



HOME MOVING TRENDS

2016

About

The Home Moving Trends survey is a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the Property Academy, in partnership with tmgroup, to provide insights and learnings for the property profession.

14,389 consumers from across England, Scotland and Wales took part in the 2016 survey into how they found, selected and rated their service providers.

Those responding gave a representative split of age groups, property types and price ranges, providing a substantial subject group and ensuring statistically valid data.

This is the fourth year that the report has been compiled with feedback from home movers designed to benefit conveyancers, alongside a detailed interpretation of the results.

Content

: contributors	03
: executive summary	04
: choosing a conveyancer	05 - 06
: delivery of service	07 - 08
: clients 'cyberblind' to risk of fraud	09 - 10
: mitigating the risk of cyber crime	11 - 12
: method of communication	13 - 14
: the ever more demanding client	15 - 16
: the price factor	17 - 18
: recommend a friend	19
: summary	20



tmgroup

tmgroup have a vision to streamline the property transaction for the benefit of all. They do this through their innovation and experience, by employing great people and by listening to their customers.

That's why we promise : we make time for you.

tmgroup's solutions include:

- > **tmconvey** - An award-winning conveyancing platform, providing mapping, quote conversion and other useful tools alongside property searches to support conveyancers in offering an efficient service to their clients.
- > **tmcore** - An online property data hub which helps local authorities and other search providers to streamline their operations, save time and reduce costs.
- > **tmconnect** - A platform which delivers panel management solutions and a collaborative desktop, by joining up the various parties involved throughout a property transaction to access and share information.



Property Academy

Property Academy was set up in 2008 to provide four-i (Information, Insights, Ideas and Inspiration) for individuals and companies in the property industry.

They passionately believe that everyone, no matter how experienced, should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and be the best they can be, and their aim is to encourage, challenge, motivate and inspire those who strive to achieve this.

Property Academy shares four-i through regular industry updates, live events, peer learning groups and independent surveys; and has built an excellent reputation for sharing the latest innovations and ideas that are vital for everyone in the property sector.



: executive summary

With incidents of cyber crime becoming more and more prevalent in the media, discussions about 'Friday afternoon fraud' and 'ransomware attacks' are becoming increasingly common across firms of all sizes.

While this certainly isn't news, the findings captured in the last 12 months reveal that it has never been more important for the conveyancing industry to understand these risks - and the steps they need to take to protect their firm and their clients.

The scale of the challenge is highlighted in these 2 key statistics:

- > **Only 17% of clients consider transferring funds to their conveyancer to be a high risk phase of the property transaction**
- > **46% of home movers "don't think" they heard about cyber security risks from their conveyancer - despite claiming to have "read every word" of their documentation**

Suddenly, the continuing challenges posed in delivering an exceptional customer experience are about more than just being proactive and securing repeat business; they have been superseded by a daily battle to protect your clients' transactions and your firm's reputation.

The findings of the Home Moving Trends survey are based on the real-life experiences of 14,389 consumers who have recently progressed through the property transaction and worked alongside conveyancing firms like yours.

Coupled with expert opinions and recommendations from experienced members of the tmgroup team, this in-depth look at Home Moving Trends promises to provide a range of insights to help you tackle existing and emerging challenges and thrive in an increasingly difficult marketplace.

I hope you find them useful,

Paul Albone, Managing Director at tmgroup

: choosing a conveyancer

Which skills do clients value most in their conveyancer?

Conveyancers routinely scan the market to secure both new and repeat business from their clients, making it of utmost importance that they understand what their clients are looking for so they can sell their services accordingly.

There is a clear demand for proactive conveyancers with good communication skills, with less focus on making a choice based on price. However, as the data from the last 12 months reveals, delivery isn't as consistent as it could be.

Clients value proactive conveyancers with good communication skills

Collectively, 76% of clients said that having good communication skills was either 'really important' (51%) or 'quite important' (25%).

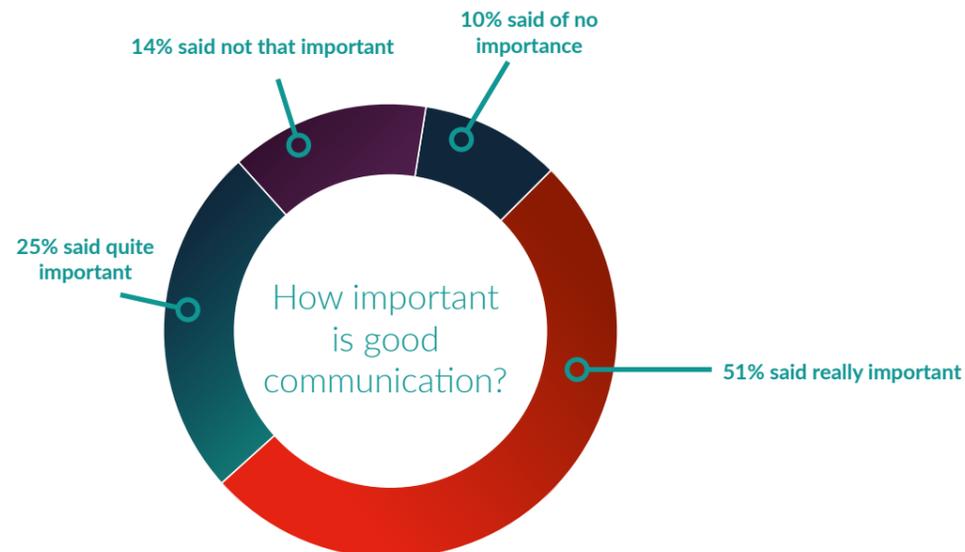
While 65% valued a proactive approach, with 32% saying it was 'really important', and 33% saying it was 'quite important'.

