

Issue 10

Trailblazers and Trailblazing 101

'Dodgy Prostate' Simulators,
Menopause Vests, and
Cognitive Diversity, Anyone?



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Meet the Tech Ambassadors



Chrissie Lightfoot
Chair and
Chief Tech Advisor



Sucheet Amin
(aka Such)
CEO and Founder, inCase



Chris Williams
Legal Tech Expert,
Betty Blocks



Martyn Best
Managing Director,
Document Direct



David Wybourne
Head of Legal AI,
Cloud Business



Adam Pope
CEO, Spencer Churchill



Priscilla Sinder
Director, Property Conveyancing
Consultancy (PCC)



Dana Denis-Smith
CEO, Obelisk Legal
Support Solutions
Limited & Founder of
First 100 Years



Maya Markovich
Executive Director, Justice
Tech Association; Legal
Innovation Consultant; Growth
Startup & CEO Advisor



Nicola Shaver (Nikki)
CEO & Co-Founder,
Legaltech Hub; Adjunct
Professor, Cardozo School
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Dr Sally Penni MBE
Barrister at Law,
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Master of the Bench at
Gray's Inn, London



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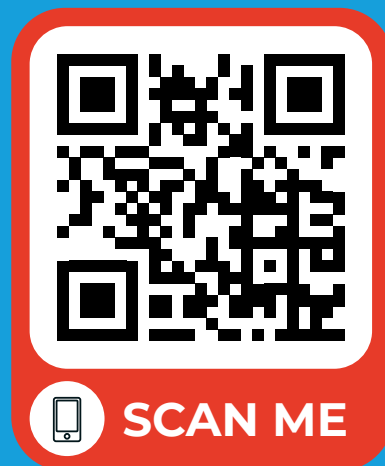
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ROUNDTABLE

Welcome

SHE'S BACK! *Whizz-bang* *Whoosh* *Shriek* *Splat* *Boom!*... *The Naked Lawyer* blazes into the room at a reckless speed on her abused Segway and screeches to a halt, narrowly missing the drinks table as the first Muse Bomb smokes the deck...

You may recall that *The Naked Lawyer* happily left the Tech Ambassador Board to argue amongst themselves and get on with everything on their own over the summer, peacefully – aka without the noise and disturbance that customarily accompanies her ladyship – whilst enduring an unbearable heatwave in the last edition.² She waltzed off, bikini-clad, in search of something which I presume many of us are looking for right now: some semblance of stability, continuity, comfort, community and reassurance amongst the mayhem, turmoil and uncertainty in what appears to be such an unkind, unpredictable, and ungodly world.

Albeit she was sorely missed by the Technology in Law Law Land (TiLLL) tech ambassador family, nothing changed during her absence, or since her return. The world, and Law Law Land, remain in a fragile and volatile state.

We are all, no doubt, deeply concerned with current world affairs. They affect us all as we continue to look ahead for a way through the present challenges and contemplate what will hopefully be a much brighter future.

Not being a shrinking violet when things start going pear-shaped, *The Naked Lawyer* was determined to take whatever control she could in shaping her own destiny and that of the TiLLL Board by blazing a trail and going where others may fear to tread. Taking the initiative, she ventured forth during the blistering 2022 summer of discontent to find that "next huge thing" in Law Law Land. If you missed *The Naked Lawyer's* trip abroad and the mischief she got up to, you can find the write up in her 'solo' article, 'Winter Is Coming! In Search of Stability, Continuity and The Next HUGE Thing', on my LinkedIn profile.²

Speaking of blazing a trail, aren't we blessed that there are so many wonderful trailblazers we can look to for courage, inspiration, and hope? Male and female pioneers and power-influencers, whether lawyer, techie, or business strategist aficionados (BTW). Striking personalities who aren't afraid to stick their necks out or put their money where their mouths are in the march to steward LegalTech, LawTech and JusticeTech in a positive direction. It's a blessing, I reckon, that in the wider world and the legal ecosystem we have such brave souls.

As Modern Law Magazine is celebrating women in the law and tech this month, and women trailblazers in particular, it makes sense that the TiLLL Board should also discuss this fabulous topic. However, *The Naked Lawyer* and I would like to highlight not just the ladies, but also the gentlemen who have, and continue, to blaze a trail. That said, I did feel it necessary to invite a handful of female guests, who are, of course, all phenomenal lawyers and/or tech entrepreneurial trailblazers in Law Law Land, to join the roundtable debate in order to bring the male to female input ratio into balance for such a crucial debate. *wink*

And so, before we begin the usual roundtable sparring with our eclectic bunch of TiLLL ambassadors, permit me to introduce you to our four female guest tech ambassadors who will be contributing to this issue:

Dana Denis-Smith – CEO of Obelisk Legal Support Solutions Limited & Founder of First 100 Years.

Maya Markovich – Executive Director at Justice Tech Association; Legal Innovation Consultant; Growth Startup & CEO Advisor.

Nicola Shaver (Nikki) – CEO and Co-Founder of Legaltech Hub & Adjunct Professor at Cardozo School of Law.

Dr Sally Penni MBE – Barrister at Law at Kenworthy's Chambers; Master of the Bench at Gray's Inn, London (Master Penni MBE) & Podcast host: Talking Law + The Law and Guidance Podcast.

applause *smiles* *hand-shakes* all around...

BOOM!! Another Muse Bomb explodes... Obviously *The Naked Lawyer*, now rested, rejuvenated and revitalised from her travels, and clearly agitated by the lack of attention and instant progress as soon as she entered the room, is keen to crack on. Hmm... We'd better not test her patience further. It would be wise to begin...

¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6978612714763886593/>
² <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6986211513157967872/>



Trailblazer

Okay gang let's hit it. When you hear the words "trailblazing" and "trailblazer" what do they mean to you? And, what meaning do they have for you particularly in relation to the legal world?

Martyn: A trailblazer has such a romantic resonance – an explorer, an adventurer, a blazer of trails not yet blazed. Do we not think of the Wild West, or space exploration, or great challenges across huge distances, with the outcome unknown? So, what are we doing discussing such evocation here? My answer would be that this is fertile ground for trailblazing! We occupy a broadly non-trailblazing environment, where even the existence, or the mere thought of the existence, would repel us. So, of course, we who inhabit Law Land would delight in this – and we welcome and recognise trailblazers with joy and delight.

Thanks, as ever, for kicking us off, Martyn. A rather unexpected and unusually philosophical start if you don't mind me saying. *wink* What do the rest of you think?

Such: I prefer to answer this by sharing what I 'see' in my mind's eye. I see a person, focussed, energetic, committed and challenging the status quo by setting new paths that others happily follow. In relation to the legal world, I see a person breaking new ground in the business of law. Someone who is not afraid to break through walls by being innovative and creative for the benefit of everyone.

David: To me, the terms suggest someone who is trying to make a difference by subverting the norm, or just doing something better than everyone else. In the legal world, I think a trailblazer is someone who questions the status quo, who looks for better ways to deliver their services, all to the ultimate benefit of their clients, in-house teams, or their organisation as a whole.

