



## Annual Report

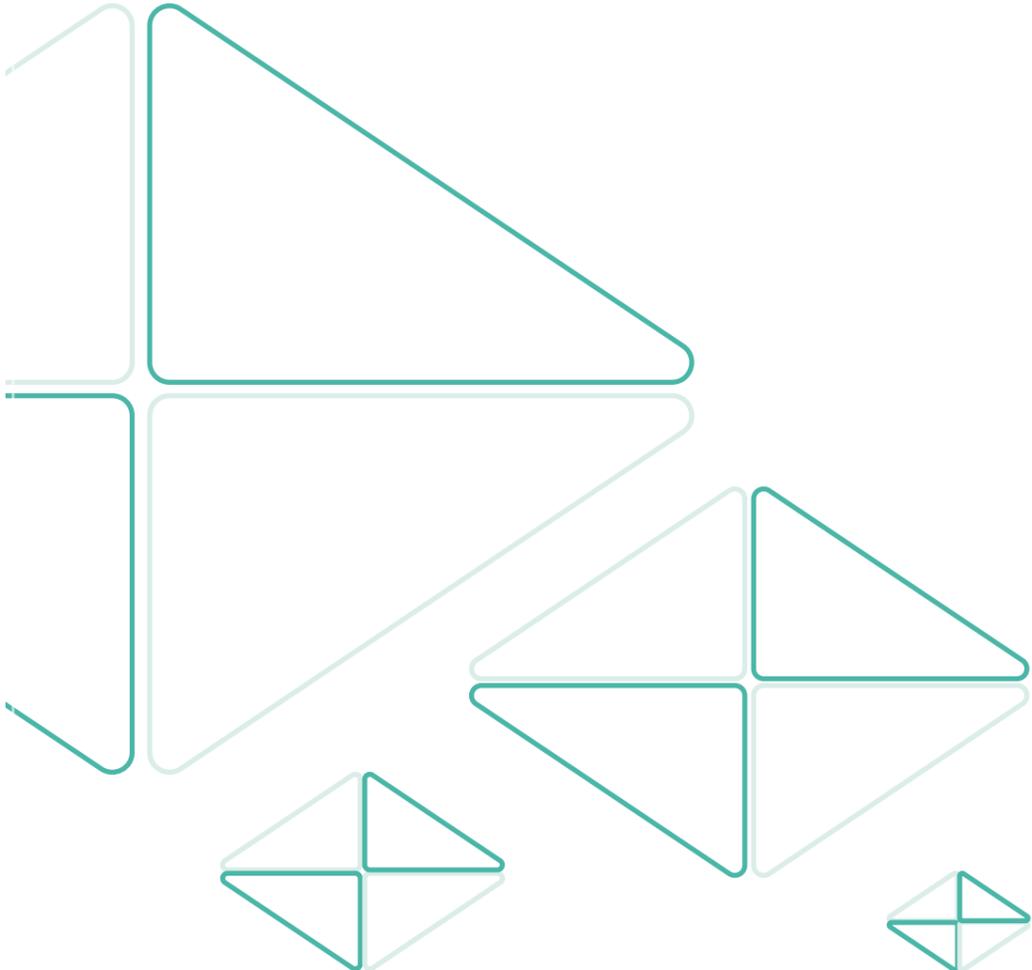
December 2017

[gardner-leader.co.uk](http://gardner-leader.co.uk)

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Trust . Value . Peace of Mind



# Another year of GROWTH

Despite the political and economic uncertainty over the last 12 months, we have seen continued growth.

The firm is now twice the size that it was just five years ago, both in terms of staff and turnover.

Indeed our Newbury office alone generated more turnover in 2016-17 than all three offices combined did in 2014-15.

We continue to follow a five year strategy, to 2020, for prudent growth to enable us to invest in our people and our infrastructure. In 2017, that has included the appointment of our first professional HR Manager and the creation of a new role of Quality Manager to oversee our compliance obligations.

