

Castrén & Snellman: Transforming the Nordic Legal Environment

Client Success Story

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- Paula Aura, Knowledge Manager

Founded in 1888, Castrén & Snellman is Finland’s oldest law firm. For decades, the firm has supported Finnish and international clients in transactions, dispute resolution and a wide range of other specialised facets of business law. Today, the firm has offices in Helsinki, Moscow and St. Petersburg and employs more than 250 people.

The Challenge: Doing More with Less

Castrén & Snellman (C&S) prides itself on helping clients succeed in a rapidly changing world. So, when the firm noticed a trend of clients wanting greater value and predictive control over their legal spend, they sought to improve the efficiency of legal service delivery. The Knowledge Management Team, headed by Paula Aura, gathered a project team and began looking for technology that would enable the firm to streamline document drafting, reduce risk and ultimately transform the firm’s way of working. C&S also needed to implement a knowledge management system that would enable them to easily capture and manage the firm’s collective know-how.



The new system needed to meet a robust set of criteria, including delivering a more efficient process, unifying document creation across the firm, providing the opportunity to use alternative and tailored clauses and enabling lawyers to work within Microsoft Word. After evaluating the industry-leading document automation solutions, C&S partnered with Sysero because it offered an easy-to-use system that could handle complex workflows and be customised to fit the firm’s unique needs.

Aura explains: “We wanted a partner who had a deep understanding of the legal market and was willing to closely work with us to implement our vision. Sysero offered an innovative solution and a knowledgeable and collaborative team.”

The Solution: Driving Firm-wide Efficiency

Sysero collaborated with C&S to develop a comprehensive knowledge management system aptly named “Transformer.” The firm’s model, example and know-how documents were imported into Transformer using the iManage Workflow connector that links Sysero to the iManage document management system.

Once in Transformer, the project team organised and categorised the documents by practice, work type and sector.

The team was mindful of the importance of including lawyers early in the planning process, and as such, piloted its programme with the firm's Mergers & Acquisition team (M&A). "The M&A team are under a lot of pressure to deliver documents to clients in a more efficient manner," says Carola Lindholm, the project owner and M&A partner.

"By including them in the process from the start, we were able to gain excellent feedback and make sure the system was relevant to our lawyers," Aura adds.

The firm officially launched Transformer in summer 2016. The project team hosted several training events for its lawyers and used service categories' weekly meetings as an opportunity to provide further training. Additionally, the team offered lawyers a series of on-demand training tools, including easy instructional guides and videos.

Transformer leverages a customised document automation process to help ease the workload of the firm's lawyers. Instructed by a lawyer, a project trainee automates each document, which is then routed back to the lawyer for input and feedback. Once a document has been automated, lawyers can search Transformer for the appropriate document and complete it by answering a series of questions displayed within a user-friendly form. The final work product is filed under the client matter record in iManage, where lawyers can access it, along with other matter related files, from anywhere on any device.

Overall, the firm's lawyers have been receptive to the benefits of Transformer. Aura explains: "Since partnering with Sysero, I can see the enthusiasm growing amongst our lawyers. This is a much more fun way of working. When the first documents were published and presented in our office meeting, we received automation requests from across the firm."

The Result: Transforming the Way Lawyers Work

The introduction of Transformer has "transformed" the way C&S lawyers approach drafting. "By automating some of the most-used documents within the firm, we'll be able to shift lawyers' focus from drafting to clients' special needs and concentrate on producing added value to clients from the start," Lindholm says.

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- Carola Lindholm, Partner

To date, the firm has automated a number of high-profile documents, including its Share Purchase Agreement, Legal Due Diligence Report template, and Corporate Meeting Minutes to name a few. New documents continue to be automated, and the pipeline for automation keeps growing by request from the lawyers.

"The best thing about Sysero's document automation is that we can merge different model versions, such as languages or buyer and seller side, into one single automated model document," Lindholm says. "This increases efficiency in our drafting significantly."

"We see the Transformer project as a remarkable investment in our operations' efficiency, in terms of time, money and quality," Lindholm adds. "Our field of business has not changed much in past decades, but now there is pressure from the clients' side to enhance our working methods even further. Automation is one important step in that direction."

One key lesson Aura and the project team learned during the implementation process is that although lawyers don't have the time to automate the documents themselves, they do play an important role in the automation planning. "The importance of sufficient training and communication cannot be emphasised enough," she says. "Once the benefits are understood by the lawyers, the rest often follows more easily."

Moving forward, C&S hopes to bring the advantages of automation closer to their clients. The firm already is exploring how knowledge automation can enhance the firm's collaboration with in-house counsel and help its business clients drive greater efficiency within their own firms.