

Speech by Aleks Tomczyk at The British Wills and Probate Awards 2023

Good evening everyone,

I would like to start by thanking David, Allie, the rest of Today's Wills and Probate team, and all the staff here tonight at the Kimpton on behalf of all of us.

Congratulations to all the worthy winners so far. As a judge of some of the Awards myself I know that the standard of entries was very high.

As you heard my name is Aleks Tomczyk and I am Managing Director at [Exizent](#).

When we started sponsoring these awards, we realised that many in the sector would not know who we were or what we did.

We hope that has changed, but for those that don't know, Exizent is a bereavement technology company that provides easy to use software for professional practitioners working in estate administration. The software enables users to complete the probate process easily from end to end – including collecting information on an estate, producing court and inheritance tax forms, and generating estate accounts – all within the platform without the need for other software.

Since the start we have worked very closely with practitioners, using what is called a 'service design' led approach, so that we build what is really needed and we prioritise what comes next based on user feedback. 'Feedback is the breakfast of champions' is not just a cliché but an absolute necessity when building modern software and adding new functionality as frequently as we do.

The last few years have been particularly challenging in business, so it is useful occasionally to take a helicopter view. Coming here each year is one such useful opportunity for me.

We started Exizent not that long before the pandemic and I am pleased to say that we have broadly done what we planned to. Our legal services software is in use in many firms across the UK and receives excellent NPS scores and testimonials - including about our super Customer Support team.

On a night to be proud and celebrate achievements across the Wills and Probate sector, I want to publicly thank the whole Exizent team plus all those customers and probate practitioners for all your contributions so far. We look forward to continuing to work with you and to getting further feedback from all those currently onboard.

When Nick Cousins and I founded Exizent we did so with the explicit purpose of 'making bereavement easier for everyone involved in the process'.

We did not know how to measure success on this big task so we commissioned some research that we called the Bereavement Index to assess the 'state of the nation'. Just a couple of weeks ago we published the third Bereavement Index which gathers data from three key stakeholder groups.

If you have not read the [2023 Bereavement Index](#) please feel free to download a copy – there is a leaflet at your place with a QR code and the relevant links. Or search Bereavement Index 2023 if you are watching online.

There is a huge amount of data in the Bereavement Index identifying many of the problems in the space, but respondents also recommend solutions.

A few highlights for me included:

- The substantial mental health and financial impacts on individuals who had lost someone.
- That 66% of individuals used a professional to apply for probate on their behalf. 92% would make the same decision again.
- 94% of legal professionals think their firm could handle probate more efficiently.
- And 52% of financial services firms have plans to improve their customer's bereavement journey in the next 12 months.

On the recent [Today's Wills and Probate Webinar](#) where we were discussing the Bereavement Index, one of the questions David Opie asked was how probate practitioners deal with helping clients through the emotional side of probate. The discussion was recorded so you can listen to all the points made at your leisure, but I was very impressed by Nicola and Yasmin's caring and professional answers. Those of us here can never make the process easy, but we can make it easier by doing the best job possible for clients.

I am a big fan of 'starting with why'. Those of you who were at these Awards last year or watching online may recall that I asked why it was that practitioners enter the wills and probate space. I answered this question by suggesting it was to help people.

These Awards are about celebrating excellence and innovation in the sector. Showcasing what is great and thereby hopefully encouraging more of it.

Sponsoring this evening's Awards is therefore aligned with Exizent's purpose as a business. We are sponsoring the Customer Service Champion Award, which will be presented by my colleague Laura later because it speaks to that. We are the Networking sponsor as we strongly believe that it is by talking to each other, listening, collaborating, sharing good practices, and working together that we will ultimately do even better jobs for clients and also be more successful as businesses.

To this end, I have three asks of you all tonight.

Firstly, publicise the Awards on social media or just by talking about them. By making good practice visible we help ourselves and the overall system improve.

Secondly, read and discuss the Bereavement Index – within your own company or with peers. I am sure you will find something interesting to debate.

Finally, use the opportunity of our Networking Reception to talk to some people you don't know or have not seen for ages – or reach out to them online if you are attending virtually. Use the magicians that will be circulating upstairs to break the ice or come and speak to us at Exizent if you like!

Well done again to everyone nominated tonight including those waiting for the remaining award categories. We hope that you all enjoy the evening and celebrate with all the nominees and winners.

Congratulations to all of you from us all of us at Exizent and we look forward to meeting you at the Networking Reception in the Whitworth Room, at the conclusion of the Awards Ceremony.

With that could you please welcome Jennie back to the stage.