

Knowledge Sharing Drivers Among Legal Professionals: Insights from Thailand's Intellectual Property Law Firms

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Abstract: This study explores the motivations influencing knowledge sharing among lawyers and legal counsels in intellectual property (IP) law firms in Thailand. IP law firms represent a knowledge-intensive professional service context in which legal professionals must combine legal knowledge, procedural knowledge, client-related experience, and business-oriented IP strategy. Using a qualitative research approach, this study conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with ten legal professionals from five leading Thai IP law firms, including partners and senior associates/associates. Thematic analysis was employed to identify the types of knowledge shared, existing knowledge sharing practices, and motivational factors affecting knowledge sharing behavior. The findings reveal four categories of knowledge shared in Thai IP law firms: legal knowledge, professional practical knowledge, IP-driven business strategy knowledge, and personal skill knowledge. The study further identifies two groups of motivational factors. The key extrinsic factors are organizational culture, team interaction, management involvement, technology, business development, and institutional sustainability. The key intrinsic factors are recognition, professional reputation, altruism, trust, and reflexive self-development. Three important context-specific insights emerged from the data: knowledge sharing supports business development through professional visibility and client trust; institutional sustainability depends on transferring knowledge across generations of lawyers; and reflexive self-development shows that lawyers also learn and improve through the act of sharing knowledge with others. The study contributes to knowledge management research by extending understanding of knowledge sharing in a specialized legal context in an emerging economy. It also provides practical implications for law firm management. Thai IP law firms should not treat knowledge sharing merely as informal cooperation among lawyers, but as a strategic management practice. Firms should strengthen leadership involvement, create regular formal and informal sharing opportunities, improve searchable knowledge repositories, support mentoring and cross-team discussion, and recognize knowledge sharing as part of professional development and succession planning. Technology should be used not only for document storage, but also to improve knowledge retrieval and reuse. By developing more systematic knowledge management practices, IP law firms can reduce knowledge loss, improve consistency of legal service, support junior lawyer development, and enhance long-term competitiveness.

Keywords: Knowledge management, Knowledge sharing, Motivational factors, Intellectual property law firm, Lawyer, Legal Counsel

1. Introduction

In the knowledge-based economy, professional service firms, particularly law firms, are quintessential knowledge-intensive organizations (Gottschalk, 1999). Their success depends not on tangible assets, but on the knowledge capital embodied in their personnel (Forstenlechner et al., 2007). Intellectual Property (IP) law firms, the context of this study, present a particularly complex case that is significantly distinct from general law firms. They require a deep integration of both legal and diverse technical knowledge across various scientific and technological fields (Hislop, 2023). This necessitates a high degree of collaboration and expertise sharing among professionals, distinguishing them from general law firms where lawyers often work independently (Levin & Cross, 2004). The rapid pace of technological change and globalization has increased the demand for adaptable and continuously learning lawyers (Flood, 2012), making effective knowledge sharing an essential mechanism for maintaining a competitive edge and facilitating mutual learning (Gardner, 2019).

Knowledge sharing is the process of exchanging both explicit knowledge, such as legal statutes and court precedents, and tacit knowledge, which includes experiences in case analysis and negotiation tactics (Nonaka &

Takeuchi, 1995). While the importance of knowledge management in the legal sector is well-recognized (Zeide & Liebowitz, 2012), the implementation of new systems often faces challenges, particularly a lack of acceptance from professionals who may perceive them as disruptive to traditional practices (Schulz & Klugmann, 2005).

While existing literature has examined motivational factors for knowledge sharing in professional service firms or large law firms more broadly (Holinde, 2015; Kabene, King & Skaini, 2006), empirical research remains limited (Forstenlechner, 2005). Critically, a significant research gap persists regarding in-depth studies within the specific context of “IP lawyers and legal consultants in IP law firms,” whose work relies on a unique hybrid of highly specialized legal and technical expertise. This specialized context, particularly within an emerging economy like Thailand, remains largely unexplored.