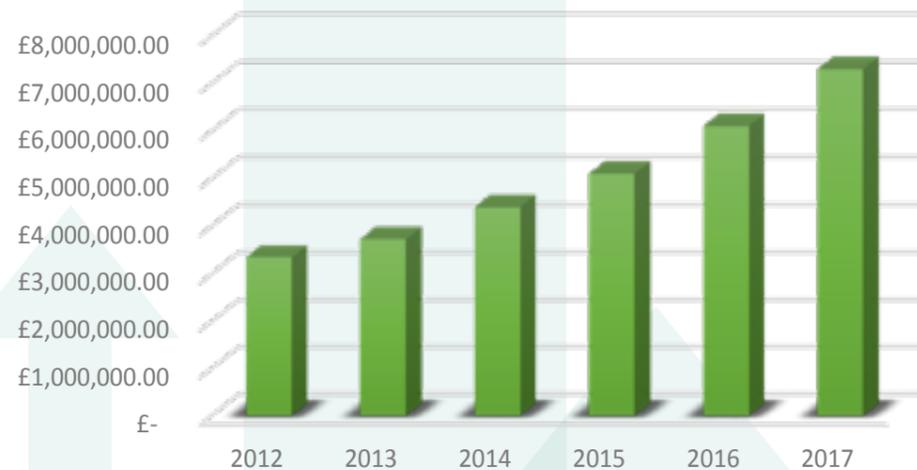
We have handled our first Supreme Court case, a major piece of litigation in the Seychelles, complex international commercial arbitration and a number of high value and high profile commercial and property transactions.



Winners: Picking up the award for Best SME at the Maidenhead & Windsor Business Awards 2017

## Financial Results

### Turnover in 12 months to 30 June



For the second year running, we achieved 20% turnover growth in the financial year to 30 June 2017, up from £6.1m to just over £7.3m, continuing a trend of double digit growth every year since 2012-13.

All five teams and all three offices exceeded their financial targets for the year.

## People

Continued recruitment during 2017 has seen our total headcount grow to 125 people, including 15 partners. As well as adding more lawyers to our team, we completed the 'professionalising' of our management by filling the new roles of HR Manager and Quality Manager. These appointments, together with additional recruitment into our Technology and Marketing teams, will ensure that we have the appropriate infrastructure to support a growing firm.

Significant senior appointments amongst our lawyers included Suki Hardy (partner, Commercial Property), Suzy Hamshaw (senior associate, Family) and Marie Verney (senior associate, Inheritance Protection). We look forward to welcoming two more senior recruits (in Family and Inheritance Protection) in January 2018.

We were delighted to retain all three of our trainee solicitors who qualified during the year.

Our annual staff survey in April, conducted for us by an independent company, produced a wealth of information and showed that staff engagement remains very high.

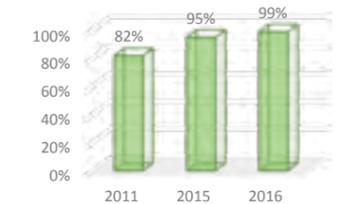
As always, the survey also indicated a number of areas where we could improve and among the steps taken as a result has been the introduction

of a new range of benefits for staff.

This year has also seen the implementation of a new approach to appraisals, based on regular 'Career Conversations' and a completely revised and improved bonus scheme for all staff.



Our values are reflected in the way we behave (total saying 'agree' or 'strongly agree')



**92%** We are maintaining what is good about Gardner Leader as we grow (2017) (total saying 'agree' or 'strongly agree')

## Continuous Improvement

Our structured continuous improvement programme 'Evolve' is now in its fourth year and has completed thirteen cycles.

In each cycle a team of around eight people chosen from across the firm are given a brief to look at an aspect of our business. Over eight weeks, they look at how we can improve our processes or policies in relation to that aspect and then present their proposals to the firm.

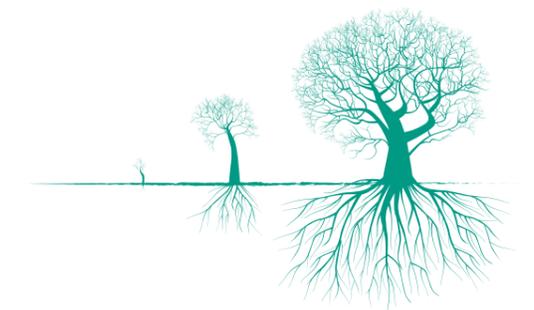
As a result of this programme we have made a large number of changes, all aimed at improving the experience which clients will have when using our services and making Gardner Leader a better place to work.

Among the most significant changes implemented this year as a result of 'Evolve' proposals has been a complete revamp of our induction process.

In early 2018, we will be relaunching our Client

Charter as a result of a review undertaken in the final Evolve cycle of 2017.

As well as the benefits we get from the proposals themselves, 'Evolve' has been a major driver of staff engagement. Participants get to work closely with colleagues from other teams and different offices and gain a better understanding of how the firm works. Each person's views are given equal weight in the process, whether they are a partner or an apprentice.



