

## Background

AB & David Law is a multi-specialist business law firm based in Ghana. Their aim is to ensure that business and projects succeed in Africa; minimising the risks of entering into commercial transactions on the continent.

With affiliates in Ghana, Rwanda, Botswana, Zambia, Liberia, Burundi and Mauritius and “best friend” firms in 16 jurisdictions, AB & David is positioned to provide legal and business coverage across 23 African jurisdictions.

Within the Ghana office, AB & David Law consists of seven partners, 30 solicitors, and 18 support staff.

Their main areas of expertise are:

- Corporate, finance and capital markets
- Government business
- Energy, infrastructure and extractive industries
- Telecoms and information technology
- Intellectual property
- Commercial dispute resolution.

## Finding a strategy to demonstrate quality

Isabel Boaten, a partner in the firm, told us that Lexcel was a natural choice for the firm when it came to select an accreditation because it is administered by one of the world's top law societies, the Law Society of England and Wales.

“We have always operated on a five-year strategic plan cycle,” she says. “When it came to the end of the second cycle in 2013, we decided we wanted to invest in an international accreditation.”

She went on to say, “We have always been aware that a key part of what has distinguished AB & David Law has been our commitment to client care and responsiveness. However, over and above that, the more our clients commended us for our client care and responsiveness, the more we saw the need to enhance this. Applying for Lexcel was seen by us as a critical step to have independent world-class verification and enhancement of the measures we had put in place to serve clients.

To ensure the effective implementation of our five-year strategic plan, we also have a yearly business plan that is carefully adhered to. In addition, we have always had a development plan in place for our staff and client care is of utmost importance to us.”

When we researched different accreditations, we discovered that Lexcel would strengthen the plans, processes and procedures we already had in place. But most importantly, it would help us plug the gaps we were missing, which included the creation of a more rigorous information management and security policy.”

Once Isabel and her project team discovered that a Lexcel accreditation could be obtained by firms outside the UK, a Lexcel toolkit was procured. After studying this, it became clear that Lexcel would provide AB & David Law with the accreditation it was looking for.

## Life with Lexcel

Isabel states the firm did not use a consultant to implement Lexcel. Instead, they appointed a Lexcel champion throughout every level of the organisation. This was because the partners were aware that change could be difficult, but by having someone in each team communicating the reasons for the move to the plans, policies and procedures based on Lexcel, the benefits of the accreditation were quickly assimilated.

Lexcel is fully integrated into the culture of AB & David Law. All new staff receive orientation on the plans, policies and procedures created by the firm under the Lexcel framework.

All files are audited monthly. These checks are then summarised in a quarterly report which is received and reviewed by Isabel.

“All staff know the firm will be independently assessed before being awarded accreditation by the Law Society. Therefore, it is important everyone in the firm understands what having a Lexcel accreditation requires of them and the consequences of non-compliance with our policies and procedures.”

Isabel states that the Lexcel accreditation is a stamp of quality, referenced in all promotional materials.

“Today’s discerning clients are not looking for merely ‘satisfactory’ work, or work that is technically accurate, they are also interested in the quality of how the service is delivered. Having Lexcel provides evidence of our ongoing commitment to providing excellent service and improving our policies and procedures.”

## The time commitment

Isabel is the first to admit the time commitment in putting the plans and procedures in place was a challenge but states it has been well worth the hours invested.

Not only were there new plans and policies, such as those on information management and security, and case and file management, but existing procedures were also brought into line with the Lexcel framework.

Isabel was responsible for the implementation of Lexcel. “Fortunately, all the partners were 100% behind obtaining the accreditation. Therefore, I could pass over a lot of my client work to others in the business. This allowed me to concentrate on gathering the information needed from different departments and lead the development of the plans and procedures we required.”

## Benefits to the business

Isabel states, “The benefits to the business have been immense. Our policies now allow us to focus on the client. We also have clear strategies in place for career advancement, a factor that helps us attract and retain the top legal talent in Ghana. Lexcel has allowed us to build a practice that puts people, including staff as well as clients, first”.

“Like most law firms, we want our staff to be happy and productive,” she goes on to say. “The fact that we have achieved this makes me very proud. We have a high ratio of female staff, so we have opened a nursery within the firm. The type of people who come to work for us know that our standards are high, and are proud to work for us”.

In addition to attracting high-quality talent, Isabel states that Lexcel provides an excellent framework for managing client complaints and expectations. “Clients understand that they can complain about the service they are receiving at every level of the process. This results in few, if

any complaints because if the client is unhappy, we can deal with it immediately by rectifying the problem or adjusting their expectations.”

### **Resistance to Lexcel**

“The process of acquiring and maintaining a Lexcel accreditation seemed daunting at first. However, because we undertook the self-assessment as a team off-site over a weekend, the lines of resistance were quickly overcome”, states Isabel. Having Lexcel champions in every department was also important states Isabel. “It meant that the process and accompanying change did not merely come from the top, everyone in the organisation was invested in the process.”

Isabel states the firm’s senior partner, David Ofori-Dorte, is an exemplary “visionary,” who believed whole-heartedly in Lexcel and sold the benefits to the firm.

“When implementing Lexcel, you need to have a clear idea as to where the business is going,” says Isabel. “If you want to create a law firm that will outlive you, as our founder did, and one that you are proud of, you must invest time as well as capital. Just putting policies together is not enough. There has to be action and compliance from everyone in the organisation if the process is going to work, year after year”.

“Lexcel has been endlessly positive for AB & David Law. It has provided us with a platform to see what our business and the team within it is capable of.”

“You will be amazed what can be achieved if you put the right framework in place.”

### **Are you interested in becoming accredited?**

Find all the information you need about applying for Lexcel online: [www.lawsociety.org.uk/lexcel](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/lexcel). Download the relevant version of the Standard, Scheme Rules and self-assessment checklist.

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