In Thailand, IP legal practice requires lawyers and legal counsels to combine legal knowledge with the Department of Intellectual Property (DIP) procedures, prosecution experience, enforcement strategies, client portfolio management, and advice on emerging technologies and IP commercialization. Much of this knowledge is tacit and experience-based, and is often shared through mentoring, case discussions, informal consultation, internal meetings, templates, shared drives, email, and messaging applications rather than formalized knowledge management systems. This makes Thailand a meaningful context for examining knowledge sharing motivations, particularly as many Thai IP law firms remain people-dependent and face risks of knowledge loss, inconsistent practice, and limited junior professional development. This issue is significant because ineffective knowledge sharing may affect service consistency, junior lawyer development, retention of specialized expertise, and the competitiveness of Thai IP law firms in a technology-driven legal market. Moreover, despite the practical importance of knowledge sharing in this context, there remains limited empirical research specifically examining knowledge sharing among IP lawyers and legal counsels in Thai IP law firms. Preliminary interviews with managing partners in Thailand also confirm that most IP law firms still lack a systematic, formalized knowledge-sharing system.

This study presents an extended analysis that builds upon a preliminary conceptual framework first introduced at a conference (Ariyahchatraweekul, Wiriyaipinit & Khlaisang, 2024). It therefore aims to fill the aforementioned knowledge gap by presenting the findings of a qualitative study that deeply explores knowledge sharing within the specialized context of IP lawyers and legal counsels in IP law firms. The study addresses the following research objectives: (1) to understand the characteristics of the knowledge being shared; (2) to explore current knowledge-sharing processes; and (3) to identify and analyze motivational factors affecting knowledge sharing. The findings will offer valuable new knowledge, contributing to a deeper understanding of the drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing among highly specialized professionals and providing a crucial foundation for developing information management strategies that promote legal professional development in an emerging economy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Unique Knowledge Landscape of IP Law Firms

Law firms are widely recognized as knowledge-intensive organizations, whose competitive advantage depends on their ability to create and leverage knowledge (Forstenlechner, 2005). The context of an Intellectual Property (IP) law firm, however, is uniquely complex. The knowledge required for operations is not limited to explicit, declarative knowledge in the form of statutes or legal precedents (Apistola & Gottschalk, 2012; Edwards & Mahling, 1997). It also demands sophisticated tacit knowledge, developed through experience, which includes procedural knowledge (e.g., processes for working with government agencies) and analytical knowledge (e.g., applying legal principles to complex facts to devise client strategies) (Apistola & Gottschalk, 2012). This hybrid nature of knowledge presents distinct challenges for knowledge management and sharing compared to other professional service firms.

2.2 Types of Knowledge in the Law Firm Context

The knowledge within a law firm is diverse and complex; understanding its different types is essential for effective management and sharing. The literature classifies knowledge across several dimensions, but the most widely accepted distinction is between explicit and tacit knowledge (Apistola & Gottschalk, 2012). Explicit knowledge is formal, codified knowledge that can be systematically stored and easily communicated (Alavi & Leidner, 1999). In the legal context, this includes, declarative knowledge or “know-what,” such as statutes, court precedents, and legal principles (Edwards & Mahling, 1997). It also encompasses, administrative data, like client information and case details (Terrett, 1998). Explicit knowledge forms the foundational layer and is relatively straightforward to share via information technology. Conversely, tacit knowledge is highly personal, experiential

knowledge that is difficult to articulate or codify in writing (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). This type of knowledge is crucial for a firm's competitive advantage as it is hard to imitate. For lawyers, tacit knowledge comprises procedural knowledge, such as the skills for drafting legal documents or navigating bureaucratic processes (Du Plessis, 2004; Fombad, 2008). Even more complex is analytical knowledge, which is the ability to creatively apply legal principles to complex factual scenarios to devise solutions for clients (Edwards & Mahling, 1997). Sharing this tacit knowledge typically requires close social interaction, such as mentoring or collaborative teamwork. Therefore, the central challenge for knowledge management in law firms lies not merely in archiving explicit knowledge, but in creating the mechanisms and culture that facilitate the transfer and sharing of valuable tacit knowledge, which is the true source of the organization's expertise.

