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'Not a single client satisfied' - report exposes how law firms fall short

New research claims to have unearthed 'unambiguous evidence' of a flagrant disconnect between large law firms and their clients.

Clients said they looked to law firms for solutions to business problems, while the firms saw their role as just providing advice - with clients required to convert this advice into solutions.

The research, by information provider LexisNexis, also uncovered differences in expectations of service quality. While lawyers strive to provide the best advice they can, many clients want advice that is 'good enough'.

Many law firms are not convinced this standard is sufficient, but clients expect what the [report](#) termed 'Rolls-Royce service at bargain-basement prices'.

Clients also reported 'poor visibility' from law firms on the work being undertaken, costs and timeliness.

This was one area where law firms acknowledged they could improve, but researchers found efforts to invest in project management and improved processes often come up short.

The research was based on semi-structured interviews with partners and/or heads of support services from law firms, as well general counsel and heads of business lines at clients.

LexisNexis says this is a crucial time for law firms to ensure they understand their clients, with new market entrants – often with new pricing and business models – looking to disrupt the legal sector.

The disconnect between provider and client is being narrowed,

according to law firms, who view the issue as primarily a 'challenge of improving service delivery, as opposed to a fundamental challenge to the nature of their service offering or a need to better understand the client's perceptions of value'.

Some 40% of clients noted that senior partners of their law firms 'appeared to lack more than a basic knowledge of their business'.

The report adds: 'The view of the clients is entirely different and they do not see any perceptible change in the size of the disconnect.'

'Not a single client interviewed was satisfied with what law firms provide.'

Other problems recounted by clients included 'superficial' interactions with law firm partners, little appetite to offer alternative business models, and no desire to help them improve their operations to save costs.

The report concludes that law firms must acquire and maintain 'internal visibility' of all work done for a specific client, with key account representatives appointed for better integration.

More time must be spent building relationships between law firm teams and client teams, and law firms must become more pro-active in spotting opportunities for clients to help their businesses.

The report adds: 'This requires moving beyond pragmatic engagements with the client and providing a sense of partnership where the client feels valued and protected.'