



Barristers' chambers gets conference-led competitive edge

“The direct benefits to me in carrying out my professional duties are immense. I now have a combination of conferencing technologies at my fingertips so that, whatever the circumstances, I can communicate effectively with clients, colleagues, and expert witnesses wherever they may be.”

Leslie Keegan
Senior Barrister
7BR

BT Conferencing helps 7BR broaden its services and become a more sustainable business with multi-media collaborative tools

Client

Barristers' chambers 7BR (the name comes from its address at 7 Bedford Row in London) has been in business since 1956. Today its 80-plus members are highly rated in every area in which they practice, ranging from crime and clinical negligence to commercial law and personal injury. 7BR people regularly feature in headline cases such as the IPCC review into the shooting of Jean Charles De Menezes and the lottery rapist case. In 2000 it became one of the first sets of chambers to be awarded the BarMark, and in 2004 it gained the Legal Services Commission's Quality Mark award.

Arranging a face-to-face meeting was inevitably a tedious affair and slowed things down for our clients. There had to be a better way.”

The forward thinking chambers considered using conferencing as a possible solution. Not only driven by customer service issues such as those outlined by Leslie Keegan, 7BR was also keen to improve communications and become a more sustainable business. It investigated the marketplace and settled on solutions from BT Conferencing.

Challenge

7BR is a market leader in the use of new technology to improve legal processes. Leslie Keegan, a 7BR Senior Barrister specialising in clinical negligence, sets out an example: “In my field one has to deal with medical experts who are often located outside London and always incredibly busy.

Tim Willis of CTS¹, who acts as IT Director for 7BR, explains the choice of BT Conferencing: “BT is a leading name in conferencing, but what stood out was that its people really understood the intricacies of the legal world. The BT Conferencing team was able to provide an incisive appraisal of how its services could help 7BR be a more collaborative business. Equally importantly there was no ambiguity over pricing and they used plain language, not technical jargon.”

The BT differentiators

- Market leading portfolio of conferencing services covering all media – video, audio, and web – together with comprehensive support services
- Product and technology agnostic positioning, providing customers with an independently assessed conferencing solution
- Deep understanding of customer needs in vertical industry sectors and horizontal application areas
- Global reach with the ability to provide Professional Services for integration, implementation, and user training wherever the need occurs

¹. CTS (Chambers Technology Support) provides IT services to 7BR

A BT Conferencing case study

7BR

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Tim Willis
IT Director
7BR



Solution

7BR chose a mixture of video, web, and audio conferencing services to address areas of its business where it could see that process improvements could quickly be made.

LifeSize video conferencing

The 7BR video conferencing service provided by BT is based upon a high definition product from LifeSize. Not only is this able to communicate with video conferencing products from other manufacturers, but also it works on ISDN or IP connections. Tim Willis says: “It automatically detects the type of line that is being used, which eliminates any technical hassle.” 7BR also took advantage of the Priority One Care service package from BT Conferencing, which provided valuable enhanced support during the bedding in period.

Returning to the clinical negligence case, Leslie Keegan says: “The dedicated LifeSize video conference facility simplifies the process of arranging and holding meetings. In most cases the experts have a similar facility at their hospitals or universities and we can get all parties together in no time.” In the wider sense, 7BR barristers will naturally continue to travel to meet lay and professional clients where that is the most appropriate course of

action. But where it is more convenient for clients, or where time is of the essence, the new LifeSize video conferencing suite will be the preferred medium.

7BR is also offering the video conferencing suite to other solicitors and barristers in London who do not have access to such virtual meeting facilities. Further information about booking procedures and costs can be obtained from clerks@7br.co.uk.

WebEx web conferencing

In cases where the distant party does not have a video conferencing facility, 7BR is able to use a web conferencing service called WebEx. This enables barristers to link other sets of chambers and clients' homes, for example, over the internet using a simple webcam.



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Petra Bailey
Marketing Co-ordinator
7BR

Leslie Keegan says: “WebEx is incredibly useful where I have clients who have a disability, which includes children. My solicitor is able to go to someone’s home with a laptop fitted with a webcam and link me up in a conference with both the client and remotely located experts.” 7BR is well aware of its corporate responsibilities and, while its premises naturally have full access for the disabled, WebEx provides a much more socially inclusive solution. “In the past,” Leslie continues, “such meetings would have imposed great burdens on the families concerned.”

