LEGAL DESIGN: A NEW FIELD OR OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

We hear the term more and more, but what exactly is Legal Design?

Traditionally, Legal Design has been used to explain complex processes to people who have not engaged with the legal system before, and who know little about it. Increasingly, we are also seeing that legal design has a role in corporate settings, with experienced users of legal services.

When I started working at Houthoff two years ago, I'd never heard the term 'Legal Design'. In fact, I'd never had anything to do with the legal profession. Without any prior knowledge or cognitive framework, after a week at work I felt slightly disillusioned. It felt like I'd gone back ten years in time. What struck me most was that the lawyers used law as the starting point and basis for interacting with their stakeholders. Thankfully, we've been seeing a shift in this for some time now: increasingly, legal professionals now also think in terms of the client and the message.

The growing social trend of communicating in images and infographics paired with an innovative firm proved to be fertile ground for the creation and implementation of what we later came to call the company's Legal Design Department. The Legal Design Team is a strategic sparring partner whose work focuses on finding the right form for communicating with relevant stakeholders. Legal Design is at the crossroads of *technology*, *behavioural psychology* and *law*. At the heart of the discipline is the service user rather than the law itself. This perspective forms the basis for assessing how images can be used to help people understand legal content faster. Visualisation is just one of the possible solutions. The use of Legal Design in B2B shouldn't be confused with the work produced by a graphic designer when asked by a lawyer to 'dress up' legal content. Legal Design is not about style; it's about effective and efficient communication. If you really want to harness the added value of the discipline, it is essential that in addition to the disciplines of *law* (counsel) and *design* (graphic designer), *behavioural psychology* plays a role.

The combination of these three makes Legal Design an interesting strategic tool both in and out of court.

Legal Design | *Designed to deliver*

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