2.3 Knowledge Sharing as a Mechanism for Development

In a rapidly changing knowledge environment, the act of sharing knowledge has become more critical than merely possessing it (Van den Hooff, de Ridder & Vijvers, 2002). For law firms, knowledge sharing helps reduce redundant work, prevent the use of outdated information and support the development of learning organizations (Apostola, 2007; Farooq, 2018; Turner & Makhija, 2006). However, previous research also highlights barriers to knowledge sharing in law firms, including limited time among senior lawyers and cultures that restrict sharing within departments (Rusanow, 2003; Gottschalk & Khandelwal, 2003). These challenges show that knowledge sharing in law firms depends not only on the availability of knowledge, but also on the organizational conditions and individual motivations that encourage lawyers to share it.

2.4 A Review of Motivational Factors for Knowledge Sharing

To foster knowledge sharing, understanding motivational factors is essential. The literature generally categorizes these factors into extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic factors refer to organizational and environmental conditions that support knowledge sharing, such as an open organizational culture, management involvement, time allocation and enabling technology (Wong, 2005; Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Terrett, 1998; Deng, Duan & Wibowo, 2023). Intrinsic factors refer to internal psychological drivers, including altruism, recognition, reputation and trust, which encourage individuals to share knowledge voluntarily (Holinde, 2015; Evans, Wensley & Frissen, 2015; Van den Brink, 2003). Recent research also suggests that autonomous motivation can influence knowledge sharing intentions by mediating the relationship between environmental factors and actual sharing behavior (Nguyen, Malik & Sharma, 2021).

While this literature provides an important conceptual foundation, it is largely based on general law firms or broader professional service firms. A gap remains in understanding how these motivational factors manifest in the specific context of IP lawyers and legal counsels in Thai IP law firms, where legal, technical, procedural and client-related knowledge are closely intertwined. An in-depth qualitative exploration is therefore necessary to examine this phenomenon in its real-world context.

2.5 Social Exchange Theory and Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a foundational framework for explaining knowledge sharing behavior in organizations. Drawing on classic social exchange literature, including Homans (1958), Emerson (1976) and Blau (1986), SET views social interaction as an exchange process in which individuals evaluate expected benefits and costs. In knowledge sharing, this explains why individuals do not automatically share knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge, which may involve risks such as loss of power or misuse. Employees are therefore more likely to share when perceived benefits outweigh costs, including reputation, trust and reciprocal support (Bock et al., 2005; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Reciprocity is central to SET, as it reflects a social norm requiring benefits to be returned (Gouldner, 1960), and has been shown to positively influence knowledge sharing intentions (Bock et al., 2005). However, reciprocity may also be indirect, such as sharing knowledge to build reputation within broader networks (Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

Trust further supports knowledge sharing by reducing uncertainty and perceived risk. Prior studies show that trust, together with intrinsic motivations such as enjoyment in helping others, enhances knowledge contribution (Kankanhalli, Tan & Wei, 2005; Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006). Consistent with SET, intrinsic motivations are often more influential than extrinsic rewards (Lin, 2007), suggesting that knowledge sharing is largely a socioemotional exchange. SET also highlights the role of social context, including organizational culture, communication climate and social norms (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004). More recent work extends SET by incorporating psychological exchanges, including implicit perceptions and emotions that may appear as inactive exchanges or knowledge withholding (Ahmad et al., 2023). It also suggests that exchange processes involve rules beyond reciprocity, including altruism and rationality (Ahmad et al., 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of a new phenomenon in a previously un-researched context and to discover emergent variables from empirical data. This design emphasizes the importance of collecting direct opinions and experiences from professionals, managers, and executives within organizations, which is critical for generating new knowledge (Bruner, 1990; Scholes, 1981; Swap et al., 2001; Tulving, 1972, as cited in Evans & Price, 2017).

3.2 Site and Participant Selection

This study utilized purposive sampling for participant selection. The sampling frame consisted of five small and medium-sized intellectual property (IP) law firms in Thailand, registered as juristic persons with the Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand, that met five specific inclusion criteria:

- Membership in the Intellectual Property Association of Thailand.
- A specialized focus on providing IP legal services.
- Having registered patent agents among their staff.
- Possessing industry recognition, such as awards or rankings.
- Employing lawyers with advanced degrees or specialized training in IP law.