Price and problem-solving skills are considered least important

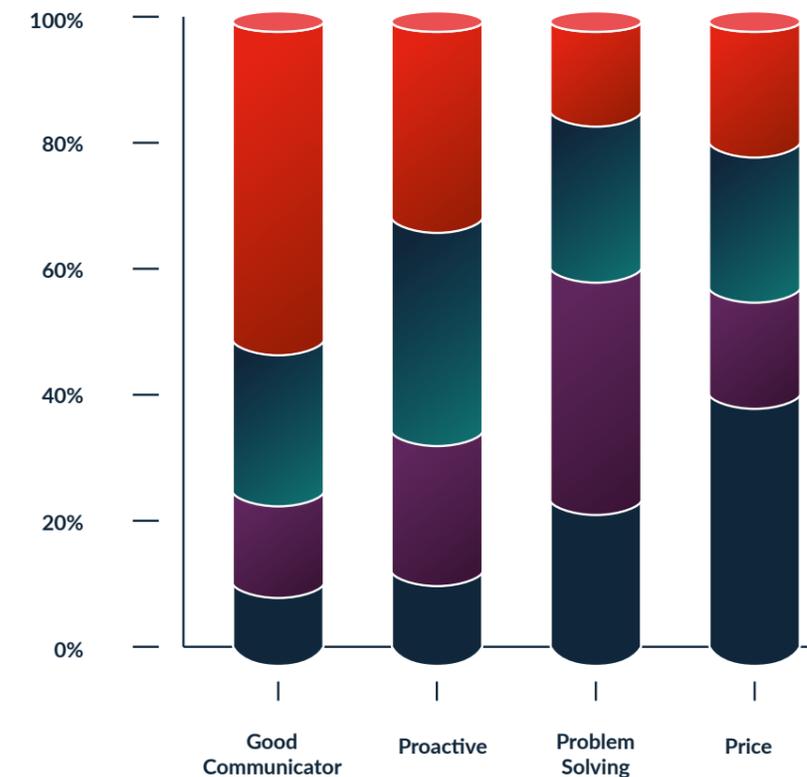
By contrast, problem-solving skills were less valued, with 61% of clients collectively stating they didn't think they were important; with 38% saying 'not that important' and 23% stating it was 'really not important'. Price was also considered less of a priority, with 56% of clients collectively saying they didn't think it was important; with 17% saying 'not that important' and 39% saying it was 'really not important'.

Conveyancers need to focus on selling the quality of the experience

While some of these findings may be due to a lack of understanding on the client's part, these findings indicated that overall conveyancers need to focus on selling the quality of their customer experience - rather than lowering their prices when it comes to differentiating their services in a competitive market.



What makes a good conveyancer?



“It isn't surprising to see that home movers value proactivity almost as much as strong communication skills, especially when the stress of moving house is taken into consideration.

Clients need to be reassured that their transaction is progressing, without feeling the need to chase their conveyancer on a weekly basis for important updates.

Conveyancers can demonstrate their proactivity – and help to remove some of the stress typically associated with moving house – by outlining key milestones in the transaction, being forthcoming with new information, and offering useful advice on the risks of cyber crime.”

: delivery of service

Conveyancers deliver on good communication – but there is still room for improvement

The majority of clients expressed confidence in their conveyancer's ability to communicate and speak in a simple way; with 41% considering this to be 'excellent', 34% saying it was 'good', and a further 17% considering it to be 'satisfactory'.

By contrast, only 8% of clients expressed dissatisfaction in the service they received; with 5% considering it 'poor' and 3% stating it 'very poor'.

While these findings are promising and suggest a lot of firms are getting this right, there is some room for improvement.

A third of clients don't feel they are getting value for money

The findings indicated that conveyancers could be doing more to ensure their clients feel they are getting value for money, as 32% expressed dissatisfaction in this part of their experience; with 29% considering their experience to be 'poor' and a further 3% 'very poor'.

Equally, some conveyancers could be doing more to improve their turnaround time and proactivity, as 26% also expressed dissatisfaction in this key area of delivery; with 22% considering their speed of service to be 'poor', while a further 4% 'very poor'.

This emphasises the level of expectation that clients bring to the conveyancing process, especially from those who perceive paying higher fees to be synonymous with a quality experience.

