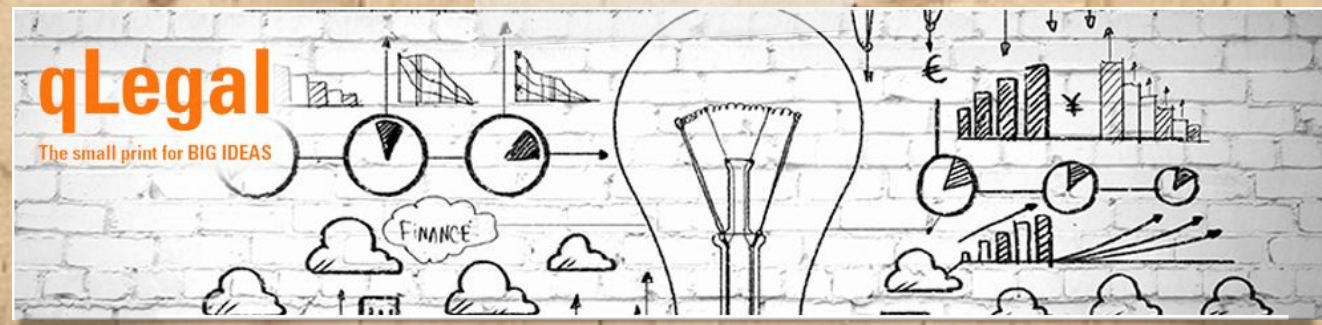




LEXOO

This month at qLegal a few of our Student Advisors met with Nicole Morinière, an employee of Lexoo: an innovative new platform that seeks to “transform the legal experience.” Lexoo has been a collaborating legal start-up with our clinic for the last two years and holds an internship programme for students to get hands on industry experience!



### Hi Nicole, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your role at Lexoo?

My name is Nicole, I'm in charge of Operations in Lexoo. I'm originally from the US, where I completed my J.D. degree. When relocating to London, it was always my desire was to be part of a legal start-up. Once I researched the market, Lexoo was a natural fit! My current role within the team consists of filtering clients' requests: I'm the link between clients and lawyers. There's a general consensus among staff and clients of Lexoo that our legal background helps to provide credibility in understand clients' needs. It's also much easier to translate these needs into the legal language accustomed to lawyers. The advantage of working in a start-up is the independence and responsibility given to employees. I am encouraged to take initiative and take major decisions within my department.

### Whereabouts is your Office based?

Our office is based just north of Old Street roundabout where our team of 8 works.

### Can you give us an elevator pitch on the concept (in 140 characters)?

We're revolutionising how businesses interact with the legal industry and purchase legal services, by adding fixed fees, transparency and speed.

### What was the inspiration behind Lexoo?

Lexoo was founded in 2014 by our CEO, Daniel van Binsbergen, a former finance lawyer. Chris O'Sullivan is co-founder and CTO. Daniel was inspired to start Lexoo from his experience as a lawyer and receiving requests from friends looking to find a lawyer.

### How does the online platform work for both your clients and lawyers?

The Lexoo **online platform** brings together clients and lawyers through Lexoo's help. Lexoo acts as the joining force between them, by transferring the clients' requests to the collaborating lawyers in a clear and precise way and by choosing from a pool of collaborating lawyers those that seem better fit for each client. In other words, clients use a smart form to submit their requests via the online platform. This smart form guides and facilitates clients to cover the issues that are important for their cases. Lexoo receives these requests and selects the most suitable lawyers, from those registered with Lexoo, to quote for them.

The **selection process of lawyers** is done in two stages. At the first stage, an algorithm runs through the online platform and provides the Lexoo team with the initial results for suitable lawyers. This

algorithm takes a number of variants into considerations, such as years of experience, industry awareness, field of specialisation, the lawyers' backgrounds and the date of joining the platform. At the second stage, the algorithm's results are scanned by Lexoo's team to ensure that the lawyers that will ultimately be invited to quote are the most suitable for the specific client request.

Then, the Lexoo team 'translates' the clients' requests from plain language to legal language and forwards them to the selected lawyers to receive quotes. They also inform the clients about the selected lawyers who are expected to send quotes. The Lexoo team monitors also the follow-up of the quotes stage (e.g. any further clarification that might be required, possible delays in the quotes submission etc.).

After the quote stage and the final choice by the client of the preferred lawyer, the platform provides a messaging function for ease of contact. Otherwise, any communication between the client and the lawyer is direct and takes place outside the platform.