The selection of ten participants was considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain in-depth insights from a focused and specialized group rather than statistical representation. Selecting one partner and one senior associate or associate from each selected IP firm allowed the study to capture both strategic/managerial perspectives and practical/operational experiences of knowledge sharing within IP law firms, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

Code	Gender	Position	Experience (Years)	IP Practice Areas
IPFIRM 1	Male	Partner	20	TM, CR
IPFIRM 1.1	Male	Senior Associate	9	PT
IPFIRM 2	Male	Partner	30	TM, PT, DP, CR
IPFIRM 2.1	Female	Senior Associate	13	TM
IPFIRM 3	Male	Partner	13	TM, PT, DP, CR
IPFIRM 3.1	Female	Senior Associate	9	TM
IPFIRM 4	Female	Partner	15	TM, PT, DP, CR
IPFIRM 4.1	Female	Senior Associate	13	DP
IPFIRM 5	Male	Partner	35	TM, PT, DP, CR
IPFIRM 5.1	Female	Senior Associate	15	PT

Note: TM = Trademark, PT = Invention Patent, DP = Design Patent, CR = Copyright

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through face-to-face, semi-structured in-depth interviews. Potential participants were contacted via email with a formal letter requesting an interview. The interviews were conducted from 1st June to 30th October 2025. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was guided by an interview protocol and questions.

3.4 Data Saturation, Analysis and Credibility

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is suitable for identifying and reporting recurring patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed an iterative process: repeated reading of transcripts, initial open coding, grouping related codes into categories, and refinement of categories into final themes. The analysis was conducted manually without NVivo or ATLAS.ti. Manual coding was appropriate given the focused sample size and allowed close engagement with the meaning and context of participants' responses.

Although the study involved 10 participants, the sample was considered sufficient because it focused on a clearly bounded and specialized group: IP lawyers and legal counsels from recognized Thai IP law firms. In qualitative research, sample adequacy is determined by data richness and saturation rather than statistical representativeness. Saturation is reached when additional interviews no longer generate substantially new codes or themes (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). In this study, recurring themes became evident after the eighth interview, and the ninth and tenth interviews confirmed and refined existing themes without producing new categories.

To enhance transparency in the manual thematic analysis, a thematic matrix was developed to document how initial codes were consolidated into broader categories and final themes. As shown in Table 2, the matrix demonstrates the analytical progression from participants' interview responses to the final thematic structure. This helped ensure that the themes were grounded in the interview data and were not based solely on the researcher's subjective interpretation. Trustworthiness was further strengthened through role-based triangulation between partners and associates, the use of direct quotations, and the maintenance of coding notes and analytical memos as an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Table 2: Thematic Matrix Used in Data Analysis

Final Theme	Sub-theme / Category	Analytical Evidence
Types of knowledge shared	Legal knowledge	References to statutes, regulations, court judgments and IP practice-area specialization.
Types of knowledge shared	Professional practical knowledge	References to Department of Intellectual Property (DIP) or procedures, database searching, application preparation and e-filing updates.
Types of knowledge shared	IP-driven business strategy knowledge	References to IP commercialization, licensing, technology transfer and emerging technologies.
Types of knowledge shared	Personal skill knowledge	References to problem-solving, client communication, language skills and relationship management.
Knowledge sharing processes	Formal processes	References to meetings, lunch sessions, new lawyer training, article writing and internal documentation.
Knowledge sharing processes	Informal processes	References to day-to-day consultation, teamwork, Line groups and spontaneous peer support.
Extrinsic motivational factors	Organizational culture	References to mandatory meetings, open workspaces and expectations of sharing.
Extrinsic motivational factors	Team interaction	References to team-based litigation, due diligence and cross-practice consultation.
Extrinsic motivational factors	Management involvement	References to leadership modelling, attendance at sharing sessions and training support.
Extrinsic motivational factors	Technology	References to shared drives, messaging groups, email, Google Workspace, databases and AI tools.
Emergent extrinsic factors	Business development through knowledge sharing	References to articles, newsletters, seminars, reputation building and client acquisition.
Emergent extrinsic factors	Institutional sustainability	References to succession, continuity, knowledge transfer and reduced dependence on individuals.
Intrinsic motivational factors	Recognition	References to feeling valued, useful and important when sharing knowledge.
Intrinsic motivational factors	Professional reputation	References to being recognized as an expert internally and externally.
Intrinsic motivational factors	Altruism	References to helping juniors and colleagues improve.
Intrinsic motivational factors	Trust	References to psychological safety and confidence that sharing will not be judged negatively.
Emergent intrinsic factor	Reflexive self-development through continuous learning	References to learning by teaching, feedback, clarification and continuous improvement.

