



Leading User-Centric Innovation by Design

Type	Gulf Legal Advisor
Date	5 juin 2019
Jurisdiction	United Arab Emirates
Copyright	LexisNexis

Document link: https://www.lexismiddleeast.com/pn/UnitedArabEmirates/Leading_User-Centric_Innovation_by_Design



Overview

As usual, Mark Cohen summed it up well in his article “Legal Innovation Makes Headlines; Change is Tough Yards”, reminding us that while innovation awards, announcements and events are flourishing, customer satisfaction remains low and “real change” has yet to happen in the legal industry.

As lawyers, whether in-house or in private practice, we're all subject to the “injunction to innovate”. While some of us embrace it more easily than others, most lawyers will start running the innovation race looking for shiny tools, such as automation or AI.

We love tech and fully acknowledge that it can provide us with fantastic instruments, but why should innovation necessarily start with tech? In other words, why do we start with the means, rather than the users?

And what is innovation in the first place? Having spent over a year studying innovation by design, what I know for sure is that there's no single definition of innovation. Progress? Invention? Discovery? Mere change? Etymologically, to innovate means putting something new inside, “from within”.

Following that lead, what could we put “inside” the legal industry to bring about progress? How about putting the user “inside”?

This is called legal design: a powerful catalyst for change, that uncovers innovation opportunities by looking at problems and situations with a user-centric mind-set. Design has long been a transformational force that helps organizations create innovative products, services and experiences that resonate with users. Thus generating something priceless: seamless adoption.

But where do we start to lead user-centric innovation?

Practical Guidance

Know who you're (really) working for

Not just the legal division, but the actual users of the contract, compliance program or legal document that you are drafting. They are the (non-lawyers) people who will read, negotiate, use and ideally apply this legal document. Obviously, there could be different types of users, which is why it's useful to create one or several “personas”, applying the user profile method:

- Get personal: Make up a name, age, family status and even a favourite quote that describes the user. Think that you're creating a biography, and step into the shoes of the user.
- Pay attention to daily routines: What does a typical day of work for that user look like? How much time will he or she have to read your document? What are the user's good and bad habits?
- Look at their professional background and needs with empathy: What's the user's general understanding of law? What is he or she going to do with the legal advice or document at stake? Why should he or she care about that legal document in his business environment?

Identify what users need the most and what are the worst friction points in their current experience of the legal document at stake

Well, that's usually the easy part! As a lawyer, you've necessarily heard many times your clients complaining about the inadequacy of legal documents and tools, and expressing frustration. And the minute you start asking around and involving your users, you'll get lots of insights. This is your opportunity to innovate.

- Start by mapping out the key milestones in their “journey” facing the legal issue or using the legal document at stake. Where do they start, where do they end, and what are the main steps in between?
- Then identify all the questions, information gaps, and blind areas the user is usually faced with.
- Finally, map out their emotions, such as their level of satisfaction or frustration at each of the steps. The higher frustration and deeper information gaps are your Blue Ocean. This is your chance to bring about real change for the users.

Think about these pain points as if you had a clean slate

This is where the innovation process gets uncomfortable for lawyers. Ideally, lawyers would want to push a button and have a ready-made, tested and validated answer.

Innovation is never going to be that way. It implies departing from our own habits and ways of thinking about problems, and acknowledging that we're going to test something that has not been done before, or not in the same way.

Try out a few of these tools:

- Start every sentence by “What if?” or “How might we?”
- Go for quantity. Give yourself five minutes to come up with as many different ideas as possible.
- Any person saying “this is not possible” has to come up with an alternative.

- Leverage your users through the “magic wand”. Tell your users to imagine there are no constraints, everything is possible, and then ask them what does the ideal document/service/process look like?

Try your new solution out, get feedback and improve it

Prototype early, as this means that you're going to test a “first draft” of a solution, the purpose of which is not to be perfect, but precisely to test a few usage scenarios. Testing this prototype early with your users will enable you to identify what works, what doesn't and give you a chance to make it better through iteration.

What does user-centric innovation look like in practice? Terms of purchase that suppliers will want to read and will easily and swiftly understand, compliance codes of conduct that business teams will adopt and apply, digital native contracts that will fit the natural way of doing business for millennials, interactive privacy compliance programs in which business teams identify immediately what they need to know and to do, digital platforms between the legal division and its internal clients that engage users, and so on. The only limit is the needs of the users!

Author



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Areas of expertise

Legal Design; Innovation

Education

- DESS, Université Pantheon Assas, France
- LL.M, University of Essex, UK
- Masters in Innovation by Design, ENSCI, France

Memberships

- Admitted to the bar in France

Biography

- Prior to founding Amurabi, a legal innovation by design agency, Marie worked for over 10 years in Magic Circle firms in London, Brussels, Paris and Mexico. She then moved in-house as Europe Legal Manager at Chanel, before becoming EMEA General Counsel at Estée Lauder Companies.
- She obtained a Master's Degree in Innovation by Design at ENSCI, and is heavily involved in research and pro bono access to justice projects.

Notes

1. ^{^ [p.4]} www.amurabi.eu