Significant decline in client satisfaction between 2015 and 2016

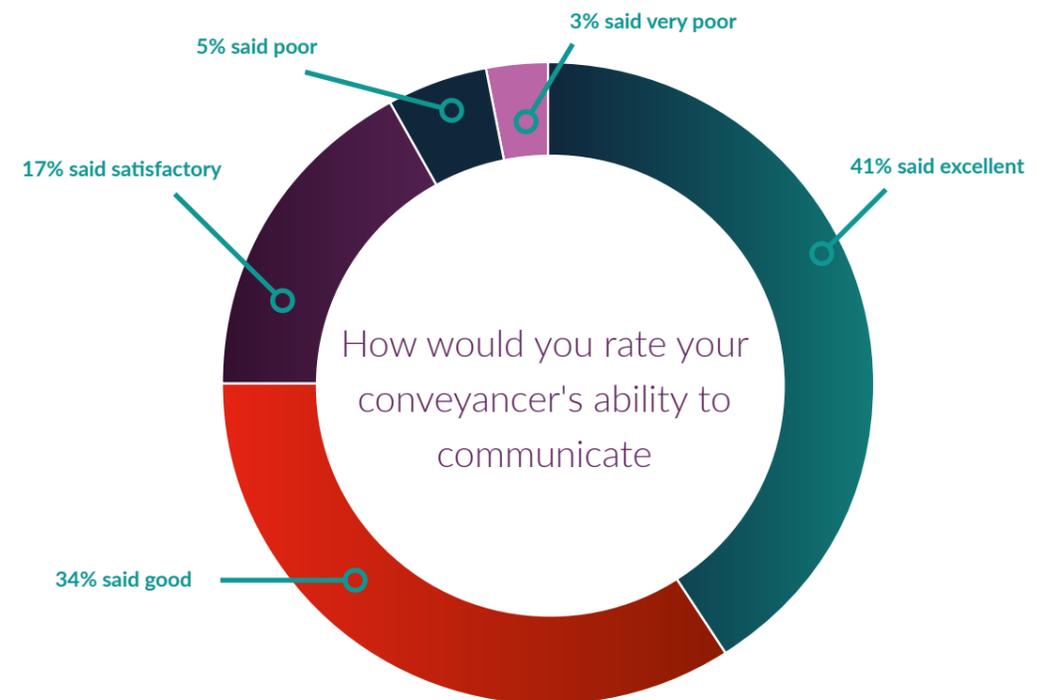
Despite these figures mostly being positive across the board, there has been a decline in all of these statistics since 2015; with the exception of 'communication and ability to speak in a simple way'.

This suggests that some conveyancers may need to review their activity in the last 12 months in these areas to determine what may have triggered this decline.

Focus on how clients interact with the firm as a whole - not just with one conveyancer

Firms looking to improve their clients' perception of their communication skills should focus on how their clients interact with the firm as a whole, and not just with their appointed conveyancer; as everything from the tone of your literature and follow-up emails, to how your front of house staff answer the phone has the potential to influence your clients' experience.

The key to delivering well in all of these areas is to remind everyone that they are in the business of customer service, and deliver consistent training messages across the firm; with a particular focus on the benefits of being proactive. This approach can also help to ensure that customers hear key messages at various touch points across the business.



"The old saying 'you get what you pay for' rings true in this case.

This research helps us to see why **conveyancers should be selling their services on factors other than price**, promoting instead their strong communication skills and ability to deliver.

The fact that people **don't seem to feel they are receiving value for money** suggests that there is a lack of understanding from the client as to just how much work, skill and knowledge is required to complete a property transaction; **highlighting a need for conveyancers to also educate their clients more about the process.**

However, it is equally important that these desirable factors, are well executed to ensure a satisfying experience right through to completion. This would help to both secure future recommendations, as well as reassure clients that they are receiving good value for money."

: clients 'cyber blind' to risk of fraud

How proactive do conveyancers need to be to protect their clients from cyber criminals?

With high profile incidents of cyber crime and 'Friday afternoon fraud' being reported in the media, the question of cyber security is becoming increasingly dominant in the concerns of conveyancers.

However, it appears that clients are considerably less worried and in most cases are 'cyber blind' to the risks in the market. This is leaving a worrying gap of vulnerability in the property transaction and prompting conveyancers to take more proactive steps to inform their clients of the risks and keep them safe.

Clients don't appear to understand the severity of the risks attached to the property transaction

The survey data revealed that only 17% of clients considered transferring funds to their conveyancer as a high risk phase of the property transaction, with a further 29% believing the risk to be 'moderate'.

While this does suggest that some clients are aware of the risks of 'Friday afternoon fraud' and may spot if they have been targeted, more than half of clients remain 'cyber blind' to the very real risk of criminals disrupting the transaction.

Most clients consider the risks to be low throughout the property transaction

Interestingly, this trend is seen throughout the property transaction.

From 'selecting a conveyancer' through to 'signing contracts' and 'transferring funds', an overwhelming majority of 'cyber blind' clients said they perceived a low level of risk.

