT, with supplementary resources for direct access, in particular, paralegal services, client management, case finance, and marketing. Chambers and barristers can cherry pick the services they require to enhance their activities in the best way possible for their specific work. Catapult Communications creates bespoke programmes of marketing activity for barristers' practice, and Catapult Personal Development offers training programmes based on the Dale Carnegie Training courses. Recently, the organisation also launched the first paralaw firm, Legal Case Management, building on the existing brands. And it continues to look at new ways to reimagine legal practice.



## How they did it

The changing legal environment has increased demand for support resources. Public access means that many barristers need access to high quality, effective support services. There is an inherent conflict between many of the typical barrister activities and the desires of public access clients. Advocacy activity requires dedication and isolation. Presence in court means barristers cannot be available to potential clients at all hours. Yet clients want instant access to their barrister. As such, there is a need for support services.

There is also a widespread, often unaddressed demand for legal help. Consumers and small businesses perceive legal advice to be too expensive and many problems go unresolved because of anxiety about seeking and funding legal advice. Providing an effective cost-neutral plan for financing legal disputes encourages those who

are cash poor or do not wish to risk their savings, to finance their disputes and resolve their problems. For barristers, this offers the ability to tap into the latent unmet need for legal services, opening up wider streams of work. And eliminating worry about receiving fees. Whereas the litigation funding market has generally taken on a small number of cases, Legal Cost Finance is available for the full spectrum of legal matters, enabling clients to pursue their right to justice.



## The future

Technology is synonymous with 'innovation' for many barristers and solicitors. But consumer demand is driving the use of technology to change the practice of law. Technology addresses consumer demand for legal services to be delivered more efficiently.

Public access is a response to the need for more accessible consumer services. It benefits the consumers because it provides greater competition.

There will be increasing opportunity for innovation that enables barristers to be freed up to focus on their core competency of providing high quality specialist legal advice.

Kohen Rapoport will continue to reinvent all areas of the legal process. Each of their innovative brands take one of the areas of the legal process and provide a way to deliver this more efficiently. They free up lawyers to do the work, rather than focusing on provision of support services.

[kohenrapoport.co.uk/brands](http://kohenrapoport.co.uk/brands)

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## Murbeck Law LLP

**Tim Becker**

Barrister, Piccadilly Chambers

**Peter Murray**

Director, Insolvency & Law

*Sophisticated barrister-professional collaboration providing specialist legal services to insolvency clients at an affordable cost.*



### Innovation

Featured recently in Thomson Reuters' Public Access Webinar as a trailblazer in public access work, Tim Becker and Peter Murray have formed an innovative collaboration between a barrister and a specialist insolvency consultant.

This provides a highly cost efficient model for the client. Tim and Peter estimate that they can save clients a third of the price. Where a solicitor and barrister doing the work may be £15k, they can do the work for around £10k.



“

We are changing the provision of legal services.

We have a unique model, one of the most sophisticated at the Bar. We're not looking to replicate the traditional solicitor-client relationship.

Traditionally barristers have been a bit sniffy about working with non-legal professionals. But it opens up a whole new range of work.

Referral through professional services and the use of intermediary provisions will be the future.

Tim Becker, Piccadilly Chambers



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## How they did it

Tim was one of the first barristers to seriously embrace public access work. Peter initially encountered Tim through the then Direct Public Access Bar Directory when looking for a new insolvency specialist barrister for a one-off court appearance. From a chance meeting, the two soon developed a sophisticated partnership which extended well beyond Peter's business model for Insolvency & Law. Thus when a client of Insolvency & Law requires specialist legal advice, Peter instructs Tim to advise the client. Having provided the advice, Peter acts as the administrative interface or intermediary between Tim and the client, taking the case forward whether court action is needed or not.

Clients like to know upfront what the work will cost, so fixed fee models are common. Most of Peter's work can be predicted with a high degree of accuracy, to cover legal advice.

The business already makes use of paralegal support for bundles or tasks with heavy documentation, such as disclosure. However, the model is true to the spirit of public access, rather than looking to move into the conduct of litigation.



## The future

'Referral through professional services and the use of intermediary provisions will be the future' (Tim Becker, Piccadilly Chambers)

ABSs will provide easier ways for barristers to form innovative businesses with non-legal professionals, formalising existing worksharing arrangements. They also make it easier for the courts, who struggle with non-lawyer involvement, to manage the recovery of costs.

