

## Episode Summary

**Episode number:** 96  
**Episode name:** No Longer Disruptive: NewLaw or Alternative Legal Service?  
**Guest(s):** Nat Parbhu

**What area(s) of law does this episode consider?** Returning to NewLaw.

**Why is this topic relevant?** NewLaw is a global trend that has been revolutionising the legal industry by combining innovative models, processes, and tools with traditional legal services. However, as a concept NewLaw is quite difficult to pin down.

Fairfax Associates, a US-based consulting firm, identified four general categories of NewLaw services: Legal Technology and Artificial Intelligence; Legal Managed Services; On Demand Resources and Staffing; and Adjacent Advisory Consulting Businesses.

The mix of these different categories between different NewLaw firms can be quite remarkable. One might focus on adjacent advisory work and another on legal technology.

**What are the main points?**

- Law is transforming, driven by client demand for value-based, fit-for-purpose services that are suited to specific needs.
- The approach at Aspen Legal is not one of NewLaw - in the sense of being a disrupter - but is more aligned with being an alternative legal service provider.
- Nat says personal relationships are key to ensuring clients receive best service, in his view today's legal sector needs to have customer-centricity at its core
- NewLaw is about redefining the scope of what legal service can be.
- In a traditional model, legal professionals prefer to stay within known parameters, providing advice and letting the client decide what to do with it.
- NewLaw lawyering is not just legal advice, but also strategic contribution through understanding and influencing the business direction.
- A lawyer in that role should extend to making decisions for the company, taking accountability for the outcomes.
- In the context of modern-day legal practices like modern slavery legislation, corporate responsibility and being the moral compass of a business are becoming increasingly important.
- The role of in-house legal teams is a balancing act: they are neither solely the police force for the business - solely there to say "no" and point out legal breaches - nor are they just there as the moral compass.
- In Nat's view, they are advising on and line-managing both roles.

- To have successful in-house teams that do a good job, the team needs to be integrated into the business, so not sitting as a separate function.
- This can be done by remunerating the team in line with the division they sit in.
- In order to provide the best possible advice to a business, lawyers must understand how the business works and generates revenue.
- Having an in-house lawyer can make this easier, as they are part of the company and therefore trusted with this information.
- Conversely, it can be harder for external providers to achieve this level of understanding and trust within the client business.
- Technology tends to work best when firms have scale and volume and Aspen Legal prefers to concentrate on areas it feels it leads the market in, primarily advisory services and legal secondees.
- Transparency in pricing is important to avoid clients receiving surprises in invoices, something Nat believes has no place in providing value to clients.
- When you're starting off in your career, be a sponge - learn as much as you can from people, whether you believe it and agree with it or not.
- To Nat, what's critical to NewLaw is an integration of both legal skills and business and commercial skills as well - don't become pigeonholed.

**What are the practical takeaways?**

**Show notes**

Fairfax Associates, [The Rise of NewLaw](#) (2020)

Thomson Reuters, [Alternative Legal Services Providers 2023](#) (2023)