4. Results

4.1 Types of Knowledge Shared in IP Law Firms

The analysis revealed four distinct categories of knowledge shared among IP lawyers and legal counsels: legal knowledge, professional practical knowledge, IP-driven business strategy knowledge, and personal skill knowledge. These categories are summarized in Figure 1.

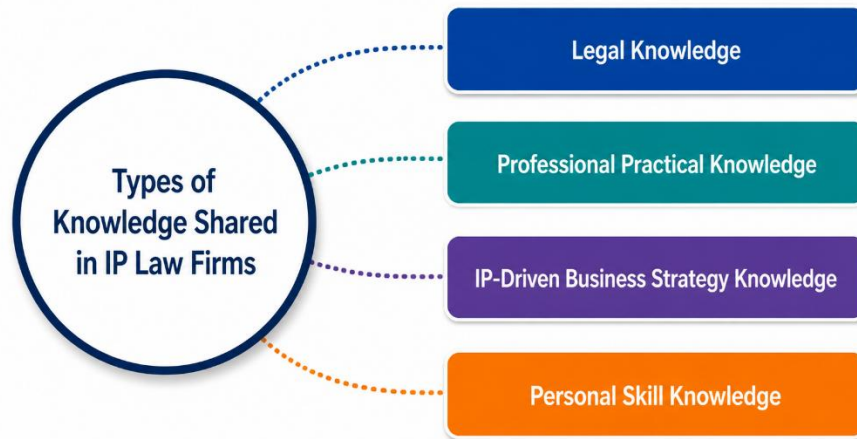


Figure 1: Types of Knowledge Shared in IP Law Firms

4.1.1 Legal knowledge

All participants emphasized that legal knowledge forms the foundation of IP practice. This includes substantive knowledge of IP legislation—the Patent Act, Trademark Act, Copyright Act, and related ministerial regulations and departmental announcements. As one partner with over 30 years’ experience explained:

“IP legal knowledge can be further divided according to practice areas—copyright lawyers, patent lawyers, trademark lawyers—each may have expertise that doesn’t overlap. A trademark specialist may not understand the technical complexities of patent prosecution, and vice versa.” (IPFIRM 5).

Legal knowledge also encompasses court judgments and decisions. Although Thailand follows civil law tradition where precedents are not formally binding, participants noted that judicial interpretations provide crucial guidance. One senior associate observed:

“When we encounter new issues, we search for relevant Supreme Court judgments. Even if the facts differ, the reasoning helps us understand how courts might approach similar questions.” (IPFIRM 2).

Participants consistently emphasized the dynamic nature of IP law. Firms regularly send lawyers for training on emerging issues such as AI-related copyright questions, international treaty developments, and legislative amendments. This continuous evolution necessitates ongoing knowledge updating and sharing.

4.1.2 Professional Practical Knowledge

This category encompasses procedural and operational knowledge essential for daily practice. It includes understanding workflows with DIP, document preparation, filing procedures, responding to office actions, and managing client IP portfolios. One senior associate described:

“When new lawyers join, we teach them practical skills—how to search the DIP database, how to prepare trademark applications, how to respond to examination reports. These aren’t things you learn in law school.” (IPFIRM 2.1).