Lexoo's services with respect to the selection process and the monitoring of the quote stage are **free-of-charge for clients**. Lexoo



charges the lawyers with a marketing fee once they have taken work through the online platform and this work has been paid for.

#### **How does Lexoo choose the lawyers to be registered with their online platform?**

Lexoo receives applications for interested lawyers - less than 20% of applications make the cut. Lexoo follows a thorough process equal to any hiring process in the legal sector including; carrying out interviews with the lawyers as well as checking their expertise, credentials, practising status and insurance coverage. Lawyers are also required to supply testimonials from former clients and are rated and reviewed by verified Lexoo clients after each job is completed to ensure the highest standards are maintained. At the moment, there is an experience threshold set to PQE 4+.

#### **What has been the biggest obstacle Lexoo faced as a start-up and what advice would you give to young businesses?**

Lexoo has been developing really well since its creation, facing some challenges more than others. One of the difficulties has been to find tech-savvy lawyers willing to embrace this new opportunity. Reflecting the technologically orientated platform, it has been essential for Lexoo to be surrounded by innovative and forward-thinking lawyers. In terms of business development, we have progressed a lot. Starting with only a few people, now we have a flow of ideas and projects for the future.

My advice for other start-ups, thus, would be to follow their entrepreneurial spirit and be surrounded by motivated and ambitious people. What has been one of the reasons for the success of the platform was the gap spotted by our founder and the willingness to fill this gap. Most importantly, finding the connection between providing traditional

clients' needs.

#### **Did you have any challenges with funding?**

We raised a seed round of investment from Forward Partners relatively early, back in 2014 (we only had helped a handful of customers at that stage). Forward Partners specialises in 'idea stage' investing, so they were primarily looking to back entrepreneurs with a credible idea who really understood the market. They really liked what we were working on so it was relatively straightforward. We raised another round in October 2015, that one took longer to close!

#### **What issues did you consider in building your business' credibility and your business profile?**

I think raising money from 'institutional investors' has helped us seem credible, as well as the fact that over half of our team has a legal background. Other than that, the world often judges you on your results, so our growth and press has been the leading source of our credibility.

#### **As a bunch of legal eagles we have to ask, what has been the biggest legal challenge to protecting your intellectual property?**

We fortunately haven't had any major challenges in protecting our IP. We registered a Community trademark relatively early on and purchased Lexoo.com about a year and a half ago. We also ensured we registered a lot of the foreign domains.

#### **What are the key legal restrictions you had to overcome as a business start-up?**

The main legal restriction we had to overcome is the fact that in a number of jurisdictions around the world lawyers are not allowed to 'share fees' with third parties like Lexoo. This isn't a problem in England & Wales, but the majority of continental

jurisdictions have a fee sharing prohibition. We had to structure our business around this, by charging the clients a fee for our service in those countries, instead of the lawyers.

#### **What are the most popular types of services and what type of client is likely to get the most out of the Lexoo model?**

Lexoo's client basis consists mainly of UK start-up companies. That said, the Lexoo platform is also used by bigger companies and in-house general counsels looking for sector and practice expertise. The most popular client requests involve commercial leases, terms and conditions for websites, shareholders agreements and intellectual property.

#### **What technological developments do you predict will have an impact on the legal industry in the next decade?**

Of course it is difficult to predict what will have a significant impact on the legal industry - there are many technological solutions that are attempting to make headway within the space and it's difficult to predict which of those will gain traction. There will also be new developments that do not currently exist. However, given the progress being made with machine learning and natural language processing, there is no doubt that these will have a significant impact on the practice of law, which mainly deals with extracting and analyzing information from documents, and is therefore ripe for disruption from these types of technologies. Blockchain will also necessarily come to have an impact on the legal industry as well.

All of these different elements will combine to have an impact on the industry, which is a slow-moving one, but once they reach a tipping point the changes will be significant!



**As a collaborating partner with qLegal, what has your experience been with the clinic and participating students?**

We've had a great experience with the clinic so far. This is our second year partnering with qLegal. As an early stage startup, it's been a good way to get input from individuals with exposure to the legal industry who can assist with any number of tasks we are working on when they come in. They are often involved in editing the online content of our website and platform, from drafting articles to posting templates to serve as an example for the submission of client requests.

Interview Conducted: March 2017

Interviewers (Student Advisors):

Ms Vicktoria Ntouna,  
Ms Penka Kostova,  
Ms Charlotte Lavery.

# qLegal

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