The announcement on 3 April 2017 by the BSB that it was receiving applications for non-lawyer ABSs will make such formations possible. For Tim and Peter, Murbeck Law LLP will soon be opening its doors to an exciting and innovative future for them and their clients.

insolvencyandlaw.co.uk

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## Richmond Chambers LLP

**Paul Richmond**

Partner and Barrister

**Sarah Giddens**

Partner and Barrister

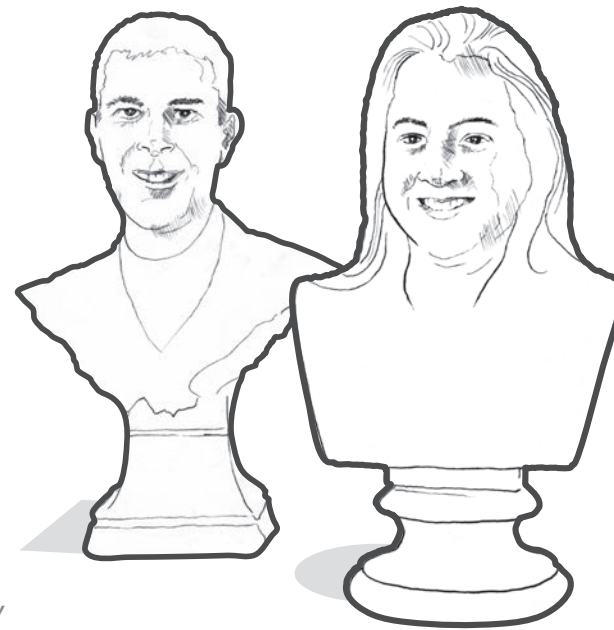
*Founded multi-award-winning partnership of specialist immigration barristers and professionals, providing legal advice and representation to the public on UK immigration law.*



### Innovation

Multi-award winning chambers provides tailored immigration solutions directly to individuals and businesses, both within the UK and internationally.

The first chambers licensed as an ABS by the SRA.



“

In order to serve Public Access clients, we needed an ABS which gave us the ability to engage in strategic decision-making about the capacity and direction of our work. It also enabled non-lawyer partners with financial management experience to join the business.

Paul Richmond, Richmond Chambers



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## How they did it

With its genesis in 2010's introduction of the public access rules to immigration, Richmond Chambers was founded out of the realisation of the traditional chambers model's structural obstacles to building a substantial public access practice. It was difficult to build this type of immigration practice within the traditional self-employed chambers structure.

They opted for the SRA regulated ABS as many international clients preferred dealing with a regulated entity rather than with individuals. This structure and use of legal associates enables the efficient running of a public access practice. It also enables a blend of a new structure to serve clients with the traditional familiar way of working of the Bar.

Richmond Chambers' model is true to the model of public access as envisaged by the BSB, providing representation and advice from specialist barristers at a cost-effective price. Barristers are supported by Legal Associates, many of whom benefit the business by way of their additional language skills.

Cloud-based platforms and Skype enable easy service of a wide range of clients. Clients can submit their applications and have conferences online, then meet at court, or, for international clients, not at all.

Richmond Chambers have placed client service at the heart of the business, building Google reviews into the website.



## The future

The future is bright! Seeing growth from increased client referrals, Richmond Chambers will build on their reputation as an innovative business helping clients at an affordable and cost effective price.

More chambers will adopt this model and that of other Alternative Business Structures as they seek to capitalise on the opportunities afforded by public access. The model they adopt will much depend on the area of their work: one model would not work for all areas of law.

immigrationbarrister.co.uk



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## ShenSmith Barristers

### Daniel J ShenSmith

Co-Founder, ShenSmith Barristers

*Serial entrepreneur, pianist, and Taekwon-Do 5th Dan black belt used his personal experiences as a public access client to innovate the legal industry.*



### Innovation

Daniel's own experiences using legal advice and public access barristers for business advice led to his founding ShenSmith Barristers.

ShenSmith Barristers has been described as 'a chambers in any other sense of the word'. At present, it provides marketing, administration, and clerking services to public access barristers, and can access the services of over 3,500 accredited barristers to provide consumers with expert, cost-effective legal advice over a wide range of areas of law.

Currently in the process of launching DigitalBar.co.uk, ShenSmith will also help barristers digitise their practice.

ShenSmith Law has recently been authorised by the BSB as a licensed body ABS. This will serve to support their offering to clients by retaining them formally when instructing counsel on their behalf. ShenSmith Law is, looking to evolve into 'a hybrid between the typical law firm and the Bar' (Daniel ShenSmith).

ShenSmith Barristers provides the benefits of choice, value, affordability, and high quality service for the consumer.



We are not just innovating the Bar; we are innovating the entire legal industry.

We are on the cusp of big change.

People are used to the live feed lifestyle – they expect responses in minutes, not the week a barrister may take.

The Bar is steeped in tradition. And until recently it has not needed to change.

Innovations come about because of changes to the ways in which barristers work.

