

SJ Berwin LLP

SJ Berwin LLP is a pan-European law firm with offices in Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan, Munich, Paris and Turin. With over 170 partners and 500 lawyers, they advise on a comprehensive range of legal services including Corporate Finance, Commercial, Real Estate, Finance, Reconstruction & Insolvency, Financial Services, Litigation, Intellectual Property, Employment & Pensions, EU & Competition and Tax.



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HELEN THORNHILL
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT,
SJ BERWIN LLP

Early Adopters of CRM

As a leading pan-European law firm, SJ Berwin LLP understands the need for an in-depth and integrated view of their clients firm-wide, and the importance of nurturing client relationships. The firm today has over 170 partners and 500 lawyers who advise on a comprehensive range of legal services. When the firm first rolled out InterAction, they knew this investment in CRM would reward them with improved client satisfaction, increased business opportunities and improved decision-making.

The Importance of Data Quality

As an early adopter of CRM technology in the UK, SJ Berwin first implemented InterAction in 2000 as a Marketing-led program to centralise firm-wide contact management for lawyers and secretaries. Although this alone was a major undertaking for any law firm at the time, SJ Berwin quickly moved into phase two of their project by adopting InterAction as their central marketing platform. This allowed the firm to further consolidate technology, replacing the Elite PDS marketing module with a system that could be linked to every secretary and lawyer.

In 2001, SJ Berwin began considering the next step in their evolving approach to CRM process and technology. CRM technology had developed considerably at this point, and the firm realised they needed to take a hard look at data quality. SJ Berwin’s culture was examined to determine the best approach to address both of these areas.

Alison Jesset, Marketing Operations Manager at SJ Berwin said, “We realised after some time that it was critical for Business Development and Fee Earners within the firm to get involved in the CRM process so that we could really start to see higher levels of ROI. Data quality within a CRM application is of the utmost importance, and without their input the system was suffering. The decision was taken to decentralise editorial access to the data, making data quality a firm-wide responsibility and changing the strategic focus of InterAction.”

“We devised a training programme that was relevant to our new approach but which took into consideration Fee Earner and secretarial working practices. We decentralised access to the CRM software and had the data cleaned to ensure maximum confidence in the system. By this time InterAction had also introduced unique data quality features in the software to help law firms manage information more effectively. We noticed a huge improvement almost immediately.”

Although data quality was administered centrally by the marketing department, a number of secretaries around the firm were given some data steward responsibilities, including duplicate merge. Over the years, their role has been expanded to encompass other tasks which have enabled them to make better use of the data change management tools which are available in InterAction.

The success of any CRM application is contingent upon its users, and once SJ Berwin adjusted their internal strategy the results were outstanding. The tactical CRM needs of law firms tend to focus on short-term gains around client acquisition, development, retention and servicing. However, CRM is also capable of helping firms achieve the cross-functional integration of people, operations, processes and marketing capabilities. Today there are over 1300 people using InterAction within SJ Berwin across the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Belgium.

Developing a Relationship Management Strategy

Successful CRM also requires internal leadership to drive its success. What started out as a marketing database and IT system was transformed into a sophisticated business development tool driven by a team of senior employees of the firm. Since 2001, SJ Berwin has made major strides in its use of InterAction and is now able to better target clients who yield maximum spend, proactively manage decreasing client activity, effectively channel business development efforts and allocate budgets with greater efficiency.

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Helen Thornhill, Director of Business Development at SJ Berwin said, "InterAction has allowed us to streamline a lot of our processes and has revolutionised the way we manage our client relationships. It has allowed us to report back on marketing activity to the partnership, and saves us a huge amount of time. Our turnover has increased significantly over the years and I believe InterAction has played a part in that."

Evolution to Meet the Changing Business Needs

SJ Berwin understands that CRM is an evolutionary process, and that their use of technology must regularly change to respond to the firm's changing business strategies. SJ Berwin ensures that all new employees are given training on InterAction at induction, including Fee Earners who often have some degree of prior knowledge of InterAction from their last firm. The secretarial training programme is modular, with each secretary being required to sit three further modules in more advanced features of InterAction after their initial induction training. As the system evolves in line with the firm's business strategy, staff are required to attend presentations and workshops which enable the firm to communicate these changes at all levels. What is important for staff to learn is not just how you use InterAction, but why it is a critical component of meeting the firm's strategic goals.

Daniel Von Weihe, Sales and Operations Director for LexisNexis InterAction said, "After seven years of measured success and gradually increasing user adoption, SJ Berwin has been able to leverage the power of InterAction to provide a valuable tool for staff at all levels of the firm. We are honoured by SJ Berwin's confident approach with InterAction and their decision to use it to support their pan-European client relationship management strategy."

