



Bringing Your Ideas
To Life

Case Study

Coodes LLP

Development of a Bespoke Web Based Risk Register

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When Coodes went looking for a developer to create a new, unified risk register, the firm initially struggled to find a software vendor that could fulfil its requirements. That is until Xperate was formed, and was able to deliver what was needed quickly, expertly and cost-effectively.



“With very busy lawyers working in today’s world of threats, having this resource has meant that time is saved, and risk is reduced. It is a win win situation for us. ”

Peter Lamble, Partner and COLP, Coodes LLP

BACKGROUND

With foundations dating back to 1747, Coodes is one of Cornwall’s oldest law firms. It has eight offices from Penzance to Holsworthy, and around 170 staff providing trusted legal advice across the spectrum to meet the county’s needs, from corporate and commercial to personal and family work. Coodes’ residential conveyancing practice is award-winning and the largest in the region. The firm also maintains a criminal practice and a thriving commercial, rural and agricultural property practice.

In common with every other law firm, Coodes must comply with a frequently changing roster of legislative and regulatory requirements. The firm’s Compliance Coordinator, Sally Davies, helps to create processes and policies, and works with the firm’s Compliance Team to ensure this happens. The team of SRA-approved Compliance Officers deals mostly with anti-money laundering (AML) and data protection compliance, and works to provide the right information to staff along with effective processes designed to minimise compliance risk.

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CONSULT

Of course, Coodes already had effective compliance risk management. But its foundations were based on separate risk registers that had developed piecemeal over time, in different places and in incompatible formats.

This made the task of completing risk assessments – which must be done by fee earners, and cannot be passed to support staff – both time-consuming and laborious. Fee-earners are busy people with heavy caseloads. They need a user-friendly platform on which to complete rigorous risk assessments in the most time-efficient way to maximise their productivity.

In addition, the firm’s multiple risk registers didn’t easily allow fee-earners to log “considerations” and actions, yet – in particular for risk-based AML regime compliance – it’s vital that these are recorded and can be easily evidenced.

Meanwhile, the multiple risk registers also made hard work of conducting overall compliance supervision. The Compliance Team knew the firm needed a new, “one-stop-shop” risk register. A list of key system requirements was drawn up (see box). Coodes then canvassed developers that it had used before. However, none were able to meet their needs in full: in particular that the new register should link into the firm’s existing case management system, P4W; and that Coodes could administer the register themselves, without having to resort to a third party every time content needed to change.

The project was the on back-burner when Coodes heard on the grapevine about the formation of Xperate – a new software development house, managed by some very experienced people who were well-known and highly-regarded by Coodes’ IT department. They decided to get in touch.



Key Risk Register Requirements

- An attractive, user-friendly and professional interface that fee-earners would readily and happily use
- A future-proofed solution that the firm could edit, adding new questions, etc. without recourse to a third party
- The ability to link the register into the firm’s case management system
- The ability to enforce completion by fee-earners (and fee-earners alone) by making the risk register a non-optional component of matter creation
- The capacity to record and evidence “considerations”
- The ability to “lock” matters of concern, if for instance, they’re not completed in a certain timeframe
- The ability to flag high risk matters
- An efficient reporting tool that would produce PDFs that sit in the matter file
- The ability to conduct risk assessments across the whole matter lifecycle: namely initial, ongoing (if any element of risk changes), and closing
- The capacity to categorise matters as high, medium or low risk
- The ability to prompt fee-earner risk assessment reviews at three months for high risk; and six months for medium and low risk matters

DEVELOP

In the first instance, a roundtable meeting was arranged, after which Xperate quickly came back with their ideas. They then put together a demonstration which, says Sally, “We were really impressed with.” She adds: “They listened to what we wanted and gave us ideas. They understood how a law firm works and the risks we face and how we have to mitigate those. They understood why we needed it, basically.”

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and how we have to mitigate those.”

Sally Davies, Compliance Coordinator - Coodes Solicitors

Moreover, Xperate’s timings and pricing were really favourable. “Our IT guys had worked with them in the past, and were always impressed with them. Plus, they were very innovative in their approach. I know all developers are, but they particularly were.” The firm decided to work with Xperate because they gave Coodes a high level of confidence that they understood what was needed and could deliver.

In addition, Xperate’s developers are in India. “This was new to us,” says Sally, “and it was really quite refreshing to be honest. They understood the system and knew they could get a product to us fairly swiftly. After the demo they created a test area we could go into, which was really, really helpful. If we had comments, we could type in a note that they’d see overnight, so the development process was really quick, seamless and smooth.”

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Sally Davies, Compliance Coordinator - Coodes Solicitors

So quick, in fact, that the solution was delivered ahead of the original schedule. Xperate also added value along the way by, on several occasions, making suggestions as to what might work better. The result, says Sally, “Really is bespoke to our needs, but I can see how much it would benefit any law firm. At Coodes we spent a lot of time creating the most incisive questions, and between our content and their development, we’ve come up with a really first-class risk register.”

DELIVER

Sally and her IT developer colleague, Jody Nicholas trained the firm's Internal Systems Trainer on how to use the register, who in turn will arrange training sessions with the firm's 85 or so fee earners. "Training is more about explaining what risk means, and why it's so important to make sure we have control of it," says Sally, as the system itself is straightforward to use. She notes she hasn't even needed training to run its back-end admin.

**"They're very professional, first-class really. I can't fault them
or their approach. I'm lyrical about them all the time"**

Sally Davies, Compliance Coordinator - Coodes Solicitors

The solution has also exceeded Coodes' original aspirations. "Another unique functionality" Sally notes, "is that at the click of a button we can further tailor the bank of questions to be department and area specific. We can drill down to create something bespoke for each particular case type at quite a granular level." This capacity to create targeted and proportionate risk assessments has led the firm to decide that every matter will now have a risk assessment, even a one-hour fixed-fee engagement. The system is not only streamlining risk assessments, but enabling more in-depth ones in a shorter period of time, empowering Coodes to extend its risk coverage. It's making fee-earners more aware of the breadth of risk, and the firm also knows the risk of every potential matter as early as possible, so it's better armed to mitigate risk sooner.

The end result is that Sally can easily recommend Xperate. She describes them as: "Extremely approachable. Knowledgeable, obviously. Their expertise with P4W in particular, is extreme. They're very professional, first-class really. I can't fault them or their approach. I'm lyrical about them all the time here because they've just been a pleasure to work with and their product is brilliant."

**"To be honest, it's underlined my faith in technology
and how it can help."**

Sally Davies, Compliance Coordinator - Coodes Solicitors

She also notes that after a recent independent AML audit, "It's great, because we were able to just add in a question. It's ticked a box. So far, every end-user who's seen it thinks it's a really good solution. To be honest, it's underlined my faith in technology and how it can help."

ABOUT XPERATE

What we do

Put simply - we develop software for you.

It is difficult to find good developers, expensive to recruit them and then hard to manage and retain them; especially if software development isn't your primary business.

You may have thought about outsourcing before but it is difficult to know where to start. Many of the well-known outsourcing companies are not set up for smaller projects or teams and everyone has a story about what can go wrong.

That is where Xperate can help.

How we work

We are a UK based software development company with offices in the UK and India and we offer everything from a full design and development service through to short term projects.

We specialise in working with SME businesses requiring anything from one or two developers for a couple of months up to firms wanting to outsource their development over the long term.

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