

Linklaters LLP increase their lawyers' commercial awareness and build better client relationships

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The challenge

To create business-aware lawyers who can provide not only legal expertise but also the sound commercial advice that their clients need and expect.

The solution

As part of an FT Group Subscription, the FT developed a tailored information service, including personalised email alerts, FT Watchlists and access to the FT on LexisNexis.

The benefits

With the increased commercial awareness conferred by the FT's international business intelligence, Linklaters' lawyers can give their clients better advice and thus build lasting client relationships.



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Rachel Manser

Global Head of Knowledge & Information, Linklaters

A global law firm with cross-border business

Linklaters LLP is a global law firm headquartered in London, UK. A member of the “Magic Circle” of leading UK law firms, it has 2,200 qualified lawyers operating in 19 countries and 70% of its work is on multi-country or multi-practice matters.

Linklaters’ work is split between three broad divisions:

- **Corporate.** The corporate division works on mergers, acquisitions, flotations, joint ventures and private equity. Its lawyers also specialise in antitrust/competition, employment, pensions and incentives.
- **Finance and Projects.** The finance practice advises banks, companies, funds and governments on their funding, hedging and investment activities: in addition, projects team works on leading global energy and infrastructure projects.
- **Commercial.** The commercial division offers a broad range of expertise to corporate and financial institutions, including litigation and dispute resolution, real estate, tax, technology, media and telecommunications, intellectual property and trusts.

The majority of Linklaters’ work has a cross-border element, so the firm also has a set of industry groupings, with partners from the three main divisions coming together to look at issues from a sector perspective.

As John Tucker, partner, banking practice at Linklaters said: “Our principal focus is on international business, so we are very aware of its interconnected nature. The vast majority of our work involves transactions across two or more jurisdictions.”

The changing face of client work

To meet the needs of clients operating in a more complex and challenging business environment, Linklaters recognised that a more sophisticated approach to building client relationships was required.

The firm wanted to make a fundamental shift from being partner-centric technical experts to clientcentric commercial experts. This meant finding ways to really “get under the skin” of its clients’ businesses; investing in the commerciality of its advisers; and demonstrating a deep understanding of sector trends and issues – all with the objective of building long-lasting client relationships.



When I talk to law students they inevitably ask me, ‘What do I need to do to get hired?’ I often tell them to read the FT.



John Tucker

Partner, Banking Practice, Linklaters



As Linklaters' Global Head of Knowledge & Information Rachel Manser explains, "Clients are asking advisers to deliver a more commercial assessment of risk and they want a view on future risks. You can't achieve this without a good level of commercial awareness."

"In addition, one of our key challenges is sharing knowledge from one area to another, breaking down silos and getting people in different practice areas to talk to each other. We're making a point of encouraging fee-earners to be more flexible and to become comfortable in many practice areas. Being able to "join the dots" means we can offer a more knowledgeable and valuable service to our clients."

Practical steps to build business know-how

Linklaters is fully aware of the importance of developing their lawyers' business know-how and is taking practical steps to make it happen. The firm has two main methods of creating business aware lawyers.

Firstly, it offers as much education as possible, including a bespoke training programme for new joiners and regular sessions with senior partners on current business topics.

"We have a well-established learning programme and curriculum that aims to develop business savvy lawyers," says Rachel Manser. "It helps them to understand their client's business objectives so they can provide advice in a commercial context, which in turn helps them develop better relationships. Our vision is to become the leading global law firm, and this learning programme is part of our strategy for achieving that."

Secondly, Linklaters equips lawyers with the tools and information they need to keep abreast of global business news and issues – which is why the firm subscribed to a Financial Times Group Subscription.

With almost 600 journalists in over 50 cities worldwide, the FT offers the global business intelligence needed to help Linklaters fee-earners to become more commercially aware and develop their international expertise.

In addition, FT journalism is available via LexisNexis which enables the knowledge team to fulfil research requests and supply relevant information on practice areas and sector developments to fee-earners worldwide.

Using FT.com to deliver relevant information

With an FT Group Subscription, all Linklaters lawyers receive unlimited access to FT content via desktop, mobile devices and third party channels, for a single subscription payment.

The FT content and tools accessed by Linklaters lawyers includes:

- Personalised email alerts relevant to their clients and industry areas, to help them keep abreast of relevant developments and be better informed at client meetings.
- Accurate and authoritative news, helping them to save time on fact-checking and additional research.
- Informed analysis, helping them acquire a deep understanding of client businesses and local markets so they can deliver a better service.
- A truly global perspective, supplying the big-picture insights that lawyers need for more strategic dialogue with clients.
- Detailed company news and profiles, making it quick and easy to learn about clients and their competitors.
- A library of over 250 special reports, for time-saving overviews of specific industries or business topics.
- Access via mobile phones and tablets, keeping lawyers and information advisers fully up to speed wherever they are.

A key goal for the firm is to embed FT information within the firm's overall intranet structure via RSS feeds, and to have personalised information portals and areas that combine business and commercial knowledge with legal information.

This will create a more personalised and client-focused intranet that is a one-stop, easy-to-use source.

Bringing added value to client relationships

The benefits delivered by FT.com are primarily seen as helping Linklaters provide better advice to clients. The broad perspective offered by the FT, and its reporting on the interdependencies across jurisdictions, is an important factor.

As John Tucker explains, "The FT provides context for client conversations and advice. Our clients don't want to talk about the law, they want to talk about their business, so it's important that we remain well informed about the context. For example, it's not just the news but the FT's reporting of the opinions and perceptions of key people. The FT has access to very influential decision-makers and we're interested in their reactions to the news."

Capital markets practice partner Paul Lewis agrees. "The FT is a catalyst to conversations, it can act as a spark," he says. "We look for potential connections when reading a story in the FT and then discuss with colleagues and clients to see what might come from that. And the market insight and market knowledge in the FT is superb."

Paul Lewis continues, "As well as the commercial context provided by the FT, we are also interested in what the FT has to say about organisational and management issues. The FT helps us to maintain awareness of the cutting-edge management research coming out of business schools and from leading thinkers."

With a better grasp of the business world, and of the risks and opportunities presented by global developments, Linklaters can offer a better service that sets the firm apart – resulting in more satisfied clients and long-lasting relationships.



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Paul Lewis

Partner, Capital Markets Practice, Linklaters





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