Practical knowledge evolves with technological and administrative changes. The transition to e-filing systems, updates to search databases, and changes in departmental practices all require knowledge updating and sharing. One partner noted:

“When the DIP introduced the new e-filing system, we had to learn it quickly and share that knowledge across the firm. If one person figured out a workaround for a technical glitch, they’d share it with everyone.” (IPFIRM 3).

This category also includes enforcement and litigation knowledge—procedures for civil and criminal IP enforcement, evidence gathering, and courtroom practice.

4.1.3 IP-Driven Business Strategy Knowledge

Several partners emphasized knowledge about commercializing intellectual property and integrating IP with business strategy. This represents a more sophisticated level of knowledge extending beyond traditional legal advice. As one partner explained:

“Clients don’t just want registration; they want to know how to monetize their IP. We need to understand licensing, franchising, technology transfer—and match these to specific IP types and business contexts.” (IPFIRM 4).

This knowledge encompasses understanding client industries, market dynamics, and emerging technologies. Participants mentioned needing familiarity with AI, NFTs, blockchain, and other innovations to advise on new IP issues. Another partner observed:

“When a client asks about protecting AI-generated works, we need to understand both the technology and the legal gaps. This requires continuous learning and sharing insights across the firm.” (IPFIRM 2).

This finding suggests that knowledge sharing in IP law firms extends beyond legal interpretation and procedural know-how. It includes commercially oriented knowledge that enables lawyers to advise clients on how IP can be protected, monetized and strategically used as a business asset. Therefore, IP-driven business strategy knowledge represents a distinct knowledge category that differentiates IP legal practice from general legal services.

4.1.4 Personal skill knowledge

This category includes knowledge developed through experience that is difficult to codify or teach directly. Participants identified several dimensions:

Problem-solving skills—the ability to analyze complex factual situations and devise creative legal solutions. One partner noted:

“Some lawyers can look at a problem and immediately see solutions others miss. That’s accumulated wisdom—knowing what arguments work, what evidence matters, how to frame issues favorably.” (IPFIRM 5).

Communication and client management skills—understanding how to interact effectively with diverse clients, including cultural nuances when dealing with international clients. A senior associate explained:

“Dealing with Japanese clients requires different approaches than American clients. Understanding these differences—when to be direct, when to be indirect—comes from experience. It’s hard to write a manual for this.” (IPFIRM 4.1).

Relationship management with government officials—particularly with Department of Intellectual Property examiners and officials. Participants noted that effective interaction requires interpersonal skills developed through experience.

Language skills—especially English proficiency essential for international IP practice, as most IP clients are multinational corporations requiring English-language communications.

One partner encapsulated personal skill knowledge:

“It’s the ability to achieve client goals by ‘thinking outside the box’ while staying within legal boundaries. Solid advice—where you’re confident the answer wouldn’t differ if the client consulted elsewhere—comes from accumulated experience. That’s invaluable firm intellectual capital.” (IPFIRM 1).

4.2 Knowledge Sharing Processes

Participants described both formal and informal knowledge sharing processes in their firms. Formal processes included regular lawyer meetings, lunch sessions, departmental meetings, training for new lawyers, article

writing, and internal documentation. These mechanisms allowed lawyers to share legal updates, practice issues, case experiences, and procedural knowledge in a structured manner. As one participant explained:

“Every Thursday we have lunch sessions. Each department presents issues encountered, problems solved, or legal updates. We discuss different perspectives—it’s structured sharing.” (IPFIRM 2).

Informal processes were equally important. Knowledge was often shared through day-to-day consultation, teamwork on complex cases, cross-departmental discussions, Line groups, email, and spontaneous peer support. These informal interactions were particularly useful for sharing tacit and experience-based knowledge that could not be fully captured in manuals or databases. One senior associate noted:

“If I’m working on a copyright question involving software, I might call our patent colleague who understands technology better. These informal consultations happen constantly.” (IPFIRM 3.1).

This suggests that knowledge sharing in Thai IP law firms occurs through a combination of structured mechanisms and informal professional interaction. While formal processes help institutionalize knowledge sharing, informal processes remain essential for transferring tacit, practical, and case-specific knowledge.

