
Report for Private
Client Solicitors

Revealed:

**A surprising way to
steal a march on
your wills and
probate competitors
– local and online**



Contents

Introduction.....	3
Strengthen your position locally... ..	5
The cheap, online behemoths who want to trample all over you	6
A scandalous mistake	6
What is the answer?.....	8
How can FREE online wills be profitable to your practice?	9
Why FREE online wills from Bequeathed make more sense	10
How we pass clients to you.....	13
Who are your new clients and how many are they?	14
Where Bequeathed finds you new clients	16
What do other practices think of the Bequeathed service?	18
... as do people who've used Bequeathed	19
What about your competitors?.....	21
How much does all this cost?	21

For your immediate consideration:

If you feel your practice might benefit from becoming Bequeathed's panel firm or have any questions, please call Jon Brewer on 07799 719 901 or send him an email at jon@bequeathed.org.

Perhaps you might like to discuss this opportunity with your partners now, whilst this report is fresh in your mind?

Introduction

It is difficult to make money out of private client work, isn't it?

You already compete with every other local law firm; now you have a new battle with unregulated online will-writing and probate services.

Moreover this battle can only get fiercer because sadly the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) - supposed to represent your interests - has welcomed, even encouraged these interlopers.



Jonathan Brewer
Founder

This report explains, in detail, how you may overcome these threats and in doing so actually gain more profitable private clients.

Quite a claim: and you may be surprised by, even sceptical of, the unusual solution this report proposes because it essentially suggests you beat these competitors by promoting free online will-writing services yourself.

This may strike you as a costly recipe for disaster. But before concluding this you should know:

- The free online wills cost your practice **nothing** – financially or in time
- Any potential client you speak to already **knows** they need your help and is ready to pay for it
- *4,367 people used this service in May 2019 alone*
- *Over 30 charities already support this*
- *As do 3,600 financial advisors*
- 92 other charities are considering this avenue

These charities and financial advisors are actually committed to helping you get more profitable clients. The reasons why will become clear as you read this report.

Before you read on, here's what two people with legal practices like yours say about this service:

“When Jon approached me, I instantly recognised the competitive advantage Bequeathed would give us. I certainly didn't want our competitors to have it. It's such a good fit for our firm: we want to be able to do more for local charities and, of course, we want to win new private clients but we also need to retain our margin on private client matters. Bequeathed helps us achieve all of those things.”

**—Wesley Bower
Partner
Simpson Sissons & Brooke LLP**

“I approached one of our major local employers about offering free wills to their staff. They absolutely loved the idea. We're now first port of call for 3000 employees when they need legal advice, not only for wills but across the range of personal legal services. And when the will-writing comes through Bequeathed, it's higher value work that can't be done online.”

**—Tracey Wright
Partner
Woollcombe Yonge**

Now please read on ...



Strengthen your position locally...

... by building relationships with charities and local employers

If your private client department is typical, your chief source of profit flows from probate work, usually as a result of your will-writing services.

After using you for will-writing, private clients continue to instruct you for *all* their legal requirements.

Logically, then, when any consumer in your area decides they need to write a will, it is *essential* to your profitability that they choose your practice.

How can you ensure this? Only by outflanking your competitors.

This could be by offering a service they don't offer. Or using a promotional weapon they don't use.

Well, like most practices, you probably promote your services via some or all the following means:

- Advertisements in local newspapers and magazines
- Sponsorship
- Blogs and articles on websites and in newsletters
- Website
- Listing in Yellow Pages and other directories – physical and online
- Pay per click advertising

But so do your competitors. How, then, do you stand out against them?

Well, since making a will so often leads to more work perhaps you've already tried offering free wills to attract clients. Only to discover the people who reply do so because they don't want to spend a penny.

But it gets even worse, because while you're distracted with your local battle, a greater, more dangerous threat has crept up on you:

The cheap, online behemoths who want to trample all over you

The internet is often compared to the American Wild West - with good reason.

Cowboys and snake oil salesmen are more prolific online than they were in Dodge City in the 1870's.

Websites abound with offers of free or cheap wills – ready to snatch prospective clients from you. And consumers simply don't know about the risks.

What's more, their budgets dwarf yours. For example, farewill.com raised an eye popping £7.5m from venture capitalists in January.

How do you compete with that? And quickly – because the unpalatable truth is you're *already* losing:

Farewill now writes 1 in 30 wills and by the end of 2019 is forecast to be writing 1 in 10'.

Visit their website and they go to great lengths to show how costly legal advice from a qualified solicitor is compared to their low price. And note how they compare their service directly with yours.

And they reassure by saying their wills are 'checked by experts'.