Conveyancers need to double check client awareness

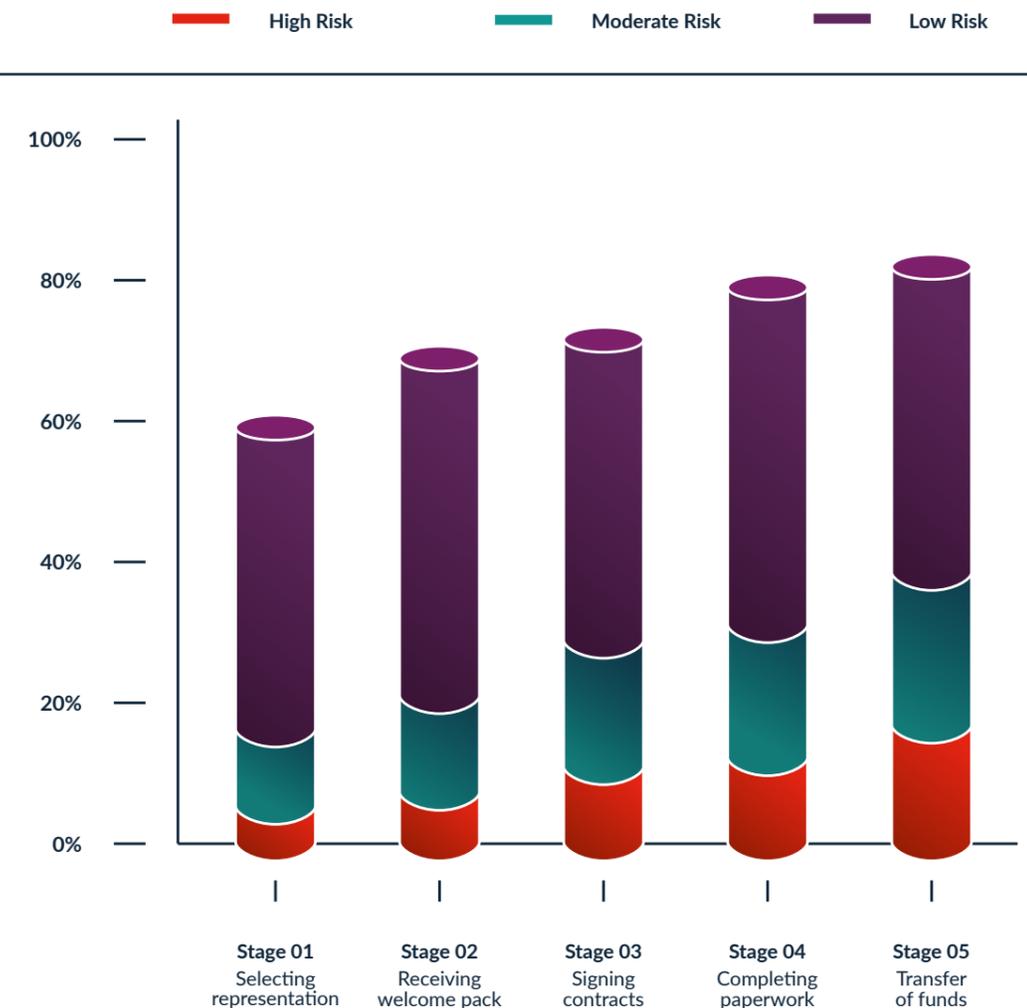
Fortunately, for the majority of law firms, a few tweaks to existing processes can make all the difference in better protecting both your firm and its property transactions from cyber criminals.

For example, if a firm is already sending cyber crime information to their clients in the welcome pack, they could add a follow-up phone call to double-check this information has been read and understood.

They could also try adding standardised messages into their email signatures to remind clients not to trust any emails about changing bank details; and so help reduce the risk of 'Friday afternoon fraud'.

While such steps can help to mitigate the current cyber risks in the market, it is equally important for a firm to add cyber crime to their board meeting agenda to ensure that new challenges are always being discussed.

How do your clients perceive the risk of fraud?



“As these statistics reveal, conveyancers need to be mindful of the fact that **it is their responsibility to convey these risks to their clients** – not merely as a conveyancing exercise, but in an attempt to eradicate this kind of fraud from the market, and reduce the level of risk to their firm, their reputation and their bank balance.

With ever-savvier cyber criminals targeting the conveyancing world, **assuming that every client is aware of every risk is no longer an option.** Fortunately, taking steps to safeguard your firm and your clients is a relatively simple exercise, relying predominantly on client education and consistency of process.”

: mitigating the threat of cyber crime

How do conveyancers communicate cyber security threats to their clients?

The risk of a cyber security breach is a serious concern in conveyancing, with large sums of money and the collapse of property chains routinely at stake. Unfortunately, every client brings a unique risk to the property transaction.

The severity of this risk can be influenced by an individual's awareness of cyber crime, as well as any assumptions they make about their level of responsibility in safeguarding the transaction; and so conveyancers are best advised to ensure that every client is briefed on the possible risks and what they can do to protect themselves.

Only half of home movers thoroughly read all of their paperwork

Despite the importance and financial risk involved with buying and selling property, only 54% of home movers said that they 'read and took in every word' of the paperwork their conveyancer gave them.

By contrast, a further 37% of home movers admitted that they just 'scan read it all', while 7% admitted to just 'reading a few sections' and 2% said that they 'didn't read their paperwork at all'.

This suggests that home movers do make some effort to engage with the conveyancing process and understand the information they are given; while others take a less thorough approach.

This disparity is possibly due to the level of trust some clients place in their conveyancers assuming that they don't

really need to read the small print as their conveyancer will alert them to anything important.

Conveyancers need to take such assumptions into consideration when discussing important issues such as cyber security with their clients; and make a conscious effort to explain to them that they too have a duty to be vigilant against opportunistic criminals.

