



A reading and two proposed tracks · for the partners of Baker Botts – Riyadh

An idea you own – *that the market can't.*

Globally, you define yourselves with a claim an entire sector can't make: "Legal Partner to the Innovators." In Riyadh – the most crowded legal market today – you speak everyone's language.

01 – About AZR

Before we read your firm – who we are

A Saudi innovation studio whose work is to create, for major institutions, the central idea that makes them chosen and remembered.

We are not an agency that executes briefs, nor a consultancy that hands over a report and leaves. We are the layer before all of it: we find **the central idea no one else can own**, then build it with you until it becomes real. We work in three connected layers:

We create – we find the central idea and the angle only you can own.

We build – side by side with you, until the idea lands in reality.

We share – we stay partners in its impact – not vendors who leave at handover.

And the one idea takes whatever form fits you

a narrative told

an initiative launched

a destination lived

a campaign in its season

We don't arrive with a template – we find your idea first, then choose the form that makes it real rather than a slogan. This reading sits in our **Positioning & Narratives** umbrella.

02 – The Market

The most crowded legal market in the Middle East

Since the 2023 reform, Saudi Arabia's legal market went from near-closed to the world's biggest race.

+20

UK & US FIRMS

licensed or applying since the reform – incl. Kirkland, Linklaters, Baker McKenzie.

[LittleLaw](#)**15₊₁₅**

LICENSED • PENDING

~15 firms licensed by December 2024, with another ~15 applications pending.

[IBA](#)**3**

FIRST LICENSES • MAR 2024

Latham & Watkins,
Herbert Smith Freehills,
Clifford Chance.

[IBA](#)

The reform itself: restrictions on foreign firms lifted, local licensing required – [Global Trade Alert • 24 Oct 2023](#)

03 – The Sameness

One vocabulary, different names

When everyone entered, they entered in the same language. Here's how your rivals define themselves – verbatim from their sites:

AS&H Clifford Chance – “the leading law firm in Saudi Arabia”. [↗ source](#)

A&O Shearman – “deep understanding of the local landscape” · “go-to legal advisor”. [↗ source](#)

Latham & Watkins – “combines local knowledge with global experience”. [↗ source](#)

Baker McKenzie – “a leading legal force” · “trusted partner”. [↗ source](#)

“Leading,” “global + local,” “a trusted partner.”

No one says what the others can't – the
space of distinction stands empty, unclaimed.

04 – The Idea You Own

A rare asset – switched off where competition is fiercest

You don't lack a position. You own one the sector can't claim – but it's silent in Riyadh.

On your global page

"Legal Partner to the Innovators."

bakerbotts.com – an identity idea, not a deal descriptor.

On your Riyadh page

"Energy, telecom, manufacturing, transport, construction, banking... transactional work and international arbitration."

[/geographies/riyadh](#) – generic, like any new entrant.

05 – AZR's Reading

● AZR's reading · our own view, quoted from no one

In a market where everyone competes on “bigger and deeper,” you own a categorically different word: **innovation**. The question isn't how to create it – but how to activate it here.

**The asset is owned**

“Legal Partner to the Innovators” is an identity idea your rivals can't claim – it needs no invention, only activation.

**The Saudi voice is neutral**

Your presence here speaks in a list of sectors – the language every new entrant shares, so it distinguishes no one.

**The gap isn't scale**

Legacy and scale are held by others too. What they don't hold is the line – and you have it, but it's silent.

06 – The Moment

The best time to set a Saudi narrative is the moment of expansion

Your Saudi expansion is at its peak now – and this is exactly the moment a narrative is forged, not after the office settles.

2001

YOUR FIRST MIDDLE EAST
OFFICE

A presence in the Kingdom since
1996 – a legacy few new
entrants hold.

bakerbotts.com

RHQ

MOJ LICENSE • REGIONAL HQ

Intense expansion in 2025: an
official license, an RHQ
application, new strategic
partners.

bakerbotts.com

“all in”

IN YOUR LEADERSHIP'S WORDS

“Saudi Arabia is driving the
global energy and
technology conversation,
and we're all in.”