A scandalous mistake

As you know there's a vast difference between an 'expert' and a solicitor.

But your potential clients don't. And regrettably, by not standing up for the profession, by failing to demand that unregulated websites make it clear

¹ Source: <https://fundraising.co.uk/2019/01/22/online-will-writing-service-farewill-completes-7-5m-capital-raise/#.XPi8P4hKhaQ>

their service is nothing like your service, “your” SRA is making the mistake of allowing claims like this to be made:

Professionally checked wills for £90, or £140 for couples

As you probably realise, this claim - from farewill.com - is nothing but smoke and mirrors. And your average consumer simply doesn't know this.

By their own admission, these ‘professionals’ don't even have to have any legal experience.

A bad joke compared to your *proper* legal advice.

In his Advice to Bequeathed, Carl Troman, a barrister at 4 New Square chambers notes:

To say a will is “checked” ... to make sure everything is “ok” or “in order” is essentially meaningless as far as imposing a legal obligation or duty is concerned.

It is most certainly not the case that, by promising a will is “checked” or “provided” by a solicitor or similar, the company offering an online will is obliged to ensure that a suitably qualified person has performed any of the will making responsibilities ... one would ordinarily expect from a solicitor acting in relation to the preparation of a will.

He also says:

I speculate that some of those people who use the services of these website companies other than Bequeathed Ltd do not understand that and, on the contrary, believe that the website company is obliged to provide a will making service equivalent to that which they would receive if they were to instruct a solicitor. If that is their belief then they are very much mistaken and should their will be ineffective and they, or any disappointed beneficiary, seek redress from one of those website companies they will find that a very different prospect from making a claim against a negligent solicitor.

What is the answer?

This report suggests the only way to beat these people at their own game is to fight fire with fire.

And that is what the *Bequeathed* service enables you to do. It heads off the challenge of online only providers and their anti-solicitor rhetoric, whilst delivering valuable new private client business to its selected legal partners.

How is this possible?

Well, whilst the quality of most wills produced online is rightly questioned...

... if you promote a far better online will service, and it is free, your practice will get ahead – and stay ahead - of your competitors – local or online.

And that is what Bequeathed offers. It allows consumers to make a will however they wish: free online, or paid for through a quality-assured solicitor - on the phone or face-to-face.

It works in the best interests of the testator and your practice.



How can FREE online wills be profitable to your practice?

As counter-intuitive as it seems, our experience has **proved** offering free online wills is an ideal way for you to gain new clients. And not just a few clients.

Here's why.

People love the convenience of a free online service.

As one commented:

“Excellent product! I have been delaying writing a Will as it was such a hassle getting an appointment for me and my husband, especially with two children! This was so easy to do at home and only took me about 30 minutes. I have been telling all my friends about this service!”

Now that person's requirement was simple. They needed no legal expertise and might even have resented paying for something simple. Even if they had come to you there would have been little or no profit in the task.

But that person is by no means typical. That is because a great many others do *not* have simple needs.

In fact research and tests with actual clients reveal that a full two-thirds could really do with more help.

Naturally the lure of a free service attracts prospects. But once they start to draft their will we help them understand where they will need your professional advice.

They need proper advice from a practice like yours.

So yes: the free will offer gets them to act. And having begun the will, they want to complete it. Whilst a third do so, two thirds could really use your help.

But the benefits to the practice they deal with can be even greater.

Even if their will *doesn't* need legal help, our statistics show that 9% still use the Bequeathed system to appoint a firm as a Professional Executor.

And since they can do so with just one click, it's easy. In May, one of our panel firms picked up four Professional Executor appointments in wills completed online.

Why *FREE* online wills from Bequeathed make more sense

As mentioned earlier, a quick internet search reveals a horde of free, or low cost will-providers.

But you may wonder how Bequeathed is better than other seemingly similar offerings - and perhaps a good potential partner for you.

Well, as you will read in a moment, clients *love* Bequeathed.

There are three major reasons why:

1. The people involved
2. How the wills are created
3. The technology used

1. The people involved

You don't need to be a law firm; anyone can set up an online will service.

But obviously with any legal matter, let alone something as important as a will, it makes sense to deal with people who have legal backgrounds.

Bequeathed.org was started by former solicitor, Jonathan Brewer.

He started as a paralegal with Hammond Suddards (now Squire Patton Boggs) was trained and was admitted with Pinsent Masons and finished his career in practice at CMS Cameron McKenna.

His legal career was in professional negligence, including defending claims against solicitors.

He left practice in 2002 to study for an MBA at Imperial and then joined LexisNexis where he became Product Development Director.

You may have heard of, even used, some of the products he developed and launched, such as LexisPSL.

