



TREEHOUSE INNOVATION CASE STUDY

How **DLA Piper** is transforming its culture to deliver **greater impact** for clients





Understanding the **prevailing mindset** and the scale of change

Like many industries, the legal sector is facing a variety of disruptive challenges - from digital transformation to ever changing client expectations.

Global law firm DLA Piper - now Law.com International's Law Firm of The Year 2020 - saw an opportunity not only to address these challenges head on, but to capitalise on them to build stronger and more innovative client relationships. The result is an organization-wide Radical Change programme.

The programme is designed to fundamentally change the way the firm operates and enable it to better meet client needs by embedding new mindsets and ways of working, embracing new technologies, and developing and expanding its services.

Treehouse Innovation was delighted to partner with DLA Piper to deliver one of the key strands of their Radical Change programme; Design Thinking. But it was clear from the outset that some 'off the peg' design thinking training was not going to deliver the radical change DLA Piper was looking for.

Working as a joint team, DLA Piper and Treehouse Innovation agreed a brief to develop a framework, tools, training and support programme that resonated with lawyers and legal support staff, in order to drive change centred around what clients really want.



Why Design Thinking?

"I lead the Change Council at DLA, which is a cohort of 13 members from across international business. I realised that we would never come up with 'radical' change ideas if we used our same old ways of working. I had done some design thinking sessions and loved how they enabled me to be more creative, to tackle problems in a different way, and to think differently. So I used some of the techniques I had learned with this group to see if it took our thinking in a different direction.

We got great results and everyone really enjoyed it, but when we reflected on what we'd done, we noticed that it had been quite uncomfortable. The approach we took challenged our mindsets and the way we usually do things - and that's exactly what I wanted. As a group we realised that it would be truly radical if all 8000+ people in the firm had this same shift in mindset.

So that's how we ended up working with Treehouse. This project isn't just about rolling out design thinking, it's about how we change the DNA of DLA and use design thinking as a conduit to create that shift in mindset, and the way people approach problems, think about our clients, and what we can do."



JANA BLOUNT
CHANGE MAKER, DLA PIPER





THE DLA DESIGN JOURNEY

From discovery to Radical Change

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Understanding the prevailing culture

- Being clear about where you want to end up
- Understanding who needs to be involved, how they see things currently and where you expect sticking points
- Agreeing how you'll work as a team



Making Design Thinking work for DLA Piper

- Taking time to understand your users needs (in this case learners and potential DLA designers)
- Being prepared to tweak 'methods' and 'tools' to work within your own organisation
- Giving new ways of working the broadest appeal



Building Capability

- Create a learning journey for each skill level
- Create hands-on and engaging learning experiences that allow people to build confidence in new skills
- Target new learners and find enthusiasts to act as catalysts



Going global

- Find ways to engage people remotely
- Create pockets of experts and enthusiasts in new locations
- Make it easy and enjoyable for people to learn and use



Creating an impact

- Get clients involved. Use creative engagements to start new conversations
- Don't save new skills for special occasions. Find ways to integrate them into the everyday





Understanding the **prevailing mindset** and the scale of change

When adopting any transformational project, it is crucial to understand the culture of your audience.

The joint DLA Piper and Treehouse Innovation team embarked on an immersive two-day discovery workshop to understand and experience design thinking and consider how best to leverage this in the pursuit of client-centred radical change.

The joint team spent time identifying the current mindsets within the organisation and agreeing the skills and behaviours we wanted people to adopt in the future.



What we learned:

Adopting design thinking mindsets and tools can be a big adjustment for any organization, but for law firms it can feel like an even bigger jump because, as expert advisors, they're used to being expected to know the answer to client problems. The level of training required to qualify in the legal profession, and the level of process and rigour followed to be effective in the role, means it can be a real challenge to encourage lawyers to adopt new approaches in their day to day work. We knew we had to develop a programme that would allow people within the firm to learn, experience and practise design thinking in a 'safe' way.