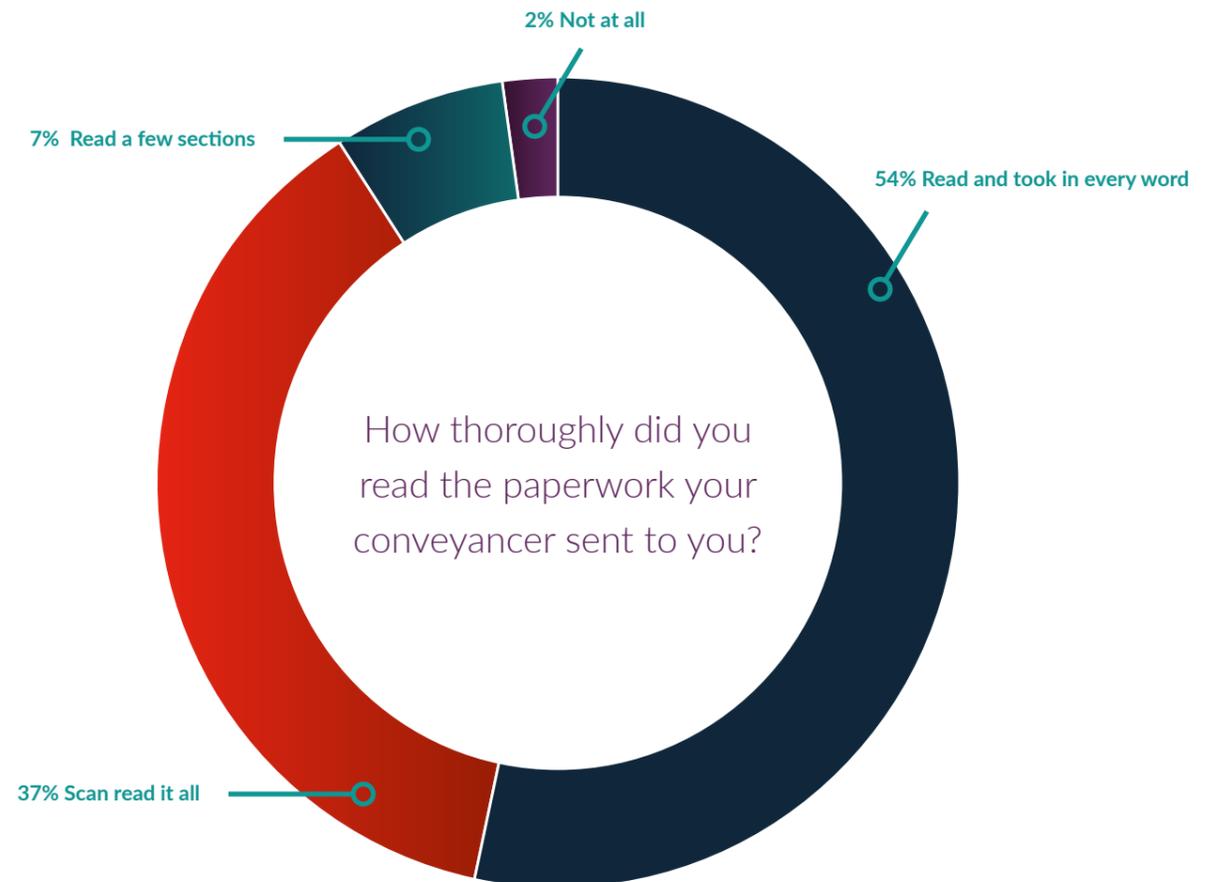
These processes should become business as usual, much in the same way that conveyancers treat their AML checks, to ensure a consistent approach to mitigating the risks.

Around half of home movers don't recall being told about cyber security risks

Conveyancers also need to consider how and where they are positioning these important messages to their clients, so they aren't overlooked.

This is evident in the fact that only 46% of home movers who claimed to have 'read every word' of their documentation stated that they 'don't think they did' hear about cyber security risks from their conveyancer.

This either suggests that key messages about cyber security are not being included, or that they aren't being communicated in a clear and memorable way; both of which scenarios leave clients vulnerable to cyber criminals.



“As these research findings highlight, conveyancers need to reconsider where they are positioning cyber security information and what they can do to make them stand out from the rest of the paperwork their clients receive. One possible solution is to send a separate cyber crime awareness pack a day or two after the welcome pack.

Given that some clients also admitted they didn't thoroughly read their paperwork, these findings have identified that conveyancers also need to ensure they communicate these key security messages through a number of methods and check for understanding in order to confidently mitigate the risks.”

: method of communication

How do clients want to be contacted?

It is important that conveyancers talk to their clients about communication methods. This will not only help them to establish their clients' individual preferences for the different channels, but also give them the opportunity to discuss the relevant threats and the sorts of communications they should typically expect to receive (and not receive) from the firm.

So how did clients want their conveyancers to communicate with them.

Overall, one clear preference remains for email and online communication over the telephone or text message; suggesting that conveyancers need to be securing these popular communication methods in order to protect the majority of their transactions.

More than half of home movers want to be contacted by email or online

More than half of home movers expressed a preference for receiving updates from their conveyancer via email and online communication methods, with 61% of clients stating this as their channel of choice.

There are consistent year-on-year consumer preferences for the telephone (38%) and the considerably less favourable text message (1%).

Most people are too busy to take telephone calls during the day

With consumers becoming increasingly accustomed to online communication in other sectors, including retail and banking, it is unsurprising that conveyancers are seeing similar demand in the property sector too.

The only slight variation was seen between 21-69 year olds who highlighted a greater preference for email, and both the youngest age bracket of <20 and the oldest age bracket of 70+ who stated a preference for the telephone.