Brewer then set out on his own, building an online legal services company, Evident Legal. This was sold to a private-equity backed legal services provider.

He subsequently bought back some of the Intellectual Property – using it, as well as the insight from two pilots, to launch Bequeathed with his colleagues in June 2018.

These colleagues include Director of Content, Simon Hetherington.

Simon is a law graduate and former publisher of Halsbury's Laws of England and the Encyclopaedia of Forms & Precedents for 27 years.

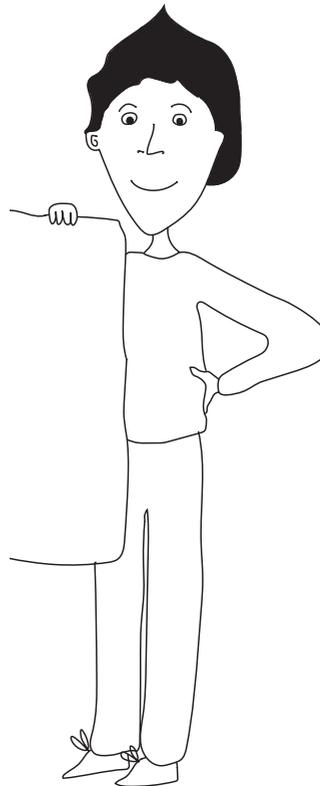
Our highly experienced Marketing Director, Crispin White, previously worked with Brewer on market launches at LexisNexis and Evident Legal.

And Bequeathed's COO, Pier Thomas, is a chartered accountant who's been a CFO in Fintech, Technology, E-commerce and Healthcare businesses.

The Bequeathed will process was developed by a former Withers solicitor.

2. How the wills are created

As a practising solicitor you know no two wills are alike. So a 'one size fits all' online service just won't work.



And because a will must cater for a diverse range of circumstances and can be extremely complicated, it isn't enough to simply have people complete an online form.

The 'platform' Bequeathed uses to create our wills is Exari – the industry leading document generation software.

Exari is used by blue-chip companies, banks and law firms around the world. You may well be familiar with Exari yourself as many solicitors use it.

It is designed not only to make changes easy, but also to ensure any change doesn't have any unintended consequences for the will.

It can deal with relatively complex circumstances because it doesn't rely on forms being filled in.

Exari is a 'conditional logic engine', building the will from clauses and wording based on the user's answers.

This guards against contradictory or ineffective provisions.

We've coded in automatic prompts to will-makers to consider any issues they hadn't already.

And we offer online 'chat' help based on 258 pages of guidance to help users make informed decisions.

To ensure Bequeathed wills are always legally up to date, our Director of Content proactively monitors changes in the law using online tools and STEP updates – making changes as necessary.

Finally our panel law firms – yours, if you become one - form part of our ongoing quality assurance processes. They use the product daily and feed in improvements or changes required as the law or best practice change.

3. The technology the service uses

Bequeathed's website and all the data from the will-writing process are securely held on servers in data centres operated by Rackspace.

Rackspace is trusted by many of the world's largest corporations - including 40% of the FTSE100. They are certified to the international standard for information security, ISO 27001.

Only specific staff from our IT provider, Tier 2 Consulting, have a username and password to access our Rackspace servers. And this access is only possible via a 'secure shell' (SSH) connection.

Users access Bequeathed using the secure internet protocol, HTTPS. Using bidirectional encryption - between the users' computer and the Rackspace server - the privacy and integrity of users' information is protected

To download their completed will, or access other sensitive areas of the Bequeathed website, users must first have their name and password authenticated.

Bequeathed's software has been developed in accordance with the Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) guidelines for security of web applications.

A penetration security test was passed in both 2016 and May 2019.

How we pass clients to you

When a user requires legal advice, we clarify their need using online chat.

The details of the chat are recorded and transferred to your firm. Always with the user's express, recorded permission.

A complete copy of the user's will and interview (as far as they got with it) is also included in Word. This immediately gives you a strong base to work from.

Of course, as a solicitor, your duty is always to satisfy yourself - either by phone or face-to-face - that your new client has considered all issues.

Only then can you properly advise.

So you contact the user to discuss the matter, agree a fee to cover the bespoke advice to be given. Then bring your new client on board through your standard regulated procedures.

Crucially, you pick up the matter within our system from the point at which the user left it.

This creates a seamless handover and adds to the user's incentive to complete their will with you.

It also preserves the data trail from us to you.

As you can see from the following testimonial, your prospective clients really appreciate this:

“This is an excellent service. I didn't realise that it was so easy to do. I had an unusual request to put in my will so had to seek guidance which was sorted in no time. Thanks to all concerned. I will definitely recommend this service to friends.”

