

# mayfair times

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## John Caudwell

IN HIS MAYFAIR MEGA-MANSION

PLUS: BRIDAL SPECIAL AND  
WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL'S  
NEW LEADER



# LEGAL SOLUTIONS SIMPLIFIED

Via Legalis offers best in class legal consultancy and legal management services across multiple areas of law. It was recently recognised as the Best General Legal Consultancy (London) in SME News Legal Awards 2020. Here, Lev Klyuvgant tells us about his practice and its novel concept.

## **WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?**

I studied law at the LSE. Afterwards, I joined the ‘magic circle’ international law firm Linklaters LLP and spent the last 11 years there, specialising in commercial dispute resolution. After experiencing law in a conventional corporate setting, I wanted to do something where I could still use my legal experience but also provide practical guidance in an effective and more modern way.

## **TELL US ABOUT YOUR PRACTICE**

Via Legalis is designed to be the client’s first and only point of call for all things legal - not just for legal assistance but also for minimising the practical inconvenience and hassle of dealing with a legal issue.

Not knowing what to do about a legal issue can cause panic and lead to poor decisions and choices that will be harder and more expensive to rectify later. We can eliminate this anxious experience by helping clients with the necessary practical and legal steps as soon as a legal issue arises.

## **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

Initially, we can consider any legal issue. Depending on its nature, we can either deal with it ourselves or use our trusted industry contacts and market knowledge to select the most appropriate specialist candidates for it.

In the latter scenario, our legal management services can significantly free up clients’ time by reducing their day-to-day involvement in the process - they won’t be overwhelmed with correspondence, lengthy documents, administrative matters, etc.

## **WHAT IS YOUR ‘TYPICAL CLIENT’?**

Most of our clients are individuals with personal and/or business legal issues, start-ups and small businesses. There is usually an international element as well. Our



LEV KLYUVGANT

Russian-speaking clients also benefit from interacting with us in their language. However, we don't have a particular client type and are open to anyone who needs assistance.

**IS THERE AN ANALOGY WITH ANOTHER INDUSTRY?**

The role of an interior designer. With the benefit of their expert insight and advice, you can discuss and agree with them what you want and how to achieve it. They would source all the necessary items, appropriate workforce and supervise the implementation of the project, consulting with you as required. You don't need to hunt for furniture or interact with the contractors yourself and you have a single point of contact with whom you can always discuss any aspect of your project throughout its term.

**WHAT'S THE DIFFICULTY IN SELECTING A LEGAL SPECIALIST?**

The English legal services market is extremely overcrowded. Finding options is easy but choosing the right one(s) is far more difficult (and important). There can be significant variations in size, reputation, specialisms and, of course, cost. Using "the more expensive, the better" approach can lead to bad choices.

There is also the matter of approaching them. You don't want to be a 'walk in' or be scrabbling for a way to be introduced to a decision-maker. It won't make for a good start of your working relationship.

For a meaningful selection process, you need guidance and contacts of a market insider.

**WHY IS LEGAL MANAGEMENT SO IMPORTANT?**

Breakdowns in law firm and client communications are extremely common. There may be various reasons - assumed knowledge, poor engagement or communication skills, language barrier, mentality clash etc. This can derail the process or result in an unpleasant experience. Having someone who can either directly engage in discussions in the 'specialist language' or 'translate' it makes a big difference to effectiveness, efficiency, progress and experience of the process.

It's common that clients don't engage fully with the legal process because of lack of time, interest,

understanding or any combination of these. At the same time, law firms often have their own expectations of client engagement. As with communications, it's important to have someone who can balance the level of client engagement so that it doesn't jeopardise the process but, at the same time, doesn't overwhelm the client.

**ANY COMMON ISSUES YOU COME ACROSS?**

The most common is 'self-diagnosis' of a legal issue. Someone would contact me for help with particular area(s) of law or legal issue(s). Sometimes they are correct, but often they aren't and we need to 're-diagnose' it and what's required.

**Some practical ones:**

► Dropping guard because of pre-deal euphoria and neglecting to include important contractual protection in a new relationship. The usual logic is either "it won't happen to us" or it's a "formality" standing in the way of closing the deal that can be dealt with later. At the start of a new relationship, a bitter fallout usually seems just a theoretical possibility, but you need to be contractually protected if things go wrong. They often do.

► Confusing personal (and usually emotional) view of fairness with what the court will consider just. The two views are formed very differently – one is subjective and emotional and the other is objective and factual. For this reason, the two often don't correspond but it still takes people by surprise.

► Equating a final judgment with financial recovery. A losing party could refuse to comply with a judgment or have no assets within easy reach. Enforcement of a judgment can become a costly and protracted saga. Realistic likelihood of recovery should always be considered separately from the strength of your case.

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