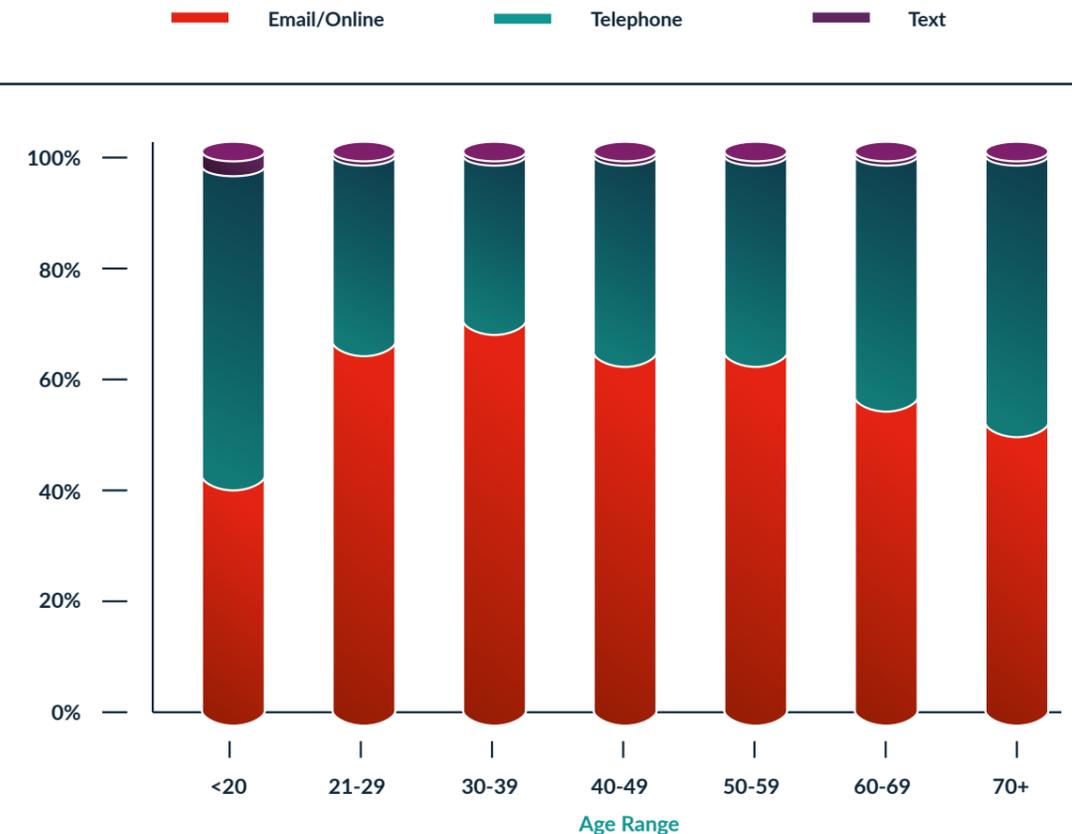
This contrast is possibly due to the convenience of email for those juggling family responsibilities with full time work.

It is harder to build strong relationships via email

While this research clearly indicates that clients find email to be a more convenient method of communication, conveyancing solicitors need to be aware that this convenience comes at a cost; as it is harder to build rapport and interpret clients' satisfaction levels via email. Conveyancers should also be alert to the risks of over-communicating via email to help limit the number of opportunities cyber criminals have to intercept any communications.

Overall, conveyancers should review how they secure their digital communications, and if an online portal might better suit their needs. Conveyancers should also invest some time in developing a friendly email persona to help build stronger rapport with their clients.

What was your preference for receiving updates from your conveyancer?



“This variation in responses suggests that conveyancers need to be investing time upfront talking to their clients about which communication channels work best for them, in order to maximise both efficiency and client satisfaction.

While these findings clearly show that email is the communication method of choice, likely due to its convenience and the fact that it can be accessed at any time during the day, conveyancers need to tread carefully when using this channel to ensure they are consistently delivering a great client experience. They also need to be conscious of the increasing risk of cyber crime, and ensure they are routinely reminding clients about how to spot genuine communications, in order to protect their firm from incidents of 'Friday afternoon fraud!'”

: the ever more demanding client

How frequently do your clients expect to hear from you?

It is no secret that the emergence of Twitter and web chat as a means for customers to communicate with retailers and service providers has changed consumers' behaviours and expectations.

No longer are consumers content to wait for a letter in the post, or for a customer service advisor to pick up the telephone, they want access to information and support almost instantly.

This shift in attitude is reflected in conveyancing practices too, as consumers bring their high expectations for efficiency and speed into the house-buying process; creating an on-going industry challenge of managing 'the ever more demanding client'.

Most clients expect at least weekly updates from their conveyancer

The survey findings revealed that 73% of clients expect to hear from their conveyancer at least once a week. By contrast, just 21% of clients expect to hear from their conveyancer 'only when there is something to report'.

This high level of contact also presents opportunities for conveyancers to remind their clients more regularly about the threats of cyber crime, and in turn better protect the best interests of the firm and its clients in the long-term.

Managing expectations is key to delivering a positive client experience

While there is a clear preference for weekly contact, the range of responses given suggests a need for conveyancers to better understand and manage their clients' expectations to avoid delivering a disappointing experience.

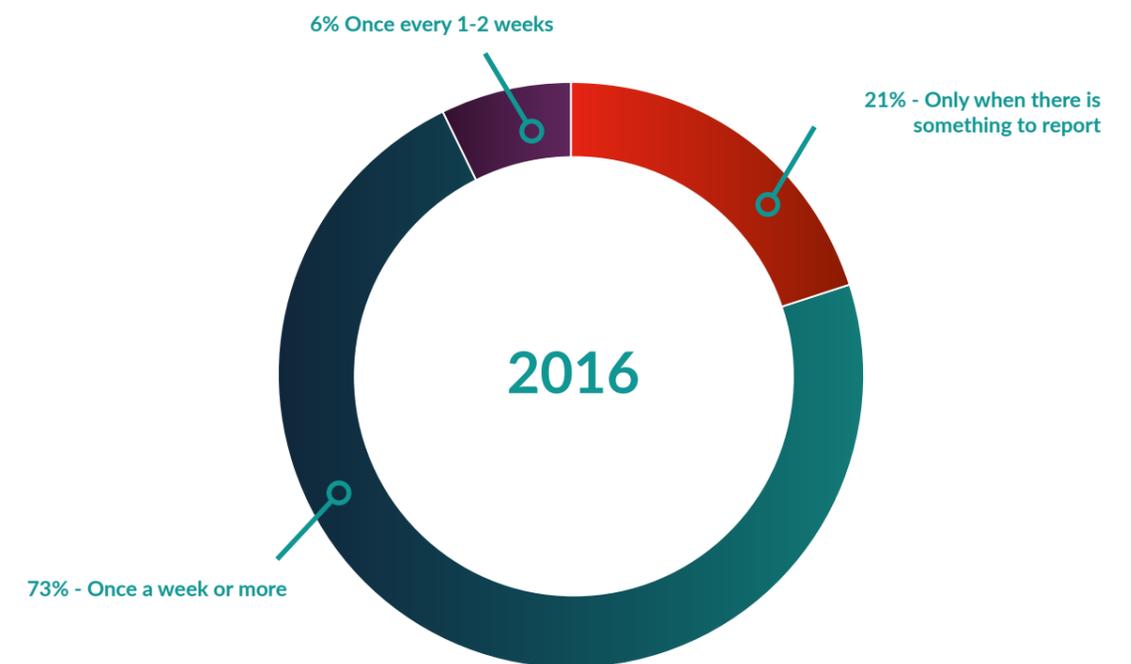
This is because a one-size-fits-all 'once a week' approach can be just as likely to upset a client who expects daily updates, as a client who expects to hear from you only when something has progressed.