Sally: To me, it means people who have carried on with a determination to make change and lead in the sector on pertinent issues, and in a way that is completely different. In the legal sector, I am especially impressed by the silent trailblazers too, changing the playing field. In the legal world, I think about those who are using software to assist in their preparation of cases, as well as in their billing.

I'm sure you will have something to add to Sally's opinion in relation to using tech, Chris?

Chris: To me, a trailblazer is the first one to do something, someone who is at the forefront. When you cut the word into its component parts you get a very visual image: someone blazing a trail. You picture someone forging and forming a path where none existed before, a path which clears the way for others to follow. Trailblazing means innovating, seeing possibilities, taking risks, being independent, and being different.

Trailblazers in the legal industry, whether a firm or the lawyers within it, are those who dare to blaze a new trail and forge their own path. Those who make changes to the norm, or the usual ways of working and operating. Those focused on new ways to innovate and improve, try and test, adjust and adapt.

In today's digitised world, trailblazing in the legal industry means adopting and leveraging technology to improve internal processes, elevating legal services, and establishing new revenue streams. This means adopting and using technology to mediate the relationship between a firm and its lawyers on the one side, and a firm and its clients on the other.

In the legal world, trailblazing means facing the growing pains and taking the risks of adopting technology. Incorporating new legal technologies into an organisation requires both a workflow and mindset transformation. Implementation means flexibility and change – two things only undertaken by true trailblazers. Legal trailblazers are not only supported by good legal tech tools, they are also building their own digital tools to automate internal processes, improve client services, and establish new revenue streams.

Sucheet Amin
(aka Such)



Do you agree, Dana?

Dana: Trailblazers, to me, have the courage to go into uncharted territory. Mostly out of curiosity or intrigue around what they may find. They are essentially explorers in uncharted waters. In the legal profession, historically, there was not much scope in looking for new territories, except searching for different angles to interpreting decisions or statutes. So, for me, it is refreshing that today's trailblazers challenge the very conservative nature of the profession, not just the product. They challenge how it is built and whether it delivers on its client promise – that's like discovering a whole new continent!

I guess your view is similar to Martyn's, then? That is, a trailblazer is somewhat of an explorer. I agree. However, there are lots of great lawyers out there who might be called a 'trailblazer' because of the quality of their service and results. But in the context of embracing technology, how would you define a 'lawyer trailblazer'? And why? Nikki, let's have your thoughts on this please...

Nikki: A lawyer trailblazer is someone who not only embraces technology in their legal practice, but also moves the needle on "making law better", by continuously looking for new ways to do things and approaching legal processes and workflows with a creative problem-solving lens. Trailblazers will encourage other lawyers to adopt new processes and technologies, and are often the ones who create new technology solutions, lead legal innovation efforts in law firms, corporate legal departments, courts and law schools, or leave the traditional legal practice to establish firms with new business models. Lawyer trailblazers can either continue to practise law while they support change in the industry, or they can leave the practice of law entirely to focus their efforts fully on advancing the profession and making it better.

Again, do you agree, Chris?

Chris: A lawyer trailblazer embraces and leverages technology to optimise, simplify, and facilitate their work so they can constantly take on more clients and provide the best customer service. Trailblazers are those who go above and beyond to not just meet, but to exceed customers' expectations. Legal trailblazers are working to make legal services faster, more transparent, more efficient, and of better quality for their clients.

Lawyer trailblazers are those who are not only capable of identifying issues and opportunities outside and within their organisations, but who connect these to solutions. Increasingly, we are seeing lawyer trailblazers become not only the designers, but the creators of legal tech solutions. Empowered by low-code / no-code technologies like Betty Blocks, lawyers without coding capabilities are empowered to participate in the application development process. Building within an IT-sanctioned and governed environment, users are able to easily, and quickly, develop applications. This means that solutions are being built by those directly experiencing the pain from issues, and involve end-users in the development process.

Backed up by the safe environment of a secure and governed LCNC platform, lawyer trailblazers dare to try and fail. They are the ones who conceptualise and test, iterate and improve. Through agile development processes, they can build applications as minimum viable products (MVPs) and gather user feedback and test to improve. Lawyer trailblazers, thus, are actively conceptualising and building solutions which empower them to improve their client support. The way to do this is two-fold:

1) Building applications which optimise internal workflows and automate manual processes.

By using technology to take over the tasks, workflows, and responsibilities which are repetitive and can be automated, lawyers free up their own time. For example, with an internal Document Review application or an ESG Tool, lawyers eliminate the time spent searching for information, emailing back and forth, or generating documents and reports. Instead, their time is freed up to turn into billable hours and focus on customer services which require their expertise.



Chris Williams
Legal Tech Expert,
Betty Blocks

Creative tech

2) Developing customer-facing applications which digitise existing, and offer new, legal services.

Using LCNC technology, legal teams can build applications which provide clients with digitally enabled access to legal services and expertise. Through a Customer Knowledge Centre, or a client portal for example, clients can independently find the answers to their legal questions 24/7 from anywhere in the world, without having to wait for a lawyer to respond.

Operating in an industry rooted in minimising risks, lawyer trailblazers must swim against the risk-averse current of their surroundings. This means not only diverging in their practices or ways of working, but also adopting a new mindset.

Such: There are probably two types of people that would fit into this phrase: a lawyer who develops new technology, and a lawyer who uses technology that already exists but has never been utilised in the legal sector. Both are challenging in their own right, but a person who was successful in either of these scenarios would well deserve the title of being a “lawyer trailblazer”. These people not only challenge the status quo, they actively set out to prove it. That comes at great personal risk and exposure, which in my mind deserves a huge amount of credit alone. I actually think the phrase “lawyer trailblazer” is meant to sound like the journey there was all positive, but without doubt, the route will be anything but. With that in mind, I’d define a “lawyer trailblazer” as, *someone who has challenged the norm, exposed themselves to personal risk, overcome many obstacles, and taken all of the pain to find a new path for others to follow with ease.*

David: In many ways you could say that any lawyer who’s using technology to do their job better is a trailblazer. That’s because the legal professional has been quite slow to adopt digital technologies, so they’re, by default, early adopters. However, I would go a step further and say that a lawyer trailblazer is also a legal tech advocate – they’re blazing a trail by identifying and deploying the tools that help them work better, but also taking their colleagues and peers with them on the journey. Trailblazers create new paths so others can follow.

David Wybourne

Head of Legal AI,
Cloud Business



With all that has been aired here, who springs to mind as a female LawTech / LegalTech / JusticeTech trailblazer (lawyer or non-lawyer) in the past and present? That is, who should we have watched, and be watching, in the LegalTech / LawTech space? Why?

Martyn: Haha – We need look no further. Our lovely Leader of Law Law Land has broken conventions and has gained wide credibility for being able to deliver contentious, but welcoming, views on how to adapt and change the legal landscape. Let her not blush but be a shining example on what any of us can achieve.