[Danny David](#)

Our hypothesis – and we own being wrong about it

Baker Botts doesn't need a new position –
it needs its owned idea translated into a Saudi
narrative,
whose protagonist is **the innovator**, not a list of
sectors.

A hypothesis we put forward to be tested, not a verdict we issue – the verdict is yours, at
the table.

07 – After Our Call

Localization as the law mandates it – equally, on everyone

Every firm here will meet the localization ratios.
So the question isn't whether you localize — but
whether your localization means anything.

- 25% local partner ownership
- 180 days' residency for two partners
- 50% Saudi lawyers
- 70% of fees stay in-country

And beyond the ratios: any work relating to Saudi law **cannot be passed to offices outside the Kingdom** – it must be conducted wholly in the local branch. Localization here isn't messaging; it is the structure of the work itself.

IBA – Code of Law Practice amendments

08 – The Layers of Localization

Above the compliance layer – five layers that make the difference

Localization is not translated messaging. It is a language, a body of knowledge, people, and presence.

01 • Meaning

narrative & guiding
metaphor

What does “Legal Partner to the Innovators” mean in Riyadh specifically – **and who are the innovators here**? The funds building whole sectors, and the regulators drafting rules that never existed before.

02 • Language

lexicon • verbal identity
• tone

In which Arabic words is it said without losing legal precision? The lexicon is built once, then unifies the memo, the pitch and the post.

03 • Proof

local intellectual
property

How is the idea proven rather than claimed? Through publications, frameworks and indices built for this market – **localization shows in what you produce, not what you say**.

And the two layers that make localization lived, not read

04 • People

a named talent program

Who embodies the idea daily? The 50% is a legal obligation for everyone – with you it becomes **a narrative, if it carries a name and a story.**

05 • Presence

platforms • councils •
experience

Where are you seen, and in what role – a speaker, or the one who convenes? This includes what is lived: the office, the meeting, the written material.

THE THROUGH-LINE

The five layers aren't parallel workstreams – each one proves the one before it. Meaning without language stays a slogan; language without proof stays a claim; proof without people and presence stays a document.

09 – The Positioning Challenges

We name them upfront – not after signing

01 • COMPLIANCE IS NOT DISTINCTION

The ratios bind everyone; presenting them as an achievement reads like taking pride in meeting a condition.

02 • THE CENTRE AND THE EDGE

The network protects brand consistency; the market demands local relevance. The way out is one idea in a local voice – not two.

03 • A CROWDED WORD

“Innovation” is said by everyone here. The idea holds only once you name which innovators you serve – and with what.

04 • TWO AUDIENCES, NOT ONE

The client and the talent. In a war for talent, localization may pay off in hiring before sales.

[LittleLaw](#)

AND ONE THAT PRECEDES THEM ALL

Where the decision sits – between the centre and the local office. A narrative without a named owner does not survive, however well written.

10 – Track One · Localization with Meaning

We don't invent you a second idea

We take the idea you already own, and make it speak – and prove itself – here.

What it covers

- A diagnosis of your current language – Arabic and English, internal and external
- Naming the “innovator” you serve in this market – specifically, not descriptively
- Writing the narrative and its guiding metaphor – then testing it on those who read it
- Tailored messages per audience: client · talent · regulator · local partner
- A proof plan: what you must produce for the idea to be believed

Its deliverables

- brand narrative
- guiding metaphor
- institutional lexicon
- verbal identity
- application guide
- proof plan

These deliverables are named in our canonical services file under the **Positioning & Narratives** umbrella – not invented for this proposal.

11 – Track Two · Talent

Initiatives that turn the 50% from an obligation into a narrative

Universities

people layer

Work with law faculties: a moot competition or a “law and innovation” lab under your name – feeding the hiring pipeline two years before graduation.

Local firms

presence layer

A secondment and joint-training program with Saudi firms – building a professional relationship before it becomes a competitive one, and widening the referral network.

