

Case Study

The Power of Document Automation

Clifford Chance + Contract Express

The Goal

Clifford Chance is one of the world's leading law firms, with 35 offices in 25 countries and some 3,400 legal advisers. A single partnership, the firm has unrivalled scale and depth of legal resources across the key markets of Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and the Middle East and in the core areas of commercial activity including capital markets, corporate M&A, finance & banking and real estate.

At the very largest law firms, document assembly is now the norm. Clifford Chance has used Contract Express since 2001, when it replaced an inefficient system of many different manual templates.

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Before we had a number of document templates on the same theme, which was inefficient to maintain. Now, our lawyers need to answer just a single set of questions to get their new variation of the document. As well as the obvious time savings for them, it means our document specialists can devote their time to adding more richness and value to the templates rather than managing multiple versions.”

Gail Swaffield, Director of Knowledge Management Systems
Clifford Chance



The Solution

A key benefit for Clifford Chance is simplicity. In the past, when they needed multiple documents, lawyers had to apply the same concepts across maybe five or six templates. Now, one interview populates several documents with the same information. This keeps work consistent too, ensuring that answers are applied across a complete set of documentation in the same way. Plus it adds an important layer of risk management, removing the potential for errors that might occur if the same comments were made manually across a set of several documents. There is still a degree of manual work needed in the fine customisation of documents, but the nitty-gritty amendments – for example changing ‘borrower’ to ‘borrowers’ or ‘has’ to ‘had’ are all automated.

The Result

As Gail Swaffield notes, this way of working is now the norm at Clifford Chance. “Document automation is now the standard for us. The key value is efficiency – the fact that our lawyers can get to a first draft quicker and that both they and our document specialists are free to focus on more interesting and more valuable work. Then, of course, there’s the consistency, and the part the technology has to play in managing risk.” Clifford Chance is still making incremental improvements to its capability together with the Contract Express team. For example the firm can now ‘merge manual edits’ in our documents, making manual changes after the first draft then sending the document back through the Contract Express questionnaire, which keeps it ‘live’ in the system for longer, with all the benefits of control and consistency.

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Gail Swaffield, Knowledge Management Specialist
Clifford Chance

Say ‘yes’ with Contract Express.