Ohh noooo Martyn, now you’ve gone and done it! PLEASE don’t encourage her!

Too late... *The Naked Lawyer* whizzes across to Martyn and plants a HUGE kiss on his cheek.

guffaws *belly-laughs* *grins* and *winks*...

Come now, there must be others you can think of and share with us, surely?

Martyn: My own knowledge in this area is limited of course, but LawTech entrepreneurs such as Dolores... the bubbly and infectious founder of Eclipse Legal Solutions (Proclaim) spring to mind in the creation of a case management system standard. And other marketers, such as Victoria Moffatt, use tech to good effect in supporting their clients.

David: Electra Japonas and Roisin Noonan at TLB spring to mind. Their oneNDA and oneDPA initiatives optimise the way lawyers work by taking a time-consuming task, contract generation and review, and finding an innovative way to reduce the burden on legal teams. Additionally, their solution helps legal teams reap the benefits of legal tech by creating an environment that’s optimised for automation and the use of artificial intelligence.

Ladies, please do interject and proffer your views. It is, after all, why *The Naked Lawyer* cajoled you to come along.

Hearing her name, *The Naked Lawyer*, right on cue, sidled gracefully and carefully on her trusty Segway alongside Dana, Sally and Nikki, depositing a Muse Bomb at the foot of each of them.

ka-boom! *ka-boom!!* *ka-boom!!!*

Inspired, although somewhat shaken, each in turn were eager to opine:

Dana: Janet Day at BLP was well ahead of her time in her role as CIO of a large law firm. She understood rolling out technology beyond just championing it as new tools emerge. There isn’t much point in tech without adoption, and the creation of a faster and more efficient process. I like the way she brought about technology change, whilst also taking stakeholders along on the journey.

Dana Denis-Smith
CEO, Obelisk Legal Support
Solutions Limited & Founder
of First 100 Years



Sally: I tend to think of Sam Kendrick who has worked in the e-disclosure space for quite some time, and is presently working at eBrief Ready, an Australian software now available in the UK, designed for use in trials by barristers at law. The software has the capacity to revolutionise the way we manage briefs – not underwear from M&S – but the instructions barristers receive from solicitors. eBrief allows updates, as well as additions from solicitors and expert reports, to be uploaded automatically.

When we talk about retention of women in the legal sector, or how beneficial agile and flexible working can be for those with caring responsibilities, I believe embracing technology in the legal space has a real opportunity to shift this issue. Women can work from anywhere, better manage cases, hold conferences from Spain, Italy, the States etc., while also performing their caring duties.

Nikki: I look at someone like Kristen Sunday, Co-Founder and CEO of Paladin, and Partner at LongJump, as a real trailblazer. Kristen founded Paladin with Felicity Levey (Conrad) to help law firms effectively and efficiently manage their pro bono programmes. Not only does Paladin solve a real problem, it also sits in the interesting space between access to justice initiatives and commercial law. Kristen is also a partner at LongJump, a venture capital fund created by founders to support other founders. One of the most interesting things about LongJump is that it hopes to interrupt disparity in funding by providing opportunities to companies founded by women or individuals from traditionally marginalised groups.

I LOVE this, Nikki!! Please do continue...

To me, Kristen is the epitome of a trailblazer because she continues to strive for improvement in the legal industry in everything she does. It’s not a “once and done” effort; she founded Paladin after recognising that pro bono programmes were not as effective as they could be and she wanted to rectify that to the benefit of non-profit and legal aid organisations everywhere. Once she became a founder, she realised the inequity that existed for female-led companies, who were not getting the same opportunities for funding as other companies (both in the legal industry and beyond), and she joined an initiative to change that.

I’m glad you mentioned the funding challenges that women face, Nikki. Personally, I just LOVE what the trailblazer Erin Levine, the divorce attorney and CEO who founded Hello Divorce, is doing currently. With her recent funding round success, I’m super excited to see how Erin and her team intend to go deeper into the divorce lifecycle, to support customers not just through the legal process, but also with the financial, real estate and insurance issues they face in the wake of a divorce.³ Truly inspiring!

³ <https://www.lawnext.com/2022/10/hello-divorce-raises-3-25m-to-span-more-of-the-divorce-lifecycle-including-financial-planning.html?>

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I also greatly admire all those amazing ladies listed in the American Bar Association's 'Women of LegalTech' List (which started in 2015).⁴

Just out of curiosity, a direct question to all of you, have you been a trailblazer in the past, or are you presently, or do you wish to be in the future? Why? What was it that elevated you to that status? Or, what drove you to it?

Martyn: I'd love to be thought of as a trailblazer – but perhaps we shouldn't confuse that for stubbornness and persistence to keep going in the face of slow adoption and reluctance.

Which sort of brings me to think of the qualities a trailblazer needs. In a very small way, the services of Document Direct (and spare me the blushes as I don't often mention us) might be regarded as a minor trailblazer: the recognition of emerging technologies, the identification of a demand not universally realised, the above resistance and doggedness to keep going, and an ability to galvanise a team to join the journey. All good elements of a trailblazer – together with some thick skin, and some scar tissue.

You're doing it again! Don't poke the bear!! You know *The Naked Lawyer* will surely prrrrrrrrrrr and pounce to check out your alleged scars!!!

chuckles *pearly white grins* as the ladies' nod in unison whilst *The Naked Lawyer* cruises past Martyn, eyeing him up like a luxuriously plump fertile lunch...

Swiftly, Such jumped out of his chair and placed his body between her and Martyn, rescuing him from what was inevitably going to be a VERY embarrassing situation. To deflect her attention further, he immediately began:

Such: I would say that I never saw myself as a trailblazer, but I have certainly been referred to as one, particular when it came to creating a platform using mobile app technology to communicate with my clients. At the time, nurturing the idea to improve communications with my clients was the key objective. Technology ended up being the most effective method to achieve that and before I knew it, my firm had the only app of its kind in the legal space back in 2012. Being first probably elevated me to that status but it certainly wasn't a badge I went looking for. I was driven by the goal to improve client service, and my view back in 2011 was that consumers generally were going to change the way they would consume legal services. Over 10 years later, you really cannot imagine a relationship where technology and client service aren't interwoven in any sector. For the legal sector, I've had the privilege to take my small idea and build it into a platform that has served hundreds of thousands of clients.

applause *back-slapping* *cheers* *high-fives* *whoop-whoops* I'm not sure if this was in relation to Such's professional achievement or his saving Martyn from *The Naked Lawyer's* advances. Let's be jubilant and thankful with either!

Moving on, let's hear from the ladies please as you are all, undoubtedly, venerated trailblazers IMHO *wink*...

Nikki: I didn't set out to be a trailblazer, but I have a strong sense of justice and a passion for trying to make things better. When I started working in law firms, I was struck by how deeply hierarchical the environment was, almost to the point of dysfunction. Law was my fourth degree, so I was a little older than most associates when I started working and probably more prone to questioning the way things were done. It didn't make sense to me that we were staying in the office until 2 or 3 a.m., manually stamping documents and photocopying binders for trial, or that a barrister could call me to his chambers just to tidy a brief. It didn't seem right that I would spend all hours organising evidence for a client meeting and then couldn't join that meeting because the relationship belonged to the partner.