4.3 Extrinsic Motivational Factors

Analysis identified six key extrinsic factors influencing knowledge sharing among IP lawyers and legal counsels. Four factors were consistent with those previously identified in the literature: organizational culture, team interaction, management involvement, and technology. In addition, two emergent factors were identified from this study: business development and institutional sustainability.

4.3.1 Previously identified extrinsic factors

Organizational culture emerged as a foundational factor, though its manifestation varied considerably across firms. Some firms have institutionalized knowledge sharing through explicit policies. As one participant explained:

“Our company has an Internal Policy—meetings are mandatory, a firm rule we strictly follow. It’s part of our culture.” (IPFIRM 3.1).

Another firm designed physical workspace to encourage interaction:

“We arrange desks so people sit together, not in separate rooms. This creates constant conversation—about cases, about developments. If people are isolated, that atmosphere doesn’t develop.” (IPFIRM 5).

However, some participants described weaker cultures where sharing depends on individual initiative rather than organizational expectation. Generational gaps were mentioned as potential barriers, suggesting culture involves not just policy but interpersonal dynamics.

Team interaction was universally recognized as crucial. Both formal meetings and informal collaboration facilitate knowledge exchange. One participant noted:

“Each team conducts monthly internal training on their specialty—beyond IP, topics like NFTs or FDA regulations. This deepens everyone’s knowledge.” (IPFIRM 4).

The collaborative nature of complex IP work naturally generates interaction. As another explained:

“Because our cases are large, we work in teams—4-5 people on litigation, 5-10 on due diligence. Knowledge sharing happens organically through this teamwork.” (IPFIRM 5).

Management involvement was consistently identified as critical. Leaders who prioritize and model knowledge sharing create organizational momentum. One partner described:

“As a manager, I actively support knowledge sharing within our team and with associates. I conduct training on interesting topics and encourage sharing across departments.” (IPFIRM 3).

Another observed:

“Management is crucial because they set rules and policies. Our managing partner attends every knowledge sharing session—demonstrating commitment.” (IPFIRM 3.1).

A senior partner emphasized modeling behavior:

“I try to set an example. After court, I asked juniors why I argued certain points. Back at the office, I have them present and discuss—showing that learning continues after cases end.” (IPFIRM 5).

Technology was unanimously recognized as an important enabler of knowledge sharing, but participants’ accounts also revealed that its current role in Thai IP law firms remains largely supportive rather than fully transformative. The technologies currently used include shared servers or shared drives for storing case files, email for distributing legal updates, Line groups for quick informal communication, Google Workspace for collaborative document management, DIP databases and e-filing systems for procedural work, and specialized databases such as Darts-IP for case law and IP-related research. One firm also reported developing an internal AI chatbot trained on internal data to provide basic answers on IP procedures, fees and legal requirements.

However, participants consistently noted that existing systems still have practical limitations. Shared drives and servers are useful for storage, but knowledge retrieval often depends on folder structures, file names, personal memory or asking colleagues where information is located. As one participant explained:

“We have a shared server where everyone can access case files and information. But searching is difficult—you have to click through folders, guess file names. Finding specific knowledge takes time.” (IPFIRM 2.1).

Another participant expressed desire for better search:

“If we had technology that could intelligently search our shared knowledge—using keywords, finding relevant precedents quickly—it would transform how we work.” (IPFIRM 3.1).

Salary increase, bonus receipt, promotion, knowledge champions, time allocation, and annual appraisal showed mixed and limited responses. Some participants indicated that financial rewards or performance-related incentives operated in their firms, while others stated that these were not directly linked to knowledge sharing. Similarly, knowledge champions and time allocation were mentioned only by some participants. As these factors were not strongly repeated across the interviews, they were not retained as core factors in the final framework.

4.3.2 Emergent Extrinsic Factors in Thai IP law firm context

Business development through knowledge sharing emerged as a significant extrinsic factor. Participants recognized that external knowledge sharing—through articles, speaking engagements, website content—serves marketing and business development functions. One partner explained:

“As a partner, I write articles as part of business development—promoting our department, demonstrating expertise in interesting areas. It attracts clients.” (IPFIRM 3).