Daniel ShenSmith



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## How they did it

Daniel's unique background as a serial entrepreneur who has never worked for anyone else, and as a client of public access barristers along with his unique drive via martial arts and his approach to 'give yourself no choice' has summed up his approach to business. He has brought the same imagination and dynamism to the Bar as to previous ventures as diverse as skirting boards and international martial arts.

Innovations come about because of changes in the ways in which barristers work. The development of public access work was initially slow, due to reluctance to disrupt existing barrister-solicitor relationships, and lack of familiarity with the demands of the lay client. Now, however, things are changing.

Public access barristers need to get used to service, accounting, and clients who want to speak to someone before they pay. ShenSmith barristers successful in this work – people like Stephen Harvey QC and Sunil Rupasinha – are approachable and user-friendly, providing reassurance to anxious clients often with no experience of the legal system.

Client service is fundamental to the provision of public access services. To be successful in this area, barristers and barrister businesses need to focus on understanding and providing a high-quality service. They need to remember that for an individual or small business, their legal dispute could amount to everything. They will be thinking of it all the time, worrying about it, and need access to prompt timely advice as to what to do and representation.

Marketing for public access is key to building a successful practice in this area. A successful ShenSmith innovation unique across the whole legal market has been the use of videos to help people feel comfortable with the barristers. This stops the law and lawyers being perceived as unapproachable. Barristers also need to think about whether they are best placed to do things like manage their marketing, such as websites and IT – or whether it is better to have someone like ShenSmith do this for them.



## The future

Law and the legal market is too slow. The law cannot keep up with technologies such as AI, and to predict what is needed to regulate.

Public access will provide a real, positive difference to the legal industry, reducing costs for clients, and helping those who might otherwise be deterred from seeking legal advice. However, support infrastructure and services are needed for barristers to make it a success.

The introduction of ABSs will provide consumers with wider choice. It will also lead to a more divergent Bar. Some chambers will not embrace ABSs, others will incrementally innovate, and others will make big bold experiments and investments in technology.

'ABSs also have the potential to change the training landscape. There is fierce competition to get into traditional chambers, so there will be more appetite from those qualifying for ABSs and alternative training.' (Daniel ShenSmith, ShenSmith Barristers)

Collaboration is key to the ShenSmith ethos – 'the legal market is big enough for everyone to have a slice of the pie. By collaborating with others, it is possible to improve outcomes for consumers, and to make money'. (Daniel ShenSmith, ShenSmith Barristers)

The licensed entity ABS structure will enable ShenSmith Law to become a hybrid between the typical law firm and the Bar. ShenSmith Law have the license to instruct, and using other legal professionals will be a natural progression.

shensmithbarristers.co.uk  
digitalbar.co.uk



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## 39 Essex

### David Barnes

Chief Executive and Director of Clerking

*Superclerk responsible for growing chambers into one of the premier sets at the Bar.*



### Innovation

Has grown chambers into one of the most successful supersets, with over 130 barristers and over 40 staff, operating internationally.



We have a commitment to high-quality advocacy in every tribunal and court. The business of law should be about not just money; it's also about providing access to barristers and ultimately access to justice.

I don't see it as innovation; it's a natural extension of the services we offer to clients.

Innovation is doing everything better.



A team of barristers with skills in different areas, which also necessitates appropriate clerking that reflects the business need.

What matters is consistent and high quality service.

David Barnes, 39 Essex

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## How they did it

39 Essex Chambers focused on the provision of consistent first-rate services across a wide range of practice areas, to enable them to become the 'go to' set for firms. Their distinguishing factor is the ability to field a team of barristers with skills in different areas, which also necessitates appropriate clerking structures that reflect the business need.

In growing chambers, 39 Essex built and developed the core practice areas and expanded from this.

The size of chambers leads to economies of scale and reduces contribution to individual barristers. It also enables a continued commitment to legal aid. Chambers is modern and cost-efficient, offering the full range of fee models.

Governance of chambers in a changing landscape is important. 39 Essex have a management board taken from all levels of the membership which enables rapid decision-making and implementation of new initiatives.

Diversity is central to the success of chambers. Clerks and barristers conduct flexible business development, providing a range of events at all times of the day, to allow those with different commitments and interests to participate.

Fair, transparent recruitment to allow all to access the Bar. Development of pupils to hone their advocacy skills. All pupils spend their first two years on the full range of work to ensure the development of first-rate advocacy skills.

The ways of getting work have changed. In-house clients are increasingly selecting chambers and asking them to work with panelled law firms.



## The future

Growth will continue internationally, with recruitment of further exceptional practitioners and organic growth.

Chambers will continue to expand new services to meet the demands of their client base.

39essex.com

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