



LEGAL SPEND WITH NO SURPRISES

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# Cornerstone

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Cornerstone is the UK's leading mobile infrastructure services company. They acquire, manage and own over 20,000 sites and are committed to enabling best in class connectivity for over half of all UK mobile customers. Their infrastructure helps keep society well connected for today's needs and the future, by being placed in urban and rural areas including rooftops, street work sites and greenfield locations. The company is at an exciting time in its development, rolling out new technologies and managing complex legislation affecting the industry.



Phil Warren, Head of Legal and Compliance at Cornerstone

As Phil Warren, Head of Legal and Compliance, explains:

"Having grown the Legal and Compliance team from just two people six years ago, to thirteen now, our team is diverse in personnel, and in the nature of work we do.

"We're an infrastructure business and therefore property is our lifeblood. Over time we've been able to demonstrate the value of having a strong in-house team with a broad reach across the business. We now cover commercial contracts, governance and compliance, property transactions and disputes. As you can imagine, with over 20,000 sites across the UK there is always plenty going on!"

With so many sites to manage, comes a similarly high volume of legal matters. This necessitates a structure that allows internal teams to work directly with external counsel.

“Particularly in the property space because of the volume, the instructions tend to go directly from our external agents to the law firms. The budget for that spend is then managed by that particular team. There can be thousands of legal instructions out there at any one time across the firms that we work with. So ultimately, I’ve got no way of knowing where the legal spend is coming from, or controlling it.”

Having already adopted a number of legal technology solutions, Phil was comfortable with finding technology that would help his business to manage legal spend.

“There is good tech out there. But it’s about knowing what problem you want to fix, not just going after a product because you think it’s the right thing to do. It’s actually saying ‘yeah, here’s something that could really help us’, and for me visibility of legal spend was a real problem I needed to fix.

“The single biggest driver was having transparency and clarity on what we’re spending. In a world where we need to demonstrate the value that we bring to the business, it was almost impossible to get accurate information – and our legal spend is sizeable. We needed to know what was being spent, where it was being spent and have the ability to manage that with real-time access.

“Our requirements for legal spend management therefore revolved around improving law firm behaviour, being able to make real data-driven decisions, reporting up within the business and reporting outwards. I wanted to be able to inform and advise our CEO and CFO on how much money we’re spending.”

Now that Cornerstone has been using Apperio for over a year, Phil has been able to reflect on the benefits this has brought to his team.

“Apperio helps me in three key ways. Being able to report on our legal spend across all work streams; managing the spending that’s going on in real time with law firms; and freeing up my team from administrative tasks that don’t add value to the business.

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“For me the key benefit is understanding the broader analytics around our spend. I like the visuals of how the platform provides the information to me. I absorb information much more quickly that way, rather than trawling through spreadsheets and tables.

“We’ve done a lot of work getting the data into the right place within the platform. This now opens up the opportunity to really drive more information out of Apperio and act on the reporting it provides.

“Recently, we introduced a custom monthly report that breaks out the spending across work streams and whether we’re trending in the right direction. Already that’s enabling me to inform the business about where we’re spending our money in greater detail.

“If we didn’t have Apperio, we’d have issues around how we track matters against budgets, and how we enforce our billing guidelines. Where we can see and manage that spending properly, there is a great opportunity to save the business money.”

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Phil has also found that using Apperio encourages proactive collaboration with external counsel and prevents unexpected surprises at the invoice stage.

“Law firms are now acutely aware that we can see what time they’re recording. Earlier this year, using the information from Apperio, we were able to produce a short set of billing guidelines. These set clear rules and terms of engagement for our law firms including how and when they invoice matters, controls around capped and fixed fees, and processes for increasing fees beyond these amounts.

“That’s not to say ‘thou shalt never charge more than the fixed fee’ but it’s to drive the right behaviour and encourage a more proactive conversation as fees approach their budget. In the past, we would be in a difficult position as a client when the invoice for a matter exceeded the budget. All you’d end up doing was effectively haggling at that point.”

Having gained peace of mind on the transparency of Cornerstone's legal spend, Phil is able to focus on using Apperio to drive longer-term efficiencies within the business.

"Apperio provides intelligence that says to me, 'how do we resource our legal work', 'where are the opportunities to bring work in-house' and 'where should we be outsourcing, but at a different price'? This feeds into strategic decision making, shaping our Legal and Compliance team for the future. It also helps us by providing the right kind of data for rate card negotiations with law firms.

"Previously, that information just wouldn't have been available. Whereas now, Apperio enables us to have many more informed discussions and have a better idea as to what some of these fees ought to be."

Apperio has also helped Cornerstone in reducing administrative tasks and assisting the legal team to deliver against their objectives more effectively.

"We try to drive as much fixed-fee work as possible. The problem was in knowing whether the law firms were adhering to that. Before Apperio, dealing with requests for uplifts in budgets and POs was always a difficult task to manage across the team. It required trawling through emails and information, to get to the bottom of why matters had exceeded their budgets. This sucked up unnecessary administrative time, which diverted my team's focus.

"For example, there was one individual lawyer who was spending upwards of 70% of their time managing what the law firms were spending on big ticket litigation matters. I would say that now Apperio helps save at least 25-30% of the legal team's time, simply by having easy access to the right information.

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“This year we have two objectives as a team where there is a clear link to Apperio. One is about demonstrating a cost conscious mindset and another is about realising the benefits of the technology we have at our disposal. Apperio will help the team to deliver on both.”

As a keen advocate for legal technology, Phil understands that realising the full potential of any product is an ongoing journey.

“When it comes to change internally, I think everybody adopts technology at different speeds. As well as my team, our Finance team are really positive about the information they can gather from Apperio. It helps them to validate the reporting they provide to me from their systems.

“How you really start to maximise what the technology can do is by giving feedback and continuing to have a dialogue about how the product could be developed in the future. The benefit of having a dedicated customer success manager is you’ve got that continuity. Somebody who understands your business: what the challenges are and where you’re hoping to go. They can work with us to develop the platform and provide that support. It’s very much an ongoing relationship, working together in partnership and that’s how this works best, in my view.

“Apperio immediately struck a chord with me. I wasn’t worried about an e-billing solution. I wanted a platform that could give me visibility of the work that’s going on and I really liked its simplicity and ease of use. Apperio has formed a key part of our legal tech journey.”

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To find out more about how Apperio can help improve the transparency and efficiency of your legal spend, visit [apperio.com](https://www.apperio.com) or please email [info@apperio.com](mailto:info@apperio.com).



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