

# HighQ provides a central hub for a global firm in lockdown

## Ashurst

One week before Rob MacAdam joined Ashurst, a large global law firm with headquarters in London, the entire U.K. and the rest of the world went into lockdown.

For MacAdam, who'd looked forward to working closely with new colleagues, it was a tough blow. But given his expertise, he was prepared for the complexities of working away from the office. MacAdam is head of digital products in Europe, Middle East, and Africa within the Ashurst Advance Digital team, which develops digital tools and services for the firm and for its clients. While Ashurst has a history that dates back to 1822, the firm has stayed at the cutting edge of legal technology. With 400 partners and 28 offices worldwide, it had to.

Ashurst's client base primarily consists of banking and financial services firms and large public companies. "The work that comes to us is often very complex," from major banks and large financial institutions, MacAdam notes. "And that work lends itself to us finding innovative service delivery models and creative digital solutions in a lot of cases."

MacAdam's job is helping Ashurst maintain and build upon its digital edge. And with COVID-19 closing doors everywhere, online connection and collaboration have become more essential than ever.

Two technologies that are opening doors for Ashurst's working-from-home lawyers and their clients are Thomson Reuters® HighQ and Contract Express. HighQ is a simple, flexible, and expandable solution designed for legal professionals that promotes productivity and collaboration to help law firms win business, execute it well, and keep clients returning with more work.

It easily integrates with Contract Express, a document automation system to create templates and produce documents using a legal organisation's own work.

At Ashurst, MacAdam and his team are using these tools to bring together colleagues and clients facing unprecedented challenges.

### "A firm hungry to do more"

MacAdam is uniquely positioned for his current role. He began his career as a corporate lawyer working on M&A and private equity deals, before moving into a legal technology and innovation role as Group Innovation Manager within Pinsent Masons' award-winning SmartDelivery team.

By taking on the position at Ashurst, MacAdam saw an opportunity to unite his background as a lawyer and as a technologist. Ashurst not only managed a strong stack of legal tech solutions but also had developed many of its own – and was eager to take it to the next level.

"What I stepped into is a firm that is hungry to do more," MacAdam says. Ashurst itself sees an opportunity – to evolve beyond providing digital services to support matter delivery, to a practice that is building and delivering unique digital products using its current technology stack. One of his roles is "to help the firm generate revenue through digital solutions – not just fee revenue supported by digital solutions."

But when the pandemic shutdowns occurred, Ashurst faced an urgent technological challenge – the explosive number of documents that its banking clients needed to manage.

## “Foundational layer”

Similar to the USA's Payroll Protection Program and other state and local initiatives, the U.K. government's Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan (CBIL) scheme has enabled banks to make financial support available to struggling small businesses with a government-backed guarantee for loan repayments. Banks then were faced with the challenge of how to process and execute an avalanche of loan and security documents quickly and efficiently.

“Luckily, technology is here to provide support and help law firms respond quickly in such exceptional times,” MacAdam says. “For example, our Global Loans team was recently instructed by a large global bank to help it process loans for its customers under the CBIL scheme. Our Digital Services team automated 25 loan and security documents using Contract Express in just 10 days.” In April alone, a total of 420 documents were generated for the bank using the automated questionnaire that Ashurst developed via Contract Express.

To manage the intake and processing of each individual loan, Ashurst's legal analyst team has been using HighQ Collaborate, the collaboration and transaction management platform.

“HighQ is the key foundational layer,” MacAdam notes. “It essentially acts as the hub in a hub-and-spoke model with other digital tools.” This helps Ashurst's digital team to build solutions for clients that are greater than the sum of their parts. For instance, Ashurst also uses Contract Express to generate suites of documents, to repaper hundreds and thousands of documents. For analysing contracts and extracting the data they contain, Kira is the firm's go-to solution.

“Each of those tools does great things, but they don't do everything,” MacAdam notes. “You don't automate documents in isolation – there needs to be a workflow around it. You can analyse a contract, but where are you going to store, cleanse, analyse, and action that data?”

This is where HighQ comes in. “HighQ is that central, single-source platform,” MacAdam says. “Everyone can work in the same workspace. We can go and action different activities in other tools, but we anchor it all back in HighQ, then wrap a layer of collaboration, productivity, and insight around it.”

To find out how you can combine secure document exchange with the best enterprise social collaboration and publishing tools, visit [legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.co.uk/HighQ](https://legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.co.uk/HighQ).

## Normalising the new normal

MacAdam notes that with so much evolving government support and advice being provided, it's not always easy for businesses to understand what they are entitled to and how they should respond. In response, Ashurst Advance Digital is developing web-based apps that enable businesses to assess their eligibility for support under various COVID-19 related government schemes. Businesses will be able to access the tools directly, answering a series of questions to determine whether they are eligible for the loan, then receive confirmation of their eligibility.

Ashurst and MacAdam are continually exploring new ways to use legal technology to further boost collaboration, efficiency, and client satisfaction.

“The closer integration of HighQ and Contract Express in the 5.4 release will be a game changer for us – both tools are integral parts of our digital toolkit, and the ability to create seamless workflows across both tools will transform the solutions we can deliver, and create new value for our clients”.

MacAdam notes that the pandemic and the resulting lockdown restrictions have led to opportunities for the greater use of legal technology. In addition to the obvious increase in virtual signatures, Ashurst also sees opportunities emerge to leverage its broader technology toolkit to support clients during these unprecedented times. “The situation is moving and evolving so fast that businesses need to be even more informed, agile, and responsive than ever,” MacAdam says.

HighQ is helping Ashurst keep pace by uniting its tech tools, and is supporting the firm to work more closely with its clients – even when the firm and those clients need to work far apart.



Rob MacAdam is a legal technology and innovation specialist focused on the delivery of digital solutions to help transform the firm's client service delivery offering. As a former M&A and private equity lawyer for several leading UK firms, Rob is passionate about NewLaw and the creation of client value by leveraging

technology to create smarter processes and innovative new legal products and solutions.

Rob is currently head of digital products EMEA for Ashurst Advance Digital. In his role, he oversees the design and creation of new tech-driven products for core practice groups and industries, and also leads the EMEA digital services team focused on helping practice groups and lawyers deliver matters more efficiently and cost-effectively through the use of technology.