

New York, 05.01.2004

New York firm Clifford Chance chose Thinkmap visualization technology as its interface platform for exposing the deep interrelatedness of the firm’s internal knowledge, with the goal of making it easy for lawyers and others to find resources that they might not otherwise have known about.

Case Study:

Clifford Chance – Thinkmap Taxonomy Browser

Clifford Chance, LLP, the largest fully integrated law firm in the world, operates in 19 countries providing an exceptionally wide range of legal and business expertise covering virtually every area of commercial law. Because of its broad reach and disparate operations, the firm has initiated a number of internal projects focused on improving how its people manage and share knowledge.

Central to these initiatives has been the development of a global taxonomy, which is used to standardize the vocabulary that people at Clifford Chance use to describe their areas of expertise and the firm’s collective experience. The firm’s knowledge services team spent over two years creating a controlled vocabulary that is deeply interrelated, reflecting the commonalities among the knowledge that exists within different practices and at distant geographic locations.

Clifford Chance chose Thinkmap visualization technology as its interface platform for exposing the deep interrelatedness of the firm’s internal knowledge, with the goal of making it easy for lawyers and others to find resources that they might not otherwise have known about.

THE CHALLENGE

Once the structure of the global taxonomy had been created, Clifford Chance needed a way to expose the network of interrelated topics within it. While the structure included hierarchical relationships – parent/child topics that indicated more- and less-specific concepts – it also included lateral, cross-hierarchical relationships between topics. For example, the taxonomy includes various topics called “finance” (e.g., “Finance [Public],” “Finance [Corporate],” etc.). Although these topics are unrelated hierarchically, the taxonomy does relate them to each other, via a cross-reference. Clifford Chance needed an

intuitive way to represent this interrelatedness, to allow users to discover and use relevant information beyond the immediate boundaries of their enquiry.

The knowledge services team intended to use the taxonomy as an end-user interface for browsing the firm's knowledge management system through its Intranet. A principal challenge, then, was to find a way to encourage navigation, while simultaneously allowing users to appreciate the sophisticated web of concepts that describe the firm's work.

Clifford Chance used Thinkmap to develop an interactive, easy-to-learn interface to their taxonomy and knowledge management system. The interface shows topics in their full, relational context, to a degree that traditional taxonomy interfaces are not capable of.

THE SOLUTION

Thinkmap enables researchers at Clifford Chance to grasp the complexities and depth of the firm's practice, and to discover materials that might otherwise have remained hidden.

Using the Thinkmap taxonomy browser, a researcher can select any term from the taxonomy, via a traditional "Subject Hierarchy" of terms. After selecting a term, the user is presented with: 1) a list of documents that are categorized under that topic; 2) broader and narrower terms in the hierarchy; and 3) a Thinkmap spider interface that displays related terms from other areas of the taxonomy. Clicking on a term in the Thinkmap display re-centers the Thinkmap on that term, updates the list of documents, and re-orientes the user within the hierarchical list.

This seamless integration is critical to the user experience; Thinkmap works with, rather than instead of a traditional means of accessing categorized information – in this case a hierarchical list. Since users are familiar with lists, this type of "hybrid" interface provides them with an identifiable starting point, rather than overwhelming them with a standalone, novel interface.

FEATURES OF THINKMAP TAXONOMY BROWSER INCLUDE:

- Pointing at a term in the Thinkmap displays a tool-tip with information about that term's path in the hierarchy.
- Clicking on a term in the Thinkmap re-orientes the user in the hierarchical list, with the next level in the hierarchy expanded (to show all related terms).
- The look and feel of the interface was customized to fit within Clifford Chance's branded intranet environment.
- The navigation tools are integrated with Hummingbird DM5, Clifford Chance's document management system. This integration allows for real-time access of categorized documents.

Thinkmap, Inc. worked with the Clifford Chance knowledge services team and their third-party development agencies to design, develop, and integrate the solution.

Thinkmap's professional services team provided interface design, prototyping, training, and technical support services.

Thinkmap is helping Clifford Chance communicate the complexity of its practices in a way that is simple to understand and easy to use. The utility of the system goes beyond facilitating navigation; the interface achieves gains in productivity and promotes employees' understanding of the firm's operations, by making complex concepts seem simple.

CLIFFORD
CHANCE
TAXONOMY BROWSER DEMO BY PLUMB DESIGN

SUBJECT HIERARCHY	RELATED TERMS	LEGEND: = See Under = Related Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ ACQUISITION FINANCE [WORKTYPE and LEGAL TOPIC] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Facility types [Acquisition finance] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Bridge finance ↳ Loan note alternatives [Acquisition finance] ↳ Loan notes [Acquisition finance] ↳ Mezzanine private acquisition ↳ Public to private finance [Acquisition finance] ↳ Senior private acquisition ↳ Mezzanine warrants ↳ Tax issues [Acquisition finance] ↳ ADMINISTRATIVE/PUBLIC LAW [WORKTYPE] ↳ Agency ↳ Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) ↳ ANTI-TRUST/COMPETITION [WORKTYPE AND LEGAL TOPIC] ↳ Arbitration ↳ ARBITRATION AND DISPUTE AVOIDANCE [WORKTYPE] ↳ ASSET FINANCE [WORKTYPE and LEGAL TOPIC] ↳ Banking [Empty] ↳ Building and friendly societies/Savings and loan companies 		
<p>The taxonomy hierarchy appears above. Click a topic's arrow to expand. Click a topic to view related terms on the right.</p>	<p>Related terms appear above. Browse to a new term by clicking. You can pan the display by using the right mouse button to click and drag the background. You can also click and drag a term to move it to a new location.</p>	

Clifford Chance – Thinkmap Taxonomy Browser