Another area where web conferencing has helped 7BR to innovate is in the high quality seminars it runs for barristers and solicitors. A powerful aspect of the services offered by 7BR, these cover complex areas such as clinical negligence in healthcare. WebEx has taken such events to an entirely new level. “Always popular here in London, where people can easily travel to 7BR, web conferencing has opened the seminars up to a whole new audience around the country,” explains Tim Willis.

Using WebEx a person anywhere in the UK – or abroad for that matter – can attend a 7BR seminar via their desktop, laptop, or even a screen-equipped mobile phone. Not only can they see and hear the seminar and view materials being used, such as slides and videos, but also they can put questions to the speakers in real time.

“Everyone wins,” says Petra Bailey, the 7BR Marketing Co-ordinator. “People who attend our seminars in person value the networking opportunities offered, while those further away get virtual access to a professional resource that would otherwise be inaccessible. Meanwhile 7BR gains from greater industry recognition.”

MeetMe audio conferencing

For occasions where it is not so essential for participants to see each other, 7BR uses the BT MeetMe audio conferencing service. “It’s an inexpensive and effective way of getting people together,” says Wahida Mustak, the 7BR Administrator. “We use it for operational meetings or where we need to speak to experts who are often only available in the evening.” The previous audio conferencing service that 7BR used required people to book the call in advance. “With BT MeetMe all people need to do is dial in,” adds Wahida. “They then key in their PIN number and the rest is completely automatic.”

Currently over 30 per cent of 7BR barristers have BT MeetMe user accounts with a rapid increase expected as people get more used to the idea of virtual meetings. BT Conferencing has provided 7BR people with custom templates that list dial-in and PIN numbers, and provide simple instructions on using the service.



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“As well as offering an extended client service we can also reduce clients’ travel costs and make a sustainable contribution to the environment.”

Fay Gillott
Chief Executive Officer
7BR

Value

Conferencing is having a transformational effect on many ways of working at 7BR. “The direct benefits to me in carrying out my professional duties are immense,” says Leslie Keegan. “I now have a combination of conferencing technologies at my fingertips so that, whatever the circumstances, I can communicate effectively with clients, colleagues, and expert witnesses wherever they may be.”

Attendance at 7BR professional seminars has rocketed. Held in the evening between 5.30 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. in the region of 45 people would previously have come along in person. Now they are joined by up to 100 virtual attendees. So, over a typical series of six seminars, many hundreds of extra paying customers are getting the 7BR message. People who join, either in person or over the web, earn CPD (continuous personal development) points.

Petra Bailey notes: “Gaining sixteen CPD points every year is a mandatory professional requirement, so the enormous added value to people outside London is obvious.” It’s not all work, however. In 2009, following

one of its seminars, 7BR used WebEx to run a virtual Children in Need event. Hosted by Leslie Keegan, this including an online auction raising £4,500.00.

At the operational level, conferencing is helping 7BR to become a more efficient and effective organisation. Wayne King, Senior Clerk at 7BR, brings that to life: “WebEx means we can review and amend documents in real time, and move them around without necessarily needing to print copies or use surface mail. At the same time audio conferencing means that decisions get made faster because we don’t need to go through the process of assembling everyone in the same room.”

Leslie Keegan sums up his experience of BT service levels: “The support provided to us since we engaged with BT Conferencing has been exemplary. I say that not as a barrister, but as a former scientist who has exacting standards.” Leaving the last words to Fay Gillott, the 7BR Chief Executive Officer: “As well as offering an extended client service we can also reduce clients’ travel costs and make a sustainable contribution to the environment.”

Core BT Conferencing services

- BT-provided LifeSize video conferencing
- BT-provided WebEx web conferencing
- BT MeetMe audio conferencing
- Professional Services for implementation and training
- Ongoing helpdesk and maintenance, with Priority One Care support package

For more information visit: www.btconferencing.com

Offices worldwide

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