

Case Study— LexisNexis® Public Records

Overview

Location: Minneapolis, Minn.

Industry: Legal services

Customer Profile: Founded in 1996, Nilan Johnson Lewis (NJL) is a 45-attorney midsize law firm practicing in the areas of product liability/mass tort, labor and employment, commercial litigation, health care and business law.

Business Situation: NJL had enjoyed access to both LexisNexis® and Westlaw® for online legal research since its inception, but the firm relied exclusively on LexisNexis® for access to private databases, regulated content and public records. In 2011, the firm made the decision to reduce costs by moving to a single provider for online research.

Solution: NJL looked carefully at both major providers and evaluated everything from content and technology to pricing and support. The partners were pleased with the greater contract flexibility they were offered from LexisNexis and, in the end, the firm's access to LexisNexis® Public Records was considered to be so indispensable that NJL ultimately regarded it as a major factor in its final decision. They selected LexisNexis as their exclusive provider of online research and have been pleased with the decision.

Results:

- NJL uses LexisNexis® Public Records content to conduct jury research for the litigators, using public records to gather information about prospective jurors.
- A number of basic administrative tasks are made much easier with LexisNexis® Public Records, such as tracking down individuals or company executives.
- Public Records has become an excellent tool for trying to collect judgments and even accounts receivable.
- And SmartLinx®, which is part of the LexisNexis® Public Records offering, has also proven to be a powerful tool for NJL because it allows the firm to quickly generate a comprehensive report on a person, business or location in one single search ... and in a matter of seconds.
- LexisNexis® Public Records makes it easy for NJL to manage research costs effectively, which is especially important since the firm does not charge its clients for online research.
- NJL has fully integrated LexisNexis Public Records and SmartLinx across the entire firm, which keeps their firm running most efficiently and provides them with a competitive edge.

Product Summary:

Research Solutions

- LexisNexis® Public Records
- SmartLinx® Comprehensive Reports
- *lexis.com*®
- Lexis Advance™

Other LexisNexis products used by the firm

- Lexis® for Microsoft® Office

Nilan Johnson Lewis Turns to LexisNexis® Public Records and SmartLinx® for Better Client Service, and Greater Firm Efficiency and Profitability.

Nilan Johnson Lewis (NJL) was founded in 1996 to introduce strategic, more effective ways to solve clients' legal challenges. Since that time, the firm has achieved consistent growth in both clients and revenues, a strong trajectory that is the product of its founders' shared ideals and the artful execution of clients' objectives by everyone involved with the firm.

Based in Minneapolis, the 45-attorney law firm practices in the areas of product liability/mass tort, labor and employment, commercial litigation, health care and business law. NJL is highly regarded throughout the region for its diverse workforce—nearly half of its attorneys are women and roughly 10 percent are persons of color—and is a multiple-time winner of various bar association awards for diversity in its offices and flexibility in its employment arrangements.

But the firm's greatest professional achievement has been its success in representing clients. In a client survey, 93 percent of respondents said that NJL attorneys either meet or exceed their expectations. This is accomplished by the firm's dedication to client service and responsiveness, knowledge of the client's business, a menu of alternative fee arrangements, free educational sessions and budgetary discipline.

Situation

An additional commitment that NJL makes to its clients is unique in the legal services industry: the firm does not charge its clients for online research. This is attractive to clients for obvious reasons, but it also places a major responsibility squarely onto the firm's library services staff, attorneys and paralegals. And this is also where LexisNexis® Public Records is a huge benefit to the firm.

"From the founding of the law firm in 1996, we had access to both LexisNexis® and Westlaw® for online legal research," explained Leslie Kallas, NJL's firm librarian. "This was a luxury for our library services staff as we were able to track down pretty much anything needed by our attorneys, but the firm ultimately concluded it was simply too costly to maintain subscriptions to both services."

In early-2011, the firm made the decision to reduce costs and consolidate platforms by moving to a single provider for online research—that of LexisNexis.

"One of the most important categories of online research that we had come to rely upon on a daily basis was public records content," said Kallas. "This is information available from public sources—but accessible on private databases, regulatory sources and from public records—that can help you locate an individual or business, investigate an expert witness or a prospective juror, and conduct other sorts of due diligence. As we started the process of determining our single partner for online research, it was important to us to select a provider with rich public records content as well as search and linking capabilities to support our research needs."

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—Leslie Kallas, Librarian
Nilan Johnson Lewis

Solution

NJL attorneys, paralegals and library staff looked carefully at both major providers and evaluated everything from content and technology to pricing and support. An additional consideration they discussed was how each company had approached their business relationship with the firm in the past several years.

“One thing that stood out to all of us was that LexisNexis had been a true partner to us throughout the past 15 years, including their willingness to demonstrate some flexibility on our contract terms during challenging economic times,” recalled Kallas. “In hindsight, that made us feel that LexisNexis had invested in building a long-term relationship with our firm and had never taken our business for granted.”