"It's totally understandable that lawyers would feel nervous about using design thinking because their value is in the accuracy of their advice. Switching to a new mindset which takes them away from automatically finding the answer and instead exploring the broader issue in partnership with their client, is going to feel daunting.

But it's a crucial switch to make, as design thinking is all about learning how to identify unmet or even yet to be expressed needs - and that's exactly what DLA Piper wants to be able to do for its clients."



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Making **design thinking** work for DLA Piper

To help people across the firm see how design thinking could help them provide a better service for clients, the joint team set about creating a bespoke design framework: DLA Design.

Design thinking frameworks can be found in abundance but following some detailed user research with employees across the firm, the joint DLA Piper and Treehouse Innovation team concluded that a bespoke design methodology was needed to ensure that it resonated with the firm, their clients and the nuances of legal services.

The resulting **DLA Design framework** uses language best suited to the firm and to the legal profession. It also incorporates tools and templates which are unique to the firm, to help people apply DLA Design successfully in their day to day work.



What we learned:

“Having our own unique design thinking framework has made a huge difference. We’ve used words that are familiar to people and that they feel comfortable using. It’s also helped us get buy-in internally as we’ve created an approach that’s unique to us, and we’ve done it in partnership with Treehouse - a leading consultancy business. That’s helped our lawyers understand how much thought has gone into this, and that the process has been rigorous.”



JAMIE WALLIS
HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, DLA PIPER

“We wanted to create our own bespoke framework to help our teams see what we’re asking of them. We’re not just asking people to empathize - as our lawyers speak to clients everyday and already do that. It’s about helping them understand that they’re looking for different things in client conversations, and need to ask different questions. That seems to resonate a lot more with people.”



JANA BLOUNT
CHANGE MAKER, DLA PIPER





Building capability

Having created the DLA Design framework and supporting tools, the next step was to get people skilled in using them.

A series of highly collaborative and experiential training courses and learning interventions were created - ranging from building basic awareness of design thinking skills, tools and mindsets, all the way to design mastery, enabling legal professionals to lead client co-innovation events.

The DLA Piper Radical Change team knew that they had to build capability at scale - and quickly - to ensure they could begin making a difference to their clients as soon as possible. They set an ambitious target of training 100 people in the first two months. They soon exceeded that, running events in London and Dublin with attendees from across Europe, reaching over 250 colleagues.

Clients were invited in to be interviewed to help our DLA Design learners hone their empathy skills and give people the confidence to use new techniques with their own clients.



What we learned:

The approach to this training and support was informed throughout by interviews conducted right at the start of the project with DLA Piper employees.

The joint project team spent time finding out what people think good upskilling looks like, how lawyers like to learn, what they do and don't enjoy, and how they apply things after a training course. All of this made sure that the training and support we developed would stick.

"I ran a design thinking training event and we invited real clients to join us so that people could practise interviewing for empathy. We were asking them all about what they like and don't like when it comes to a client experience. They all gave up an hour of their time, but thanked us for involving them. This was a real 'aha' moment for partners as they could see that clients like being asked these questions, and it showed how you really can apply it everyday."



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Going global - engaging teams **around the world**

The joint team had created a global rollout plan to provide face to face skills training in DLA Design to DLA Piper colleagues around the world, starting in March 2020. Global events meant that those plans needed to be adapted.

The Radical Change team now needed to find remote ways of upskilling colleagues and delivering DLA Design for clients across the globe. The Treehouse team introduced DLA Piper to Sprintbase - the remote innovation platform. This enabled them to take DLA Design online and bring colleagues around the world together remotely to use what they've learnt to solve problems.

Sprintbase was customized to accommodate the unique DLA Design framework. Aspiring DLA designers received training in how to lead and facilitate online sprints and have now used Sprintbase to run several sprints to tackle specific challenges - both internally and in partnership with clients.

DLA teams anywhere in the world can now learn and participate in DLA Design with colleagues and clients.