Nicola Shaver (Nikki)
CEO and Co-Founder, Legaltech Hub & Adjunct Professor at Cardozo School of Law



⁴ https://www.americanbar.org/groups/departments_offices/legal_technology_resources/resources/WomenofLegalTech/

Justice

When I started working in legal innovation, it was exciting to see new technology and new approaches that had the potential to disrupt that dysfunction and make law better for everyone involved. Law is meant to be a service to society, not a protected guild of artisans. We have allowed law firms and lawyers to develop into an exclusive, largely homogeneous, club, with members earning fortunes at the expense of diversity and genuine client service. That's not what the law was meant to be. It's not an association of the 1%, it's a covenant between a government and its people that lawyers are meant to uphold, in good faith. Lawyers – even commercial lawyers – are servants of society.

I have a passion for driving positive change in the industry, and I try to embody that in everything I do. I created Legaltech Hub not just because I wanted buyers to be able to easily find the solutions they needed to solve legal problems, but also because I wanted to ensure that lesser known vendors were getting a similar platform and visibility with buyers as companies with larger market share and deep pockets.

I strongly believe that change can only occur if all verticals of the legal ecosystem work together. We often forget how important law school and legal education is in the quest for change. Law firms cannot hire more diverse lawyers if there isn't a pipeline for diverse applicants, so law school entry requirements and processes need to be reviewed. Lawyers won't use technology in their practice unless they understand why it's important and how the business of law is evolving, so education at law school needs to change. I started teaching a legal education course at Cardozo Law School in New York so that I could be part of solving some of these problems at the entrance of the funnel.

Affecting the type of systemic change we are talking about when it comes to making the law better requires collective action and advocacy from many trailblazers.

Sally: As an award-winning barrister at law of 23 years' experience, and as the founder of Women in the Law UK, I feel humbled to be referred to as a trailblazer on the issue of gender. I was driven by the need to have visible role models in law, as well as showcasing what the sector could look like. Furthermore, I have a passion for diversity, equality and inclusion. My passion to drive this agenda was based on the need to have allies. Male allies are crucial to the issue of gender equality, for example, and the retention of women in senior roles in the legal sector. I wanted to show the many routes one could take in becoming a lawyer. The many backgrounds that exist in the law.

Women in the Law UK has over 27,000 LinkedIn followers, and a similar number of members. Although we are not able to support the sector through professional development, we showcase the emerging technologies available. I have also been a trailblazer in podcasting as one of the first legal podcasts with over 250,000 downloads in the UK alone, and listened to globally in 12 countries with over 150,000 international downloads. The podcasts showcase diverse voices in law of both men and women who are trailblazing in our sector. From Lord David Pannick KC and Judge Robbie Rinder, to Harold Brako, the Head of the Manchester office of Addleshaw Goddard.

Maya: When I first made the jump from law practice over to LegalTech provider, I had a very steep learning curve on the tech side. Understanding things like how to draft requirements, design wireframes, run projects, obtain feedback from users, plan roadmaps – were all things I had to learn from scratch. At the time, I also had to overcome fairly significant scepticism, mostly from male tech professionals, that I had much to offer. It took a lot of time for them to come around to the understanding that someone without a tech background – who doesn't fit the typical Silicon Valley engineer image – would have something valuable to offer in a tech company. But I was hired to bring the user voice into the decision-making process, and ultimately, I made an impact.

Dr Sally Penni MBE
Barrister at Law,
Kenworthy's Chambers;
Master of the Bench at
Gray's Inn, London



An interesting and very observant point, Maya. Let's pursue this further...

Do you think tech has empowered women to break into traditionally male-dominated legal fields?

David: I think tech can help. In fact, my own experience during lockdown might point to one of the ways tech can help women break into male-dominated fields. I'm male and, if you've met me, you'll know I'm quite tall and ex-Rugby player-shaped, and therefore, I have a certain presence in a room. This has helped me enormously during my professional career as people tend to pay attention to me. But during lockdown, and subsequently, we've all been using online collaboration and communication tools for meetings and working together. So 'Big Dave' has been relegated to a small box on your screen, taking up the same amount of room as everyone else. So, I've had to learn new ways to get my voice heard and not rely on my gender or size to get people's attention.

I've also noticed during online meetings that when people – typically men – try to talk over other people – generally women – and try to take control, it's much more noticeable than in a face-to-face session. I think this is helping women get their voices heard as this behaviour is more likely to be called out and therefore, perhaps, it's more equitable online.

Remember Jackie Weaver? Those male councillors epitomise the arrogance and privilege many men in positions of 'power' have, and we can all imagine what a typical parish council meeting would be like with them in the room. But being a Zoom call, Jackie Weaver did have the capacity to shut them down!

How can tech solutions empower female trailblazers and male trailblazers at law firms and legal departments?

Sally: By allowing both genders to be authentic in their approaches to legal services. Tech can provide the equality.

And have you been surprised to find women trailblaze in areas you thought were the domain of men, Sally?

Sally: Yes, in so many ways, in AI and in the metaverse. Also, at the Bar in commercial law and arbitration. For example, Brie Stevens-Hoare KC, at Gatehouse Chambers.

Chris: The tech stack at a legal firm or in-house department plays a huge role in the empowerment of a trailblazer. While trailblazing comes down to the right attitude and mindset, the infrastructure has to be in place to enable a trailblazer to go above and beyond. Without the right tech stack, innovation frontrunners in legal departments do not have the right tools with which to blaze a trail.

Low-code / no-code (LCNC) development empowers users with no coding capabilities to create their own digital solutions and applications. LCNC platforms are, at their core, a trailblazing tool: enabling users to independently forge their own path. By providing their legal department with a LCNC platform, like Betty Blocks, organisations truly empower their female and male trailblazers.

LCNC development, thus, enables female and male trailblazers to take development into their own hands, become problem-solvers and innovators. Rather than having to approach an IT department with an idea, or build a business case for management, lawyers can get started immediately and quickly.

Not only this, but LCNC development also empowers female and male legal trailblazers to be better and more efficient at their jobs. With Betty Blocks, lawyers can build bespoke applications which automate internal processes and digitise workflows, alleviating their own tasks and responsibilities. This means that lawyers have more time and space to provide top-notch legal services. Meanwhile, by eliminating these strenuous and repetitive tasks, lawyers are provided with the headspace to create truly trailblazing applications for their clients.

Equality

Lead the Change

To be a trailblazer do you already have to be an esteemed female team member amongst your fellow colleagues?

Dana: No. You have to have a good idea and keep at it. Courage not status makes the best trailblazers.

Sally: No, you do not. Hard work and dedication go a long way. Support and sponsorship from colleagues of all genders is the key.

And how do you become a trailblazer?