When you speak to a new client, besides finalising their will, you can offer your Professional Executor and other services. As they started online but have chosen to pay for your advice, they're fantastic prospects for those services.

Who are your new clients and how many are they?

Quite possibly some in your firm will say that people don't go online for their wills.

- Or think those who do are not the sort of client your firm wants.

If your firm only deals with genuinely high net worth families, maybe they're right.

Otherwise, they're almost certainly wrong.

Bequeathed attracts over 4,000 unique visitors per month. And this number grows each month.

People aged 20 to 80 use the system to make their will online. With estate values ranging from £25k to £2m+.

Most users value their estates in the £250k to £1m bracket.

So we already know there is demand for Bequeathed from people of all ages and all demographics.

But as you can see from the graph below, most users are elderly - *including the property-rich baby-boomers who are ideal clients for your practice.*

They all started looking online, so they're not going to phone your firm or walk in.

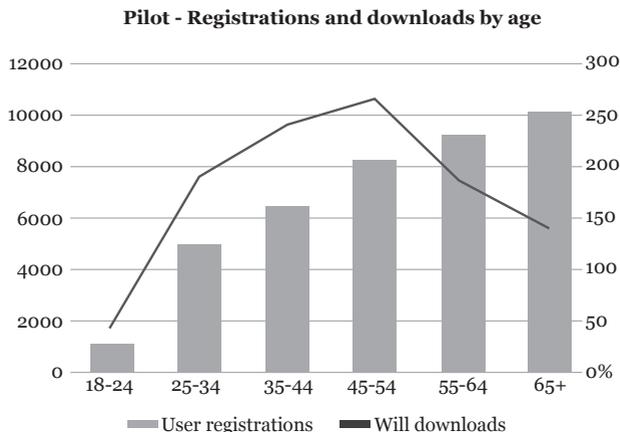
The dotted line on the graph represents those that completed the process online.

You can see the percentage of those who start - but do not complete online - drops as they get older.

They're sufficiently committed to making their will to start doing so and spend time on it ...

... but realise they can't complete it.

They need your wills advice and probate services.



Where Bequeathed finds you new clients

We use Pay Per Click advertising to generate visits to our website. Our spend on this aims to get 8,000 unique visitors every month.

We also have arrangements with 30+ national charities – we're talking to another 92 - and 3,600 financial advisors.

All of them recommend our service to their supporters and clients.

And here's the simple reason why charities partner with us.

£2.9bn is left to charities in gifts in wills each year. Voluntary income they simply cannot survive without.

As more and more will makers go online, charities must invest in online legacy marketing to ensure this valuable source of future revenue does not dry up.

How charities give you more clients

Charities pay us to promote their causes to our users within our online will-writing system.

During our initial pilot marketing activity we generated £3.2m in pledges in wills in 6 months from PPC traffic alone.

Charities make the most of their investment by also promoting us to their existing and new supporters. This is done with online campaigns and in TV and print advertising.

The charities also introduce us to their major corporate supporters, who make the offer to their employees.

Free wills which cost you nothing to deliver

Unlike traditional charity free will schemes you don't take on the cost of writing a free will for little or nothing :

- then try to recover that by persuading cost-conscious clients to consider additional services.

All the work for the free will is done online by us at Bequeathed (without any liability to you).

You only deal with clients who need advice and are prepared to pay properly for it.

You only take on profitable clients

The client is *our* user until they agree *your* retainer and your fee.

At that point you have a complete user interview to review with your new client and a first draft of the will to work with.

Further opportunities from charities and local employers

And no more embarrassment saying no to a free wills week - you can now tell them they can promote free wills year-round.

You can also offer it to local employers and other professionals in your region.

Bequeathed is a wonderful benefit for employers to offer: it costs them nothing, but ensures their staff have the will their families need.

Here's one telling example:

Bequeathed's partner in the West Midlands, FBC Manby Bowdler have recruited a museum, a hospice, a NHS hospital charity for its 20,000 employees and promotion to 1,000,000 patients across an entire NHS trust. Bequeathed is part of a cross-functional set of benefits the firm uses to establish deeper relationships with potential commercial clients in the region.



And another:

In Plymouth, our panel firm Woollcombe Yonge has recruited a local company employing 3,000 people. They've used it to also introduce employees to a range of other legal services the firm offers on preferential terms. They now receive conveyancing instructions as well.

And you gain all these benefits without your firm having to incur a single minute of a fee-earner's time in drafting a free will.

What do other practices think of the Bequeathed service?

Legal practices tell us constantly ...

