

Technology, media, telecoms: past, present, and future

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In this edition of Law Update, we have sought to provide you with an interesting mix of articles that primarily address issues likely to be relevant to clients operating in the *Technology, Media & Telecommunications* sector.

We have also included some articles from our *Digital & Data* team, touching on technology, media and telecommunications related legal issues, whilst being less specific to a particular industry sector.

What do we mean by Technology, Media & Telecommunications sector?

Al Tamimi is the largest *full-service* law firm in the Middle East and North Africa. By 'full-service' we basically mean that, no matter what you need in terms of legal services, there will be someone in the firm that has the requisite expertise to assist you. We have a variety of departments or practice areas, each with their own focus – ranging from corporate set-ups to public listings and dispute work, and everything in between. Since I first joined the firm in 2006, the specialist expertise of the lawyers in our various specialist legal practice areas has become more and more significant as the firm, and the MENA legal market, has grown in size and sophistication.

Businesses need legal support on a variety of matters, regardless of their industry sector. Whether you are in aviation or e-commerce, you are likely to have employment queries, for example. If you are a bank or a construction company, you will probably still need assistance with your tech contracting. If you are an industrial warehouse or a small co-working space, you probably need someone to review your lease. The fact that Al Tamimi & Company is a full-service firm means that we are able to assist you, regardless of the specific nature of your legal service requirements.

Having said that, we appreciate that legal service requirements often vary depending on the industry, and there is a lot to be said for leveraging the industry expertise of specialist lawyers. The tech contracting required by banks is different to what constructions companies may need; and the employment law needs of an airline are likely to be different to those of an e-commerce operator. Over time, our legal subject matter experts have also developed industry-specific legal expertise across a wide range of industry sectors, including a number of them having worked in-house for technology vendors.

The importance of this specialist expertise is at its starkest in respect of businesses operating in the broader technology, media and telecommunications fields – what we call, the “Technology, Media & Telecommunications” sector.

- The lawyer who was previously ‘just’ an Employment lawyer now has industry specific insight into niche personnel issues relevant to *IT project visas*
- The Real Estate lawyer now has direct experience on broader property implications of *building, owning and operating massive data centres*
- The Finance lawyer now has unrivalled insight into *lease-back arrangements for telecommunications and networking equipment*
- The Insurance lawyer now has expertise in claims relating to *damage to servers hosted in leased rack space*
- The Litigation lawyer now has experience in *wrangling technical experts to provide expert reports as evidence in local court proceedings*
- The Tax lawyer is intimately familiar with the ins and outs of *cross-border payments in the streaming content space*

You get the picture.

What do we mean by Digital & Data practice?

Meanwhile, one of the firm’s departments focusses on technology, media and telecommunications related legal matters, regardless of the industry sector in which the client operates.

Until recently, we referred to this practice area as our “Technology, Media & Telecommunications” practice, although we have recently ‘re-branded’ it to be known as “Digital & Data”. Part of the reason for the rebranding was that we wanted to bring the name of the practice ‘into the future’, and the future is very much ‘digital’ and ‘data’. The new name better reflects what the practice spends a lot of its time doing: supporting clients on their digital transformation journeys and advising on data related matters, from the increasingly complicated privacy regulatory landscape to key cybersecurity issues. A further benefit of the change was that it allowed us to create a clearer distinction between what the Digital & Data team does as a legal practice, and what the whole firm does, more broadly, in terms of delivering diverse legal support to clients operating in the broader Technology, Media & Telecommunications industry sector. The Digital & Data team’s focus is still on contracting and advisory work relating to technology, media and telecommunications subject matter, so there has been no change there. Much of Digital & Data’s work is for clients operating in the Technology, Media & Telecommunications sector, although other key sectors include Banking & Finance, Healthcare, Transport, and others.

I hope this edition of Law Update provides some useful food for thought.