Attracting lawyers

meaning layer

A written value proposition for the Saudi lawyer answering one question: **what do I learn here that I can't learn elsewhere?** – a question answered by the central idea, not by salary.

**One named
program**

the umbrella

A single umbrella with a name and identity that holds all three – so it is remembered and retold, instead of scattering into disconnected activities.

Opening proposals for discussion – to be tested with you and chosen before any commitment.

12 – How We Work & What You Get

Five stages – ending in a proof that ships, not a file that is handed over

The stages

- Listen & diagnose** – partner interviews, a read of your language, client and talent voices.
- The translated idea** – one decision workshop that closes the idea and its layers.
- The systems** – lexicon, tone, messages and an application guide that prevents drift.
- One proof, shipped** – an initiative, a publication or a talent program that ships and becomes the evidence.
- Measure & accompany** – we stay until the idea holds in use, not in a deck.

You choose how deep we go

- We create – the full concept
- We build – we stay through delivery
- We share – a stake in the impact

HOW WE MEASURE

Memory and behaviour a year later – not impressions, not post counts.

13 – Precedents in Your Sector

Not an experiment – an established practice

The world's largest firms built themselves a central idea instead of generic language. That's exactly our scope.

Hogan Lovells

Living Group

Positioned at the **intersection of business and government** – framed as

Grow · Protect · Innovate. [↗ source](#)

Mishcon de Reya

an owned idea

A bold central line, rare in the sector: **"It's business. But it's personal."** The same firm has applied to open an office in Riyadh. [↗ source](#)

A&O Shearman

Landor & Fitch

A brand for a merged firm of **~3,900** lawyers – encoding the union of U.S., English and local law into one idea. [↗ source](#)

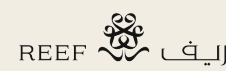
14 – Why AZR

We don't describe the service – we perform it; this reading is the sample

We create the angle an institution is remembered by, and stay partners in its impact – not vendors of a project that ends at handover.

Selected work – a few of our partners

From government bodies to private brands – we built the central angle and stayed with it until it became an experience, a narrative, a result. “Partners in impact” means a stake in the idea's success, not paid execution alone; the form is defined with you.



15 – Spaces to Collaborate

Questions we raise – not solutions we sell

Four questions to open the conversation. The “how” is work we begin with you, at the table.

01 Narrative – you own a rare idea globally. What if your Saudi presence spoke it **in a Saudi voice**, instead of the language everyone shares?

02 Distinction – twenty rivals entered, all saying “leading · global/local · trusted partner.” What angle **can they not claim** – that you alone own?

03 Moment – your expansion is at its peak: a license, an RHQ, new partners. What narrative makes this moment **remembered for years**?

04 Talent – of the four initiatives proposed in the talent track, which deserves to go first – and what would make it **yours**, rather than an activity others copy a month later?

16 – Source Transparency

We separate what we verified from what awaits confirmation

Verified from an open primary source

Your own pages (the global line · the Riyadh page · the 2025 partner news) · the four rival quotes verbatim · the 2023 reform (Global Trade Alert) · **the licensing conditions and the local-work rule**, plus the first licenses (IBA) · the three sector precedents.

Secondary source – press coverage

Entrant counts (“+20” and “15 + 15”) come from LittleLaw and IBA coverage, not a published official registry – read them as an order of magnitude, not a final count.

Declared gaps – to be asked at the meeting

Who owns the positioning decision regionally? · Is the global idea binding on offices or optional? · What regulatory limits apply to legal marketing language?

● 13 sources opened and read ● 8 of them the parties' own sites ● 2 figures tagged “press coverage” ● 3 declared gaps

An idea you own – waiting *for Riyadh to speak it.*

The next step is one working session (60 minutes) to test this hypothesis at the table – **within two weeks of our call**, while the expansion is at its peak.

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This reading is the work of AZR innovation studio

AZR is a Saudi innovation studio that creates, for major institutions, the central idea they don't yet own — and stays until it becomes something real that people use and remember.

azr innovation
studio
استوديو الابتكار

Explore AZR ↗