

Thomson Reuters HighQ

Foot Anstey

An Ingenious Re-think on Service Delivery

One of the UK's fastest-growing law firms, which today employs more than 500 people across seven offices, mid-market practice Foot Anstey's expansion over the last decade has been driven by ambitious organic growth and fueled by innovation. Advising UK and international businesses and high net worth clients across multiple service lines, its focus is firmly on prioritizing collaboration over convention and providing services that meet clients' legal and business needs.

To add value both internally and externally, Foot Anstey has been developing speciality solutions under its Ingenuity brand. These new tech-powered products and services are being born out of a combination of out-of-the-box thinking and Thomson Reuters HighQ—the connected, automated workplace collaboration solution—to make them possible.

In 2021, the firm launched a real estate solution designed to streamline portfolio management using HighQ. The idea germinated in 2019 while working for a large retail client with an extensive estate of several hundred stores requiring active asset management. Real estate partner Carol Phillips and Client Solutions Lead Tara Walsh began exploring ways to digitize the client's portfolio, creating both efficiency gains and process improvements. The solution they developed works on many different levels.

A Multi-layered Solution

The initial goal was to create a database in HighQ which extracts critical information from leases, deeds, and other documents so that clients have portfolio-wide visibility over rent review dates, status of payments, break clauses, and more. Then, on top of that database,

"It's about demonstrating proactivity on our part, making us more accountable to clients, and delivering services in a different way."

Carol Phillips
Real Estate Partner



matter-specific and litigation data is overlaid to create a portal through which clients can see all their data and track all their contentious and non-contentious matters live in one place. Notifications can be set up to remind key personnel when important dates are coming up or to alert them when decisions need to be made ahead of time. Workflows can be created to facilitate more efficient process management, and documents can be worked on more collaboratively between the firm and the client.

"We were trying to get to a point where clients could see exactly where they are with their estate or any given property or matter without having to ask or wait for that information," says Phillips. "Giving clients that transparency so they can see everything in real time for themselves and better manage their estate is really valuable. It's about demonstrating proactivity on our part, making us more accountable to clients, and delivering services in a different way."

The retail client for which the product was originally designed also required twice weekly reporting, which was a laborious, manual task that required around six hours of fee earner time using Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheets. Now, having all the data available, as well as being able to manipulate and report on it easily via HighQ, has

helped Foot Anstey achieve a 48% saving of time on that process alone—time that would otherwise have been written off.

“The client was asking for twice-weekly reporting because they had twice-weekly meetings for which they needed that data,” explains Walsh. “This is not just about how we can deliver legal services *per se*, but how we can help meet clients’ other needs by providing the information they require when they want it, in the way they want it—or in a better way.”

Foot Anstey has been able to productize the solution by creating templates that can be tailored to clients’ exact requirements such as the type of client and the kinds of assets they are managing. Now it is building other solutions for other clients, creating a “shopping list of options that can be brought together,” as Phillips puts it.

A Winning Formula

As well as impressing existing clients, Foot Anstey’s innovative use of HighQ has helped them win major new business. Phillips and Walsh point to one example when the firm was bidding for a lease-read project involving 1,800 leases, requiring spreadsheets to be filled in for each. They wanted to stand out from the competition, so they created a solution in HighQ that could deliver what was required by automating the review process, and they presented the idea as part of their pitch. It then became clear that, in fact, a total of more than 4,000 leases needed to be read in just three months. Having won the tender to take on this work once the solution was fully ready, the outcomes were delivered before the deadline and under budget. Since then, that business has become one of the firms’ most important clients, for which it has worked on numerous other projects.

“The mobile interface came into its own here as a live status tracker, so people could see how many leases had been read and how many were remaining,” says Phillips. “The project manager at the client could log into it every morning, and that interactivity took away the anxiety of waiting until the weekend to see what had been achieved during the week.”

“What would have taken an hour to review and report on in Excel, we could do much more quickly,” adds Walsh. “Our target was two or three an hour, and we could actually review and report on six. The platform could also capture questions and responses between lawyers and clients and enable lawyers to escalate difficult questions to more senior colleagues.” In the future, the firm might consider using the artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities in HighQ to further facilitate this process, although Walsh notes that legal expertise will still be required to interpret the nuances contained within leases.

“To do this kind of innovative work, you can’t rely on traditional tools. We use HighQ in lots of different ways, and we’re only just scratching the surface. It’s very exciting.”

Tara Walsh
Client Solutions Lead

The firm is now deploying HighQ more and more as a knowledge capture and intelligence tool to work smarter and serve clients better. For example, they can mine historical data held within the firm to its advantage, so that lawyers can learn from similar matters or previous work involving particular landlords or tenants. HighQ also helps the firm retain vital insight when colleagues leave or are away.

Ingenuity with Ease

Prior to deploying HighQ, the firm had tried to set up similar real estate management processes using other software programs with varying degrees of success. Having evaluated HighQ, and given that the firm already used it to create data rooms for corporate clients, they knew it had the functionality to deliver that initial retail client project. It has just grown from there.

Foot Anstey uses many of the HighQ modules, from document automation to workflows, from iSheets to data visualization. “For the lawyers, it’s about having the breadth of modules that you can use in a really clever way, and it’s easy to use and iterative. It doesn’t require masses of guidance notes,” says Walsh. “For me, iSheets is a real engine to be able to capture information quickly into a database with no need for a software developer to code it: It can be done by lawyers. It’s also easy to embed with clients. It’s not a complex system to understand.”

For Phillips, creating a dashboard through which clients can clearly visualize data is very important from an asset management point of view. An excellent user experience, for clients and lawyers, is also a major factor.

The success of the initial Ingenuity for Real Estate project is prompting the firm to look at other ways it can develop a wider suite of new products and services for clients in real estate and across other sectors and service lines using HighQ.

“To do this kind of innovative work, you can’t rely on traditional tools,” Walsh says. “We use HighQ in lots of different ways, and we’re only just scratching the surface. It’s very exciting.”



FOOT ANSTEY

With roots dating back to 1908, today Foot Anstey has offices in Bristol, Exeter, London, Plymouth, Southampton, Taunton, and Truro. It provides commercial, corporate, employment, finance, IP, real estate, data/technology, and dispute resolution services to clients in sectors such as developers, energy and infrastructure, Islamic finance, private equity, private wealth, and retail and consumer.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

To develop a real estate solution that captures a range of disparate but vital information from across a client’s entire estate and makes it more accessible, visible, and usable, so that a more proactive, rather than reactive, approach to portfolio management is taken.

WHY HIGHQ?

Having previously used HighQ for corporate deal rooms, and having evaluated its potential for real estate, it had the functionality required—and it proved to have more capabilities as the project evolved. The success of this portal signposted further possibilities in real estate and beyond.

BENEFITS

- **Efficient:** Automating processes delivers significant productivity gains
- **Collaborative:** Helps demonstrate proactivity on the part of lawyers and promotes client engagement
- **Innovative:** Enables law firms to turn ideas into reality and differentiate themselves
- **Versatile:** Its range of modules offers huge scope to develop other products for more clients

For more information about HighQ, contact your HighQ Client Success Manager or visit [HighQ.com](https://www.highq.com).