

A **Survival Guide** for Legal Practice Managers

A Brief Inventory of NewLaw in Australia

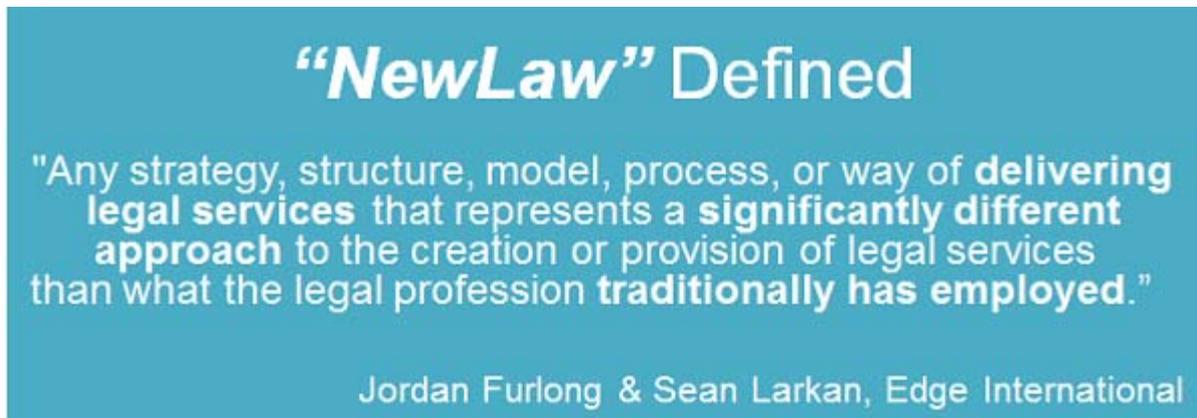
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By [Jordan Furlong](#) and [Sean Larkan, Edge International](#)

You've probably been hearing more and more about "NewLaw" lately. What exactly is it supposed to mean, and what does it have to do with your law firm?

George Beaton, who coined the "NewLaw" phrase and has [written more than anyone else on this subject](#), describes the NewLaw business model as the [antithesis of the BigLaw model](#). We recommend reading George's extensive writings on the subject in order to further acquaint yourself with this concept and its examples.

For our part, and for the purposes of identifying the firms and companies that qualified under this name, we defined NewLaw as:



This definition allowed us to encompass not just law firms, but also new legal talent combinations, legal service managers, and legal technology that both changes how lawyers practice and places the power of legal service provision in clients' hands.

We used that definition in a post earlier this year at Jordan Furlong's Law21 blog, "[An incomplete inventory of NewLaw](#)," which listed more than 80 entities that qualified under this definition. But most of these examples hailed from the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. At the invitation of [ALPMA](#), and drawing upon the knowledge base of Edge International's Australian partner Sean Larkan, we've produced a similar inventory for the local legal market.

First, a few exceptions and disclaimers.

Several innovative legal companies and technologies whose primary focus is the marketing or management of law practices, rather than the creation and delivery of legal services, are not on the list.

We also decided not to include e-discovery providers, partly because we'd spend several pages cataloguing all the players in this market, but also because e-discovery is increasingly accepted as part of litigation and isn't all that "New" anymore.

With [PriceWaterhouseCooper's recent foray into the Australian legal market](#), through the acquisition of Sydney's LCR Advisory, the legal profession must again get ready to [say hello to accountants practicing law](#). For now, however, we are leaving accounting firms off this list.

American legal document and consumer law portals [LegalZoom](#) and [Rocket Lawyer](#) provide a sort of hybrid combination of legal documents available online and networks of affiliated law firms that supplement the documents with higher-value services. More like them will emerge.

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With those points out of the way, here is our brief inventory of NewLaw entities in Australia and environs. As you will see, they are invariably small or mid-tier operations.