Sally: Such a big question. In my view, with preparation, resilience and determination, and looking after your wellbeing and wellness.

Hmmm, a popular subject, trend and point there, Sally. I'll pick up on that later. Duly noted. *wink*

Maya: Focus in on unaddressed challenges that fascinate you, and think big about what hasn't been tried yet. Try to take every opportunity offered, even if you think you're not quite ready for it. Doing things for the first time is challenging, but it leads to professional growth, emotional intelligence, and can be kind of addictive. My career path has often been characterised as a series of firsts – nearly every step has been different or adjacent to what I did before, pulling up a chair to a different table and learning from new people.

Martyn: I'll keep this simple – don't plan to be a trailblazer, just be true to yourself.

Does LegalTech level the opportunity playing field in law firms and legal departments? How? Why?

Dana: There is a lot more investment into the LegalTech space which is needed to give us the runway to build successful challenger businesses, but it certainly provides new tools that deliver quality work. If anything, the playing field is expanding with tech and that's a good thing – but equally, the opportunities were made possible by legislating to open up the legal marketplace to non-traditional models through statute.

Maya: I see an increasing number of women in legal innovation roles. In firms and legal departments, there are some remarkably equitable innovation teams worldwide, with women leading teams that are doing exceptional, forward-thinking, and impactful work. LegalTech offers a path to those, like me, who were dissatisfied with the practice of law, wanted to do something broader and more creative, and now utilise their legal expertise to affect concrete change in the industry.

For LegalTech founders themselves, however, there's no denying that those who get funding and attention are disproportionately male – by a ratio of around 98% to 2%, despite data that women-led companies deliver better returns on investment – but I think this discrepancy is more about VC than LegalTech per se.

Can you provide any advice for someone who wants to take the lead in disrupting and/or innovating within their organisation to help them lead the charge and make a positive difference and impact?

David: Choose your battles carefully. It's inevitable that you will meet resistance when you want to take a different path. People don't like change, especially lawyers. Therefore, I would advise starting small and building your reputation as someone who delivers results and positive change, before initiating significant transformations to your operating model. This way you build trust and support from your colleagues and the business, so that when you do propose something bigger, they listen.

Chris: Leading the change means guiding others. And guiding others means convincing them that the trail you are blazing is the one your organisation should take. When it comes to onboarding and implementing new LegalTech solutions, this means proving the value and getting user buy-in – building a business case.



Maya Markovich
Executive Director,
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Building a business case always starts with identifying a problem and a need for change. Start with your team members and colleagues, gather knowledge on whether they are facing the same struggles and limitations as you are. If enough people have the same problem, then there is a clear urgency to create the solution. Use this to convince stakeholders that the solution investment is worth it. Remember that, when it comes to onboarding new technology, your LegalTech provider should not just be offering a tool, but should also be an implementation partner. LegalTech companies can play a huge role in providing training, best practices, resources, and ensuring end-user adoption.

Here's what Betty Blocks has done to provide this support: we launched the '4-Week Guarantee' - the perfect empowerment tool for legal trailblazers. With a fixed price, pre-defined scope, and assured timeline, the '4-Week Guarantee' delivers a customised LegalTech solution within four weeks. This eliminates the risks usually involved with application development: over budget or time, or solutions not matching end-users needs. Instead, legal teams are empowered to achieve success quickly and immediately, reaching their first success milestone on their application development journey within four weeks.

Besides providing a bespoke application, the '4-Week Guarantee' also familiarises legal teams with the process of application scoping, establishing requirements, setting timelines and budgets, and the development itself. This establishes the concrete benefits and ROI of LCN development, which can be used as leverage to expand investment. The '4-Week Guarantee' is thus the first success milestone on an organisation's application development journey.

Such: Start with the problem you are looking to solve. Be honest...is it a bit of a pain but tolerable, in which case is any change going to have a real impact? Or, is so unbearable that if it could be solved, it would have an impact so far and wide that you'd struggle to guess how big? The latter is the problem you want to tackle. Naturally, that will feel like climbing a mountain but just break it down into small steps.

Start with the 'why' – why does this problem exist? Then move to the outcome – where do you want to get to? A big mistake, in my view, is that people rush to start to solve the problem before they truly understand (a) what it is, and (b) what should it be? Get real clarity on where you are and where you want to be. Then start to find ways to move from (a) to (b) by speaking to colleagues both inside and outside the organisation. From experience, most innovations need to have a business case – how is this going to benefit the business? You're likely to get more support if it is going to create efficiency that you can relate to £'s. Don't read that as 'it's all about the money'. An innovation that improves client service will lead to retention, lower complaints, and in turn lower £'s spent in time handling disgruntled clients.

Maya: If you're looking to find ways to better deliver legal service to your clients, or work better with your colleagues, you need to be customer-centric and start thinking about your work as a service that we are delivering to our internal and external clients. Start by identifying one problematic process, then break it down into steps and map out the bottlenecks, input, and outputs. Potential solutions will reveal themselves and give you a great starting point for discussion and concrete change. Legal professionals often violently disagree that their work is a process, because they are an advisor, and analyse complex situations – this is true, but there are parts of all our jobs that can be broken down into steps and made more efficient.

Jump in and start with some small change management strategies you can apply in the legal business context. Change management of a particular initiative is proactively managing the points between idea and outcome. A few core concepts can almost always be applied: thoughtfully anticipating impacts and potentially defensive behaviour; gathering insights from all stakeholders, not just the decision-maker; reassuring affected people of what will *not* change; setting expectations; evaluating risk; and, measuring your success.

Even just by shifting your mindset to understanding that change is not easy, and asking these questions in your team without getting hung up on specific stages or resources, you'll begin to see the benefits.

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Priscilla, you have been terribly quiet so far today. I know you approach things in a structured way, therefore, I'm sure we would all welcome your reply to this question. Please share your thoughts before *The Naked Lawyer* does her thing. You do know I have ZERO control over her mischief, right?!...

Priscilla: In my opinion, the best advice is to have a fully baked plan before taking the lead in disrupting / innovating within an organisation.

Some may be more daring and advise you to just take the risk and see what happens. If you are not representing an organisation this may be possible, but if you are, you must approach your seniors/board members with a fully baked plan. The organisation will always have its reputation to maintain, and this is its ultimate position. Thus, before you want to take a role where trailblazing is the ultimate goal, speak with your seniors/board members to see whether the move is in line with the organisation's ethos.

I suggest the fully baked plan involves several stages:

Research:

Research your idea fully, such as:

- What is it that you want to change, and why?
- How will it impact the business?
- How will it impact the organisation's reputation (negative and positive)?
- Who is your audience?
- How do you gain the attention of your audience?
- How do you get noticed?
- What is the innovation – is it a product you wish to launch, educating the community, a service?
- What is the purpose of this innovation?
- Do you need to upskill?
- How do you maintain its longevity and legacy?