An alternative solution is to introduce a real-time consumer portal to enable clients to view emails, messages, key updates, and milestones wherever and whenever they like; and reduce the demands on your time to keep track of individual clients' contact preferences.

With the forthcoming GDPR changes in 2018, it is best practice for conveyancers to regularly review their communication processes in order to respond to customer feedback, as well as adapt to new legal obligations.

How often should your conveyancer keep in touch during the process?

Only when there is something to report Once a week or more Once every 1-2 weeks



“As all conveyancers are aware, time spent sending back and forth emails to seemingly ‘ever more demanding clients’ can feel draining and inefficient.

These research findings highlight the demand clients bring to the property transaction and the importance of conveyancers addressing this challenge and finding a more cost-effective way of handling such communications.

Investing time early on in the relationship to understand an individual client's expectations, and manage them accordingly is a key way to help improve a law firm's efficiency.”

: the price factor

Are clients just after the lowest fees?

When trying to create a more competitive service offering, cutting fees is often seen as a quick-fix to attracting more clients to a particular firm.

Yet research has consistently shown that clients rarely select their conveyancer based on price.

Most clients still don't choose the cheapest conveyancer

Over the last 4 years there has been a slight variation in the number of people choosing their conveyancer based on who is offering the lowest fees.

However, as the data from the last 12 months continues to prove, the majority of clients avoid the cheapest solicitors when buying or selling their home; this is evident in the 86% of home movers who said they 'did not choose the cheapest conveyancer'.

This suggests that conveyancers can sell their services based on the quality of the customer experience. By ensuring that they are knowledgeable and up-to-date with the latest issues (such as GDPR and AML), they can reassure clients they have their best interests at heart and consistently deliver value for money; without needing to lower their fees.

More experienced buyers and sellers perceive that paying higher fees will result in a better service

These findings were slightly different when looking at age groups individually; as 23% of 21-29 year olds said they would choose the cheapest conveyancing solicitor, compared to just 7% of clients in the 70+ age bracket.

This suggests that older people who have moved multiple times perceive that paying higher fees will result in a better service.

Whilst not an overarching factor, conveyancers should take this into consideration when tailoring their services to the demographic of their target audience.

Clients opting for the cheapest fees are considerably less satisfied

Interestingly, clients who chose solicitors with the lowest fees were least satisfied with their experience.

This is evident in the 11-point difference in the Net Promoter Score (NPS), as those who made their decision based on the cheapest fees had a Net Promoter Score of 3, while those who didn't had a Net Promoter Score of 14.

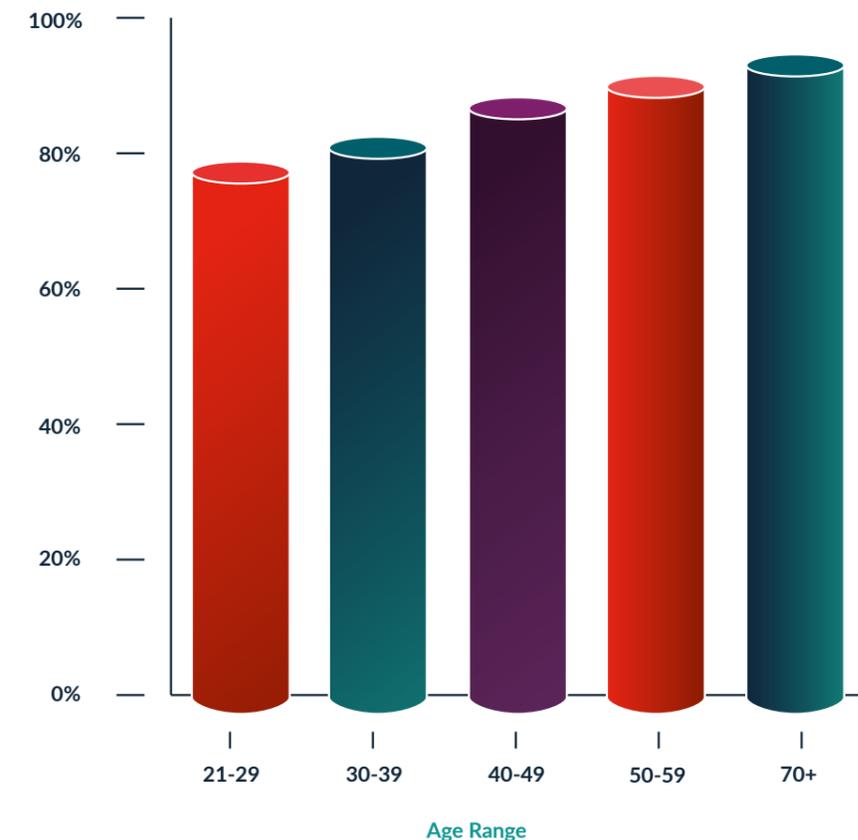
What is the Net Promoter Score (NPS)?