- [AdventBalance](#) - "A firm that combines the expertise of outside counsel with the best qualities of a sophisticated in-house team."
- [Bespoke Law](#) - "A network of experienced lawyers who are available to provide clients with tailored support without watching the clock."
- [Curwoods](#) - "Our team of experienced professionals, combined with our Artist-in-Residence program, means that we balance thoughtful creativity with innovative commercial solutions."
- [Hive Legal](#) - "We embrace the opportunity to value our work based on the outcomes we achieve for our clients and have a strong preference for value pricing."
- [Integrated Legal Holdings Ltd](#) - "A growing network of member firms, affiliates and strategic relationships, targeting growth markets and segments in Australia and the Asia Pacific region."
- [M+K](#) - "A growing firm of commercial lawyers and industry advocates, devoted to the needs of businesses and asset owners in the mid-market."
- [Marque Lawyers](#) - "We started our firm with the desire to practise law in a new and better manner, and in particular to do away with the business of charging for legal services on the basis of the time spent doing it."
- [Nest Legal](#): "Online after-hours lawyers for busy Victorians ... We offer fixed-fee services in estates, conveyancing and unbundled coaching for self-represented litigants. ... Our prices are all listed on our website."
- [Plexus](#) - "We have unshackled talented lawyers from grey suits, high overheads, billable hours and the costly partnership structure - along with many other anachronisms. ... We are transforming the value of legal."
- [Pod Legal](#) - "An innovative law firm offering expertise in intellectual property, technology law and social media law. We provide fixed fee quotes and we stick to

them ... no matter what.”

- [Salvos Legal](#) - “We provide quality commercial and property law advice on a paid basis. However, all of our fees fund our ‘legal aid’ sister firm. Both are wholly owned by The Salvation Army.”
- [Slater & Gordon](#) - “A leading consumer law firm in Australia with a growing presence in the UK consumer law market. We employ 1,200 people in 70 locations across Australia and 1,300 people in 18 locations in the UK. ”

There is a temptation, when thinking about concepts like “NewLaw,” to think solely in terms of firms with unique structures, or that use some version of outsourcing or who have, for instance, moved away from time-based billing. We think it’s more a question of the unique ways in which they structure themselves and deliver their services.

Many of these firms have also truly recognised the importance of all their people, including support staff, and treat them accordingly — in some cases, offering them an interest in the firm. It is therefore better to take a much broader view, and to consider just why it is that clients have moved their work from traditional firms to these new shops in the first place.

The message we should take from the relentless pressures felt by traditional firms is that the market has tired of what they offer and how they deliver their services. The market is looking for something just as capable and competent, but more accessible, efficient, and client-friendly than what Law As Usual offers. Many of these traditional firms (in many cases, the larger firms) still seem to believe that it is all about *what they want*, what they decide to offer that matters, rather than *what clients want*.

The lessons of NewLaw will be lost on them, to their ultimate detriment. Consider what has happened to the American legal market over the past five years: the 200 largest firms in the U.S. now have only enough legal work to keep 0.6 of a lawyer (per partner, on average) busy.

Nonetheless, some traditional firms, particularly in Australasia, do hear these messages. And in their own ways, they are responding, even if it is to only replicate what other more dynamic firms have been doing for years. For instance, several “normal” firms do offer a full range of capabilities and charge-out rates for their lawyers, reducing the incentives for clients to outsource to India or explore NewLaw options. This sets them apart from their counterparts in the U.S.

As NewLaw continues to emerge and blossom, inevitably “OldLaw” will begin to adapt and evolve in NewLaw’s direction. The challenge for the traditional firms will be to ensure that any new concepts or structures they embrace truly become part of their DNA.

So we believe the real message of NewLaw’s emergence and early success is that practising law differently, with a greater focus on efficiency, productivity, and true alignment with both their staff and client interests, is a formula that any legal service provider can adopt. Some will find this easier than others.

Is your firm ready to hear these messages? And if so, what will you do to respond?

About Our Guest Bloggers

Jordan Furlong



Jordan Furlong is a lawyer, consultant, and legal industry analyst based in Ottawa, Canada, who forecasts the impact of the changing legal market on lawyers, clients, and legal organizations. He has delivered dozens of addresses to law firms, state bars, law societies, law schools, judges, and many others throughout the United States and Canada on the evolution of the legal services marketplace. He is a Fellow of the College of Law Practice Management and serves as Strategic Advisor in Residence at Suffolk University Law School in Boston. He is a principal with [Edge International](#) and blogs about the new legal market at [Law21](#).

Sean Larkan



Sean Larkan is a strategy and growth advisor and consultant to professional service firms internationally with a particular focus on the legal industry. He has a reputation as an innovator, finding ways to help firms get the results they truly want. He follows a simple philosophy which he applies to all his interactions – ‘building growth, confidence and well-being’. He is the author of the leading publication on brand strategy for the professions ‘[Brand Strategy and Management for Law Firms](#)’ and is an internationally accredited Master Coach and Human Synergistics practitioner. Sean is a principal of [Edge International](#) and blogs about issues of relevance to law firm leaders at [Legal Leaders Blog](#).