Stay engaged:

Always keep your seniors/board members in the loop. A good metric of this is to reduce the gap of your goal with their hesitation, the less hesitant they are the closer the gap, and in theory, the closer you are with their full buy-in. Remember a lot of lawyers are risk-averse, this is part of who we are, therefore, breaking the mould is ambitious and exciting but also goes against our primal instinct. Thus, appreciate and respect the hesitation from seniors/board members, especially if they are of a different generation to you. But at the same time engage with them at each stage of innovation/disruption.

Marketing budget:

Have a marketing budget prepared. It is not by chance that there are some leaders who have a large marketing presence. In my opinion, it does not necessarily mean that they have the ideal service/product being offered to the market, but if they are able to connect to the right parties through marketing then this will open many doors. The bigger the marketing budget the more presence you will gain. That is not to say that those with a smaller marketing budget will not get the recognition, rather one should then be astute with whom to market. In this way, you are targeting the audience, rather than approaching a mass group.

Another piece of advice is to increase your profile by using social media, even if you are a novice in the use of social media, invest in a company that can increase your profile which will help glamourise your service/product.

Expertise:

Although you may be the lead, you are not an expertise in all things, and therefore, create a team around you of experts. Share the success, as success will be quicker to achieve. A successful organisation is made of strands of people who can bring something new to the table; as the lead you can decide whom you want to bring to the table, but it should not be only you, especially if you are part of an organisation. For example, the organisation's marketing manager should be part of this team so that they can provide optimum marketing strategies for you. Perhaps even encompass junior staff who can help you with research, the more research the better, and then as the lead you can cherry-pick the best of the crop.



Priscilla Sinder
Director, Property
Conveyancing Consultancy

Planning

Prepare

Upskill:

Upskilling is a very precious tool. You will need to invest in this new skill and that means investing in you. If you are part of an organisation, revert to your research plan and provide your seniors/board members with evidence of why they need you to upskill. If approved, it is up to you to take this avenue further. The easy part is to take a course to learn new skills, but the hard part is knowing what you do with your new skills afterwards. There is no point simply going on a course, thinking you have upskilled and then wasting these skills. With the new skills you have learnt you now need to put them into practice, and this is done by writing articles and sharing with the community. I would say once you are at this stage you are only now beginning to show that you are a trailblazer. Everything before this was the preparation stage.

Invest:

You have new skills, you are writing articles, you are doing podcasts, but it does not stop there, start to expand your social community online and in person. An easy measure of success here is to see who your network is. If it is the same community before taking on this new project, then you need to spread your wings further. However, if you are connecting with people who are not necessarily in your field but share a common interest with you, then this is positive. I say this because taking the lead of innovation/disruption means that disruptive minds come from different expertise, for example, conveyancing and technology is a fusion that has been there for around 15 years, but it has only now come to fruition, since the pandemic. Thus, a disruptive property solicitor would have technology experts as part of their LinkedIn community, for example.

Be a thought-leader:

Provoke debate and be invigorating in your argument in encouraging the need for change. However, *when* you do this is key. Entering the market as a trailblazer may not be beneficial if you are too early. For example, although this is not related to the legal market, it provides food for thought. In 2016, a friend of mine had the Deliveroo idea, however, at that time there was no real need for this service, the market did not have the appetite for it. If the idea had sparked in 2019 perhaps this would have been a different outcome for my friend. Therefore, as a trailblazer you also need to be smart and aware of the economy and those surrounding you. Move too quick and the ship is still docking, move too slow and the ship has sailed, therefore, move in line with the waves.

Moving fields:

As part of being a thought-leader, you may see your career change focus a little. You will always keep your roots as your main structure, but you may start to gain confidence and branch off into different areas. This is a positive change as you are now provoking your thoughts and putting them into action – this is the next stage of trailblazing, in my opinion.

There is no end:

Once you are a trailblazer / you have taken on the lead and shown your organisation your new skill, you want to continuously polish your new skill as you now have the roadmap on how to trailblaze.

You should not try to be a jack of all trades, master of none, in our community. Be the lead in one skill, master that, be a thought-leader and focus on this new skill. You will see opportunities knocking on your door as an expert of this innovation/disruption. With this you will start to gain exposure for the firm and yourself, and once this happens, you know that you have been a success in taking a lead role in innovation/disruption within an organisation.

Fabulous input, Priscilla, I had a feeling you'd have plenty to say and share.

Similarly, everyone, can you provide any advice for someone who wants to pioneer and disrupt the legal world per se, utilising technology, to make a positive difference for:

- a) clients / customers / consumers;
- b) legal personnel, aka law students, trainees, solicitors, barristers, general counsel;
- c) law firms;
- d) legal departments.

Chris: Low-code / no-code (LCNC) platforms like Betty Blocks are designed for independent and innovative pioneering and disrupting. At the core of LCNC development is the idea that anyone can build a legal tech solution. LCNC platforms provide users with the tools to create the solutions to the problems they experience, to build the changes they want to see, to make a positive impact. From clients to legal personnel, to a law firm or legal departments as a whole, LCNC makes a positive difference at every level.

For clients: LCNC development enables the creation of custom-built self-service portals and applications which provide clients with immediate and top-notch legal services. Through these applications, clients are provided with 24/7 access to a law firm's expertise and guidance without needing to involve a legal professional. This provides clients with the digitally enabled, fast, easy, and transparent services they are used to from every sector.

For legal personnel: LCNC platforms empower personnel with the tools to independently build the solutions to their and their clients' needs. Lawyers no longer have to look for off-the-shelf solutions, send requests to their overloaded IT departments, or create business cases to achieve buy-in from management. Instead, lawyers are provided with an IT-sanctioned and governed environment which is easy-to-use, and enables them to build their own solutions within weeks.

For a law firm or legal department: LCNC development allows a law firm or legal department to create bespoke, competitive applications which optimise their legal services and consistently improve their offer. By creating internal applications specifically for lawyers' needs, internal processes and workflows are optimised. This speeds up legal operations while removing tiresome and error-prone manual tasks – making an entire firm more efficient. Meanwhile, LCNC development creates an environment where personnel feel empowered and supported. Not only this, but the backlog and tasks of strained IT departments is relieved as the business can independently create their own applications.

David: In respect to innovating with legal tech, look for areas (tasks and processes) that can be improved without significant disruption to other people, or significant resources in terms of time and financial investment. Also make sure you have an eye on the big picture, where do you want to get to in the next 3-5 years? Make sure you can build on smaller projects, that they help you get to where you want to go.

Such: Be brave. The legal sector is risk-averse. Understandably so...we (yes we, I'm a solicitor) have been trained to be risk-averse. Gather all the information to advise a client and then recommend they take the option with the least risk and exposure to them. Disruption / innovation / creativity breaks tradition because these all carry a high degree of risk. Knowing that, you will meet resistance, plenty of naysayers and some that might be dismissive. Be brave. Don't permit others to weaken your determination or conviction to innovate or disrupt. If it fails, it fails, but you will have given it your best shot which is all we can ask of ourselves. If it works... well the phrase 'I told you so' springs to mind.