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a number used to measure how likely your clients are to recommend you to a friend or colleague, simply by asking: 'On a scale of 0-10, how likely would you be to recommend our firm?'

Respondents are grouped based on the score they give out of 10. To calculate your Net Promoter Score, you look at the percentage of respondents who fall into each category; and then subtract the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters.

- > Promoters (score 9-10) - These are loyal enthusiasts who will keep using your services and referring others, fuelling growth.
- > Passives (score 7-8) - These are satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who are vulnerable to competitive offerings.
- > Detractors (score 0-6) - These are unhappy customers who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word of mouth.

Did you choose the conveyancer who offered the lowest fee? (No)



“These research findings show that conveyancers should be confident enough in the service they are providing to avoid lowering their fees to attract new business.

By selling their services based on factors beyond price, conveyancers are more likely to attract clients who understand the value of a quality experience and are equally more inclined to recommend their positive experience to their friends and family.”

: recommend a friend

Would home movers recommend their conveyancer?

Word of mouth is a powerful mechanism for securing new business, as well as helping your firm stand out from the crowd; without having to rely on expensive marketing campaigns.

We asked respondents how likely they would be to recommend their conveyancer.

An overall Net Promoter Score of 12 suggests room for improvement

Collectively the survey responses revealed a Net Promoter Score of 12; this was based on 43% of respondents being 'promoters' and 31% of respondents being 'detractors'.

57% of clients aren't providing firms with new business opportunities

Taking both 'detractors' (31%) and 'passives' (26%) into account, on average 57% of consumers are walking away from firms without providing them with new business opportunities – and in fact 31% are likely doing a law firm's reputation damage in the process.

This suggests that conveyancers stand to gain considerably by focusing on key ways of improving customer satisfaction, and securing an increase in client-led recommendations.

"The revelation that a third of clients are walking away from firms with the potential to cause reputational damage highlights a need for conveyancer to focus more of their efforts on improving customer satisfaction.

Being proactive, communicating well and better managing expectations are all areas that conveyancers can work on to help improve a client's experience and ensure a good recommendation.

Conveyancing firms could also consider offering incentives to encourage clients to share their opinions. These findings can then be reviewed to help improve the experience for future clients."



Simon Wood, Sales Director at tmgroup

: summary

Consumer trends haven't really changed, what's new is the propensity for email fraud

Overall, these survey findings highlight that consumer expectations haven't changed much in the last few years. However, the market that conveyancers operate in has changed considerably due to the increasing threat of cyber crime.

This has led to a new sense of urgency in improving key areas of the conveyancing process in order to protect individual transactions, as well as the firm's reputation.

Here are some key considerations for every firm striving to thrive under the pressure of an increasingly risky market:

Keep in touch regularly - and remind clients about cyber crime

Since 2014, Home Moving Trends research has indicated that clients expect weekly updates from their conveyancer. Delivering against this expectation can help to reassure clients that their property transaction is progressing, and make them feel they are getting value for money from their conveyancer. It also presents an opportunity to remind clients of key cyber security messages, helping to ensure that the transaction is completed safely.

Looking forward, it is likely that the conveyancing world will begin to catch up with the banking sector, as secure online portals with 24/7 access to live information become prevalent in the home moving process. It is important that conveyancers start to adapt to such trends in order to maintain a competitive position in the market.

Invest time in communicating and reinforcing important messages

The survey findings worryingly revealed that solicitors cannot simply assume that clients read all of the paperwork given to them, or that key messages are consistently absorbed and understood. This is a cause for concern because any degree of client ignorance can lead to cases of 'Friday afternoon fraud', which have the potential to break the property chain, as well as damage a firm's reputation.

Conveyancers need to invest time in re-evaluating how they communicate with their clients, in order to protect everyone's best interests. They should also consider their client processes in a broader sense, in light of the forthcoming GDPR changes (which come into effect in May 2018), as well as the recent implementation of the European Union's Fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive.

Don't assume lowering fees improves the client experience

While some firms choose to lower their fees to attract new business, the research shows that this isn't something clients value, and that those who do choose the firm offering the lowest fees are typically disappointed. From reviewing the survey findings, a better strategy is to take a longer term view of the client experience; and focus on selling your services on the strength of your communication skills and proactivity, whilst routinely reviewing your customer feedback and tweaking your processes for maximum impact.



tmgroup : 1200 Delta Business Park : Swindon : SN5 7XZ

Tel : 0844 249 9200 email : helpdesk@tmgroup.co.uk website : www.tmgroup.co.uk

TM Property Searches Limited (company number 03775703) is a wholly owned subsidiary of TM Group (UK) Limited (company number 05278187). TM Group and its subsidiaries are registered in England: 1200 Delta Business Park, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN5 7XZ. TM Property Searches Limited and its subsidiaries are appointed representatives of CLS Risk Solutions Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. TM Group and its subsidiaries are appointed representatives of First Title Insurance plc, which is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority under registration number 202103.