"Bequeathed is a brilliant door opener to conversations about legal needs across a charity. So, yes, every charity we recruit with Bequeathed adds to the pipeline of supporters who start their will online and go one to take legal advice. But each of those charities becomes a prospect for employment matters, for commercial work and for estate administration where they've been left a gift."

—Neil Lloyd
Sales Director
FBC Manby Bowdler

"Charities know gifts in wills can transform the funding of their organisation but they don't have the resources to focus on it. Bequeathed solves that problem for charities. It's such an effective way for us to raise our profile in the community in a way that our competitor firms cannot."

—Scott Garner
Head of Business Development
Rix & Kay Solicitors

... as do people who've used Bequeathed

At the time of writing, 145 reviews have been posted on Trustpilot.

98% rate the service as good or excellent.

Here's what some of them say:

"The process from start to finish was easy to follow and help was always at hand. The online chat function was really helpful and when I needed talk to someone for extra guidance the team were more than happy to assist. There is no pressure either to give a donation but you have the option if you wish. Would highly recommend."

—James Hunter

"This company is brilliant with their customer service aspects and gave excellent guidance and support with a very tricky aspect of making our wills. They communicated by phone and E-mail and went through each stage of the process with us."

—Karen and Geoff Walker

"Excellent company, nothing was a problem they are there to help you. I only had to email and they emailed back within minutes."

—Lynn Stevenson

"Very easy to fill in. Explained every step of the way. Would recommend."

—Jacqueline Ibbitson

"Easy to follow will writing service. I had one area of confusion which was instantly cleared up by the great online chat service who replied within a couple of minutes."

—Lorraine Hepburn

"Very straightforward to use and compile our wills. Thank you and have recommended to a neighbour."

—Mick Kemp

“Once we went online instructions were easy and uncomplicated, always dreaded making a will as we thought that it would be complicated. To our surprise it was much easier than we thought. We knew what our wishes were and the questions were asked and we answered with ease of our own home.”

—Pamela Probert

“Amazing and simple, well laid out & so straightforward. Highly recommended for all.”

—K Spencer

“Excellent easy service with support along the way with prompt response to questions. Easy process . Feeling reassured my wishes now in place.”

—Carole Crocker

“Very easy to complete and explanations at points where required where good too. Thank you.”

—Lisa Gregory

“I was blown away by this service - far exceeded my expectations and the online chat help was first class. Would (and have) heartily recommend.”

—Mrs Sykes

“So simple and easy to do and there is help available all the way through completing the Will. Friendly advisors and document arrived within a few days. I would highly recommend this service.”

—Christine Elizabeth Sutherland

“I didn’t realise that it was so easy to do. I had an unusual request to put in my will so had to seek guidance which was sorted in no time. Thanks to all concerned. I will definitely recommend this service to friends”

—Derrick Mann

What about your competitors?

This report has been sent to many other legal practices in your area.

So if you realise that will-writing and probate - like so many aspects of our lives - will inevitably move online, you probably realise already that it makes sense to be our panel firm in your area.

You can wait until we have even more charities signed up and the number of people visiting our site has increased.

But this assumes one of your competitors has not already decided to become our one panel firm.

How much does all this cost?

If you have read thus far, no doubt you can see the potential a partnership with Bequeathed has for your practice.

But what investment does such a partnership require? Perhaps less than you might imagine.

To become Bequeathed's panel firm in your area there's a £599 setup fee.

Your subscription – from just £200/month - only starts once you get your first referral or Professional Executor appointment.

As you are doubtless aware many will-drafting tools cost significantly more, without offering any of the business development benefits just outlined.

To put it in the simplest terms if you only used Bequeathed to write your wills, you'd still be saving money. If you get just one new client each month this small charge will already have been defrayed. As our Liverpool panel firm said "it's buttons".

And unlike any traditional advertising or promotional activities, this investment is *only* targeted at people naturally likely to need your services.

For your immediate consideration:

If you feel your practice might benefit from becoming Bequeathed's panel firm or have any questions, please call Jon Brewer on 07799 719 901 or send him an email at jon@bequeathed.org.

Perhaps you might like to discuss this opportunity with your partners now, whilst this report is fresh in your mind?

Major charities that back this initiative include:



R N I B



And many more:

Mencap | Scope | Tree Aid | Seafarers UK | Norwood | PDSA |
Tree Aid | Possability People Limited | Birmingham Women's And
Children's Hospital Charity | University Hospitals Birmingham Charity |
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited | Marie Curie | Liverpool Charity
And Voluntary Service | Zoe's Place Trust | The Bluecoat | Hugs From
Henry | Bradbury Fields Services For Blind And Partially Sighted People