Maya: The access to justice crisis is vast and represents a massive opportunity for pioneering change. Over 5 billion people in the world cannot access the legal system because the industry is not set up for consumers, it's set up for lawyers to run as a business. There's a massively underserved population in our communities that is not able to access their rights. Non-profits, NGOs and pro bono are doing unbelievable work but are overwhelmed and under-resourced. We need different models, and technology can and should be part of the solution. JusticeTech, a nascent sector that intersects with LegalTech, FinTech and other verticals, is aiming straight at the heart of this problem with a laser focus on consumer experience/benefit and is experiencing explosive growth, similar to what I saw with LegalTech starting in 2015 but faster. Our recently founded non-profit trade organisation, the Justice Technology Association, is bringing together founders, investors, and advocates to accelerate disruption and positive impact.

In a typically male dominated sector, aka Technology in Law Law Land, do you think it is harder for the views of women to be heard – or do their voices resonate more due to their rarity?

Dana: I would say that women are not heard – there's no critical mass to have those voices heard and they tend to be singled out, and from a 'tech' point of view, I would say they are not seen as credibly geeky. The industry likes lawyers turned technologists, which means that your start in life in the profession still weighs too much, and therefore, excludes those who come from a tech-only background.

Gender

Sally: The sheer volume of men in tech does mean it's harder for women's views to be heard. But this is changing. Women like your good self, Chrissie, are changing this. Due to the rarity of women's voices, I think our voices resonate more due to their rarity.

David: It's interesting because most tech companies are prominently male, especially in customer-facing roles like sales, account management and technical consultancy, but I've been working with a lot of in-house legal teams recently that are more female-dominated. They're the customer so their views must be heard, but you do have a few dinosaurs knocking around who mansplain everything and don't listen to the customer.

I think tech companies and consultancies who have this kind of culture will find it much harder to succeed in this market if they don't listen to the views of women. Those that have greater diversity across all areas of the business – from sales and technical consultancy to product development and support – are more likely to develop solutions and services that genuinely make a difference to legal teams, whatever the gender balance.

Does/should gender really matter if you are good enough?

Sally: Of course, gender should not matter if one is good enough, but sadly it seems to appear as such. Technology should be a space where it does not matter at all. I believe this is what will really trailblaze the sector.

Martyn: Gender should not even enter the equation here. But I guess it probably has, or why would we be on this debate. It's hard for me to answer this as my empathy for discrimination and bias is non-existent – race, colour gender – if you're good enough, you're good enough – FULL STOP. In fact, my only bias would be to have more bias, to welcome diversity of all manner, and to hope to develop the best solution through bringing different perspectives together.



Matthew Syed highlights this philosophy beautifully in REBEL IDEAS where he talks about cognitive diversity. This of course can only happen if we have different life experiences coming together and many of these will be born from our different backgrounds, including the obvious gender origins.

All voices should be heard if we wish to maximise our chances of success – and if an historic typically male-dominated world does not accept that, then we can only say, “Dinosaurs, move over, you have incoming company”.

David: It shouldn't matter at all. But that's not the case as we have overall inequality in the workforce, and in the technology space, a reputation as a male-dominated industry. This can discourage women from pursuing careers in it, and unfortunately, reinforces gender stereotypes that women aren't good at tech. It's nonsense that is still prevalent in some sectors.

Let's pursue this line a bit further, shall we gang? Do women bring any special qualities to the art of trailblazing, which can also include removing false barriers, glass ceilings etc.?

Dana: I would say they bring a wider context – so technically-speaking their solutions can plug into problems slightly differently or simply solve problems that no one else sees.

David: At the risk of being accused of gender stereotyping, I think women are often better at listening than men and are also more empathetic. When it comes to finding solutions to problems and taking a different approach, these are desirable qualities to have. Anyone, women or men, who take the time to listen and really understand a problem or objective from the perspective of the people who are impacted by it, is going to have a much better chance of finding a new path and become a trailblazer.

Martyn: The notion of glass ceilings is a curious one. Is it a barrier created by men to make women think there is an obstacle to progress, or is it an excuse developed by women who either cannot be bothered playing the men's game, or have lost their inner confidence and are grateful of the excuse?

I will repeat – and it's clearly a personal view – there is no glass ceiling; there is no barrier other than the one inside your head! If you want something strongly enough you will find a way to achieve it. I admit that many will fail, because there is narrow-minded (gender) prejudice in the world, but each and every individual can achieve to the best of their potential if they really want to.

Eek We all clocked *The Naked Lawyer* flashing a 'Paddington Bear hard stare' toward Martyn. Methinks you are feeling rather brave today, Martyn, or perhaps you are intentionally provoking her?...

chuckles ***Oohs*** ***teeth-clenching*** by both the ladies and gents as we all hold our breath waiting to see if she is going to react further...

Beating *The Naked Lawyer* to the punch to prevent a far worse onslaught, and inspired by the remnants of earlier Muse-Bombs, I subtly enquired (albeit implicitly making a point).⁵

Do you think that women experiencing the menopause and/or their periods affects their ability to trailblaze? And do you think there are more male trailblazers because they do not experience menopause and/or periods?

exhales and sighs of relief reverberate around the table...

Dana: I don't think so – strategy isn't one month at a time. Having an understanding of our bodies is not a crippling aspect for innovating – it is simply something that needs to be managed, respected and treated with kindness. And I don't think there are more male trailblazers due to biology – it's simply to do with having more opportunities historically; technology requires investment, networks and also fewer family commitments which often women don't have or have too much of.

David: I'm not sure it's specifically because of periods and menopause, but more because of general inequality in the workplace with fewer women in positions that provide them with the opportunity to make their mark. Pregnancy and parenting also has an impact with women more likely to see their career stagnate after starting a family and lose out on opportunities compared to their male colleagues.

Sally: I act for these women and the workplace needs to make reasonable adjustments in order for them to truly trailblaze. In an economic downturn of high inflation and high interest rates, we need every worker to help rebuild the economy. We need menopausal women to thrive and trailblaze.

If men were to experience a 'simulated' period or menopause symptoms, do you think they would be more empathetic toward women who aspire to be trailblazers, and therefore, better support them in the workplace and/or on their trailblazing journey? How? In what way?

David: Definitely. I've heard of a menopause vest that simulates hot flushes which perhaps should be compulsory wearing in all workplaces!⁶ We all need to be more empathetic to create a supportive workplace for both trailblazers and colleagues who just want to do their best in the role they have. Half the workforce experience either a monthly period, or potentially years of menopause symptoms that the other half struggle to relate to. It's encouraging that there has been more openness and understanding about the menopause in recent years, but as a man I'm never going to know what it's really like.⁷

I think what we need is more empathy across the board. Whether someone's experiencing negative health issues, physical or mental, or coping with something else like grief, divorce, identity etc. It's about creating a supportive culture within your organisation so everyone thrives.

⁵ <https://amp-theguardian-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/oct/17/menopause-britain-women-health-economy> – 'It's the menopause, stupid – why Britain can't afford to ignore women's health', The Guardian, 17 October 2022.