Another major differentiation that emerged in their internal review was that the firm had come to rely exclusively on LexisNexis Public Records for access to private databases, regulated content and public records. With LexisNexis Public Records, the firm was capturing comprehensive information quickly and with the highest degree of accuracy. LexisNexis® Public Records provide legal professionals with access to one of the world’s largest online public records collections and then hands them the leading and most highly sophisticated technology available to quickly surface the data they need. LexisNexis Public Records help legal professionals spot vital connections among people, businesses and locations—connections they can’t easily find through other online providers or even the open Web.

There are more than 36 billion records contained in the LexisNexis Public Records collection. This includes information on more than 7.9 billion unique name/address combinations that map to approximately 586 million unique identities, more than 1.1 billion business records, 2 billion business contact records, more than 350 million unique businesses and more than 1.2 billion unique contacts. Beyond this massive collection, LexisNexis Public Records aggregates millions of personal phone numbers, including difficult-to-find cell phone numbers, 318 million unlisted phone numbers, and over 3.2 billion records of personal property data, which covers almost 95 percent of the U.S. population.

“We rely heavily on LexisNexis Public Records to ensure that our research is thorough and accurate by using their sources to locate elusive parties, witnesses, officers and directors, owners of businesses and other individuals, track ownership of assets and much more,” said Kallas.

In fact, the firm’s access to LexisNexis Public Records was considered to be so valuable that NJL regarded it as a major factor in the final decision. In the summer of 2011, NJL selected LexisNexis as their exclusive provider of online research.

“We’ve discovered that our access to LexisNexis Public Records content gives us an excellent tool for trying to collect judgments or accounts receivable.”

–Leslie Kallas, Librarian
Nilan Johnson Lewis

Results

NJL has been pleased with its decision to switch to LexisNexis as its sole provider of online research. The firm’s lawyers, paralegals and library services staff continue to rely upon LexisNexis® Public Records in order to achieve a number of important benefits, such as the following:

- **Jury Research**

“As a firm that does a lot of product liability and mass tort litigation, one of our primary uses of LexisNexis Public Records content is to conduct jury research for the litigators,” said Kallas. “We use publicly available sources to gather information about prospective jurors in a trial. For example, we look up basic information such as any civil filings against companies in the same field as our client, any employment issues they may have had or any public comments about our clients on the social media.” This research can often identify a strong personal bias that may not have otherwise been obvious to the litigation team and could have a detrimental impact on a trial.

- **Administrative Tasks**

The firm’s staff members also use LexisNexis Public Records for basic administrative tasks, such as tracking down individuals or company executives and also for accounts receivables. For example, proprietary LexisNexis data-linking technology recognizes similar last names, nicknames, spelling variations, typos, etc., and automatically groups public records on the “same” people and businesses.

- **Collections**

“We’ve discovered that our access to LexisNexis Public Records content gives us an excellent tool for trying to collect judgments or accounts receivable,” said Kallas. “We can even find bankruptcy histories, track ownership of hidden assets and gather intelligence on related business entities so we know all of our available options for collecting on debts owed to the firm.”

- **SmartLinx® Comprehensive Reports**

SmartLinx® comprehensive reports are part of the LexisNexis Public Records offering. It is a fast, easy-to-use reporting tool. A single search combs through billions of public records, finding names, addresses, phone numbers, and other information that links people, locations and businesses in one convenient, rolled-up report. This has proven to be a powerful tool for NJL because it allows them to quickly generate a comprehensive report in one single search. “We often start our research with SmartLinx in order to get a quick take on where we need to go next,” said Kallas. “We view SmartLinx as the best starting point, then we go conduct our detailed research by exploring the vast LexisNexis Public Records database. After we’ve completed our research, we return to SmartLinx when we’re ready to pull together the key information in a comprehensive report for the lawyers or our clients.”

“LexisNexis® Public Records and SmartLinx® allow our firm to provide better client service and do it in a manner that keeps our costs down.”

–Leslie Kallas, Librarian
Nilan Johnson Lewis

- **Cost Management**

The LexisNexis® Public Records platform makes it easy for NJL to manage research costs effectively, which is especially important since the firm does not charge its clients for online research. Any sources outside the firm’s public records subscription are clearly identified with a “\$” so users can easily see and choose whether to access these sources.

“By using LexisNexis Public Records, we can access the most current and accurate information in a much faster way than is otherwise possible, and then by using SmartLinx, we can quickly pull together the key information into a comprehensive report,” concluded Kallas. “LexisNexis Public Records and SmartLinx allow our firm to provide better client service and do it in a manner that keeps our costs down. The result is that our clients are more satisfied and our firm achieves greater profitability.”

About LexisNexis

LexisNexis® (www.lexisnexis.com) is a leading global provider of content-enabled workflow solutions designed specifically for professionals in the legal, risk management, corporate, government, law enforcement, accounting, and academic markets. LexisNexis originally pioneered online information with its Lexis® and Nexis® services. A member of Reed Elsevier [NYSE: ENL; NYSE: RUK] (www.reedelsevier.com), LexisNexis serves customers in more than 100 countries with 15,000 employees worldwide.

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