# Recommendations

## Legal 500 - 2017



Leading  
Individuals



Recommended  
Practice Areas



Recommended  
Lawyers

Gardner Leader LLP is an excellent firm – well resourced, and easy to deal with.

Gardner Leader LLP's excellent, friendly and approachable team responds quickly to all queries...

Gardner Leader LLP provides a very thorough, partner-led service, doggedly supporting clients in often difficult circumstances.

Gardner Leader LLP was listed again in the Legal 500 – 2017 listings as a "Leading Firm" with 12 practice areas recommended in the Legal 500 tables, 24 recommended lawyers & two of them being named as "Leading Individuals" in their respective practice area.



Our Litigation team was recommended in the recent Chambers & Partners listing while naming Christopher Felton as a notable practitioner in the field.

Gardner Leader LLP's Christopher Felton is described as 'a tough fighter,' who is able to 'break the case down to essential questions'.

# Awards

In 2017 we won the **Award for the Best SME** at the **Maidenhead & Windsor Business Awards** and we were honoured to be shortlisted for:

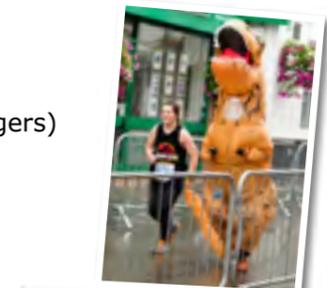
- The LawNet Law Firm of the Year Award
- The LawNet Team of the Year Award (for our litigation team)
- The British Legal Technology Team of the Year (runner-up)
- The Law Society Excellence Award for Law Management
- The IoD London & South East Director of the Year Award (Derek Rodgers)

# Gardner Leader in the Community

In 2017 we selected Bloodwise as our nominated charity following a staff vote and we look forward to working with them over the coming months.

Over the previous 12 months we raised over £5000 for Newbury and District Cancer Care Trust through a variety of activities supported by our staff.

We also support a number of other charities on an informal basis and many of our partners and staff are involved in the community as school governors and charity trustees.



# Outlook

In last year's report, we said that 'like all businesses at the moment, we cannot ignore the uncertainty created by Brexit and other external factors'. Unfortunately that uncertainty remains, with neither the path to Brexit nor the final outcome looking any clearer than they did 12 months ago.

However it is also still the case that as yet we have not seen any measurable adverse impact on our own business. Our conveyancing team remained busy throughout 2017 and this was also true for commercial property, the teams where we would be most likely to see the earliest signs.

Approaching the halfway mark in our 2017-18 financial year, we have so far seen growth of between 15 and 20% on the same period last year.

That could of course be affected in the second half of the financial year by any general downturn (or slowdown) in the economy in 2018, which many of the current indicators seem to suggest is likely.

Our aim is always to mitigate the effect of any such impact on those areas of our work which are most vulnerable to it, by maintaining a healthy balance of different types of work across the firm.

One of the benefits of the growth we have achieved in recent years is that it has enabled us to strengthen the management of the firm by the addition of professional expertise. The recent recruitment of a Quality Manager to oversee our compliance obligations will be particularly important as we prepare for the introduction of the new data protection requirements of GDPR in May 2018.

The five year strategy which we are following envisages further prudent growth. This will be through a mixture of organic growth and, if suitable opportunities arise, acquisition of other businesses.

In everything we do, we benefit from our membership of LawNet, a network of over 70 independent law firms committed to quality, client service and the sharing of best practice.

Above all, we are indebted to our clients, work referrers and other contacts for their continued support. Together with the high levels of engagement from our staff, we believe this offers the best defence against any economic pressures which may lie ahead.

# About Gardner Leader

Gardner Leader is a leading regional law firm which offers peace of mind to individuals and businesses with legal issues across Berkshire and beyond. Our clients range from first time buyers and start up companies to venture capital funds, charities and PLCs.

Our services include:

- Corporate/commercial
- Commercial litigation
- Property litigation
- Contentious probate
- International arbitration
- Commercial Property
- Residential conveyancing
- Family and children
- Inheritance Protection
- Wills, Trusts and Estates
- Employment
- Crime

We have been in Newbury since 1895 and arrived in Maidenhead in October 2014 following the acquisition of an established local firm, Heath Buckeridge solicitors. We have also had an office in Thatcham for over 40 years. We act for clients locally, nationally and internationally.





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