⁶ <https://amp-theguardian-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/13/if-men-find-three-minutes-in-a-menopause-simulator-is-no-joke-imagine-a-decade> – Menopause simulator for men.

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/02/world/asia/india-menstrual-campaign.html?smtyp=cur&smid=tw-nytimes> – Campaign in India is simulating menstrual cramps in men as part of an effort to tackle longstanding taboos around periods and raise awareness of more effective hygiene products that can better protect women's health.

I couldn't agree more, David. I'm all for supporting the drive for recognising the impact that the perimenopause (or a period) has on us ladies in relation to our performance and productivity (and potentially trailblazing impact) etc., speaking from experience here BTW!

And YES, 100% of us ladies are affected by them, and YES, we swap period troubles for menopause challenges and may endure ghastly effects that need to be managed from the age of (approximately) 11 to 65 (or more) – a timeframe of some 55 years.

However, in the drive for equality we must also recognise that at least 50% of men suffer from prostate-related issues starting in their forties for the rest of their lives. Ergo, 55 years (or more) for 1 in 2 men, now that humankind is destined to live to the ripe old age of 100 in the not-too-distant future. Due to human longevity, nature has found a way of balancing things out IMHO. That is, both women and men are likely to suffer in equal measure.

I'm willing to wager – without strapping on a 'dodgy prostate' simulator BTW (now there's an idea) – that men who suffer with an enlarged prostate (and the rest) will struggle at work due to similar effects (biologically and mentally), in relation to their performance, productivity and focus (and potentially trailblazing) just as much as women do.

So, when I read that a man was appointed the first "period dignity officer" in Scotland a couple of months ago – and it seems to be that he has no track record on women's health issues BTW –⁸ my immediate thought, being an equal opportunity advocate an'all, was: 'sign me up for "prostate dignity officer" please'... that should level the playing field.

Seriously though, if we are (considering) bringing in new law and/or policies to cater for the female perimenopause, periods, and even 'fertility-treatment leave', surely to avoid being hypocritical and to honour true equal rights, we ought to do the same for men and affect new law and/or policies in relation to prostate matters?

And another thing. The most recent wisdom I read on the perimenopause issue was just a few weeks ago on the Legal Futures website where a post with the title 'Family lawyers and judges "need menopause training"' grabbed my attention.⁹ Huh? Really?! PLEASE DO NOT get me started on this. I simply implore you to read the wee post and draw your own conclusions.

head-tilt *The Naked Lawyer* flashed me a wide grin with a cheeky nod...



**whiz-bang* *whoosh* *zing* *Ker-splat*... Incoming... Muse-Bomb cascaded off the ceiling illuminating the room like a waterfall of stars...*

Oh, alrighty then...

Giving you a very quick summary here, the essence of the article was suggesting that the family law profession needed to be trained on the menopause because (allegedly) family law lawyers (err both male and female lawyers here BTW) do not fully understand or recognise the impact of the menopause on divorce and separation.

8. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ddenissmith_group-defends-hiring-man-as-period-dignity-activity-6965631863956586496-R9ZN?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop –

9. <https://www.legalfutures.co.uk/latest-news/family-lawyers-and-judges-need-menopause-training>

10. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/legalitnews_legal-legaltech-technology-activity-6985211618838073344-xBY?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios

Conclusion

Really?! Ask any perimenopausal / menopausal female family law solicitor / barrister / judge, husband of the same, OR prostate-crippled male family law solicitor / barrister / judge what they think. I'm pretty confident they are human enough, and both intelligent and emotionally intelligent aplenty, to read between the lines and empathise with their clients.

Furthermore, the post suggested that "with the onset of perimenopause in the mid-40s and average age of menopause at 51, there is clear association with the peak time of divorce between ages 45 and 55, where many women are divorcing at a time when menopause or perimenopause is an issue".

Err, "peak time of divorce between ages 45-55", doesn't this also coincide with the life-stage when 50% of men begin to suffer from prostate issues, aka, the mid-40s, and average early fifties, too?

Oh, and also, when you take the average age of when couples marry nowadays, start a family, and the kids grow up and leave the family home, aka trot off to university and the once blissfully happy twosome (often with their union hanging by a thread as they struggle to hold things together for many years) had decided long ago to wait until 'the right time...for the sake of the kids' (aka empty nest) before formally ending the marriage? I guess we've never heard THAT scenario before.

Plus, there's the male 'midlife crisis' syndrome to consider. And I reckon a female mid-life crisis nowadays too BTW!!

Furthermore, let's not forget, all of this is based on a survey by and for women (no bias here, obviously) proffering that 66% suggested the menopause or perimenopausal symptoms "increased domestic abuse and arguments" in their relationships, and 70% said it had "played a role" in their relationship breakdown. Go figure?... It takes two to make and break a marriage...

Err, just hazarding a hugely wild guess here – and I'm just throwing it out there – but *The Naked Lawyer* is willing to bet her Segway, my apartment and pension on what I am about to say, whilst imagining and mimicking trampling over my ex-husband as she slams the front door emphatically behind her on the way out – that if you have a married perimenopausal wife and a prostate-suffering husband, who are both sleep-deprived and in pain regularly, ergo ratty as hell as a result of their combined symptoms in the collective (empty nest) household, then there is a strong likelihood that tempers will flair and they will BOTH be spoiling for Armageddon!

Hmmm, methinks there is more to this "ground-breaking survey of women confirms the link between menopause and divorce" as a sole or primary factor than claimed. Don't you? The 'evil' menopause is possibly one of a plethora of contributing factors, at best, and a namby-pamby cop-out easy excuse for many other serious issues no doubt in play between two exhausted adults, at worst.

One final thing. I couldn't possibly omit mentioning and paying tribute to an iconic trailblazer in Law Law Land, the Godfather of LegalTech himself, Charles Christian. Thank you, Caroline Hill for such a moving memorial and tribute in your recent LinkedIn post, newsletter, and magazine.¹⁰ I was shocked and saddened to hear of his sudden passing in September. As founder of The Orange Rag, aka Legal IT Insider, I admired him greatly. Like many a curious LegalTech enthusiast I suckled on the Rag since its inception.

Charles was a generous and kind soul. Always humorous and witty. He was way ahead of his time, attempting to drive lawyers and law firms to get into 'the cloud' at the turn of the century when lawyers thought of 'the cloud' as fluffy cotton wool balls in the sky.

I recall at the very beginning of my legal futurist consultancy career, Charles stood aside from a speaking and advisory gig in Scandinavia and recommended to the client I do it instead. It was a big break for me at that time (many years ago) even though Charles saw it as nothing more than a small gesture. He was a lovely man, who quite literally formed the LegalTech community.

If I were to choose, highlight and honour only one trailblazer in Law Law Land, it would be Charles Christian. Rest in peace, Charles. You will always be remembered...

I am in no doubt that flights of angels blazed thee to thy rest. xx

By Chrissie Lightfoot
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