What we learned:

Having an online collaboration tool such as Sprintbase can help you engage multiple clients in a single event in a way which may not have been possible face to face. A great example is when DLA designers ran an event to explore how the legal world might best move forward and support its clients in the context of COVID-19. Using Sprintbase enabled teams of lawyers working together to gather different people's views, draw useful insights, and develop ideas they might not otherwise have had.

"Sprintbase changed the dynamic. All the usual time, budget, travel constraints are removed. The number of sprints we've been able to run on some of our internal challenges, bringing together diverse and very international teams, has been brilliant. People feel energised throughout and excited by their ideas."



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HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, DLA PIPER

Sprintbase has been fantastic for DLA because teams have been able to work on each challenge in chunks and be guided through the process. This has helped eliminate that fear of failure, which everybody experiences when they adopt a new way of working."



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Creating an **impact**

The Radical Change project at DLA Piper is ongoing, as is the rollout of design thinking.

The firm has seen a whole host of positive results from this project, from large-scale client wins, to employee mindset shifts which have helped to deepen client relationships and improve ways of working.

New client relationships DLA Pipers clients have appreciated the more in-depth approach to understanding issues and needs. This has resulted in a greater scope of work being won, with additional opportunities being uncovered and acted on.

Genuine co-creation with clients around their emerging needs, leading to more long term relationships.

A shift in in mindset Those who have been through the DLA Design experience now think differently about how they solve problems and generate fresh ideas. This has helped to create radical change within their teams on a day to day level.



What we learned:

"I was involved in a very successful pitch where, by developing a deeper understanding of what the client was looking for in their RFP (request for proposal) we were able to uncover a broader need and we ended up becoming the sole provider for them globally. We had understood the need for something else, and we said that we would work with them to co-create the solution. That was a huge win, and, again, it showed partners the power that having these kinds of conversations can have. Taking this new approach has opened up all sorts of new and different types of conversations with clients. It's been an open door. I think that's been surprising to people at DLA - that these doors have been open the whole time, they just needed to step forward."



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CHANGE MAKER, DLA PIPER

What DLA Piper's clients say:

"Thank you Jana for a wonderful session and for pushing us outside our comfort zone – after all as Albert Einstein said "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

— **GROUP COUNSEL OF AN INTERNATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANY**

"I felt privileged to be involved. I'm a big fan of things changing for the better, especially in the legal realm. Keep up the great work."

— **HEAD OF LEGAL OF AN IRISH HOLDINGS COMPANY**





Maintaining momentum

The good work continues...

With such a large project, keeping momentum has been crucial to the Radical Change programme at DLA piper. That involves ongoing communication around the benefits the firm is now seeing from DLA Design, but also ensuring that everyone in every country has the opportunity to learn and apply the tools and mindsets.

The DLA Piper team has launched an internal microsite to share stories and videos about people's experiences and the successes they've seen as a result of using DLA Design.

The firm is now running its DLA Design virtual world tour, presenting to people in every country to share what DLA Design is, why it matters, tips on how to use it, and an action to visit the microsite for more information. They trained more than 1000 people in the first month and received great feedback.

We're continuing to work in partnership with DLA Piper during the ongoing rollout of DLA Design and to support teams to apply these new tools and mindsets in their roles.



What we learned:

"Stories play a crucial part in helping people see the value of what we're doing. It's not a silver bullet, it starts to bed in over time. When people can see how design thinking can benefit their work with clients, they can become great advocates for it."

JAMIE WALLIS

HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, DLA PIPER

"It's been fantastic to see the journey the DLA Piper team has been on in the 18 months since we started working together. What's been so exciting for us, is to see the multitude of different ways teams have started to use skills and mindsets of design thinking to change the way they approach client conversations, and to tackle the everyday problems they face. DLA Piper has shown just how beneficial taking a human-centred approach to innovation can be for law firms, and the amazing possibilities a greater connection to client needs can open up."

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"I loved that when we met the Treehouse team, you used design thinking to try and understand our challenge. You live the approach and methodology. It meant that when I walked away, I knew that you got it and that you'd work with me to make it happen. This hasn't been a linear process, so we've really appreciated how you have flexed with us through it."

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