Another noted:

“Clients are willing to pay when they see we deeply understand their business. That understanding comes from team knowledge, which comes from sharing. So sharing indirectly drives revenue.” (IPFIRM 4).

A senior associate observed:

“Our website articles and newsletters show clients we’re current. When foreign clients search for Thai IP expertise, our published content builds credibility.” (IPFIRM 2).

This factor represents knowledge sharing’s instrumental value for organizational growth and individual career advancement through enhanced professional visibility.

Institutional sustainability represents another emergent extrinsic factor. Participants viewed knowledge sharing as essential for firm sustainability and risk management. One partner articulated:

“To be a true organization, not dependent on individuals A, B, or C, we need successors who can replace each other. That’s why knowledge must be passed generation to generation.” (IPFIRM 1).

Another partner emphasized:

“A law firm’s most valuable resource is people. When people leave, knowledge leaves unless we’ve shared it. Sharing ensures continuity.” (IPFIRM 5).

A senior associate expressed personal satisfaction from this dimension:

“When I share knowledge and see juniors grow, I feel I’m building the IP profession’s next generation. That’s motivating—creating successors.” (IPFIRM 4.1).

This factor reflects knowledge sharing's role in organizational resilience and professional legacy, particularly in small and medium-sized IP law firms where tacit knowledge is often closely tied to senior professionals.

4.4 Intrinsic Motivational Factors

Analysis identified five key intrinsic factors influencing knowledge sharing among IP lawyers and legal counsels. Four factors were consistent with those previously identified in the literature: recognition, professional reputation, altruism, and trust. In addition, one emergent intrinsic factor was identified from this study: reflexive self-development.

4.4.1 Previously identified intrinsic factors

Recognition emerged as a powerful intrinsic motivator. Recognition encompasses feeling valued, important, and integral to the organization. One participant described:

"When I share knowledge, I feel good—I feel part of the company, important to it. I have power in this area." (IPFIRM 3.1).

Another noted:

"Sharing knowledge across departments exposes our expertise. We gain recognition in our practice areas." (IPFIRM 3).

A senior associate expressed:

"I feel useful when I share. Like I'm contributing something valuable." (IPFIRM 2.1).

Professional reputation also motivated knowledge sharing. Participants noted that sharing knowledge through internal discussions, publications, and presentations helped them become recognized as experts within the firm and in the broader legal community. One participant explained:

"When the company needs IP expertise, they think of me. Writing articles and speaking at seminars builds that reputation." (IPFIRM 3.1).

Another observed:

"Being known as the go-to person for certain issues—that's motivating. It builds your profile, which helps career advancement." (IPFIRM 4).

Reputation operates both within the firm and in the broader legal community, enhancing credibility and opportunities.

Altruism was strongly present throughout the interviews. Participants frequently described knowledge sharing as a way to help colleagues, support junior lawyers, and contribute to team success. One partner expressed:

"I want juniors to surpass me, to build on what I share. That's genuine satisfaction—seeing others grow." (IPFIRM 1).

A senior associate stated simply:

"My motivation is helping colleagues become better. When they succeed, I'm happy." (IPFIRM 1.1).

Another partner noted practical benefits alongside altruism:

"The more competent juniors become, the easier my work gets. Helping them helps me too." (IPFIRM 5).

Altruism reflects genuine care for colleagues' development and team success.

Trust was also identified as a foundational condition for knowledge sharing. Participants emphasized that lawyers are more willing to share knowledge when they feel psychologically safe and confident that their contributions will not be judged negatively. One partner explained:

"Senior-junior gaps can be barriers. We need to break down hierarchy, build trust so juniors communicate without fear—with genuine desire to learn. That makes sharing easier." (IPFIRM 1).

Another participant described:

"Sharing happens when people trust they won't be judged. When colleagues receive shared knowledge positively—'this is really helpful'—trust builds." (IPFIRM 4).

Trust creates the interpersonal safety necessary for open knowledge exchange, particularly for tacit knowledge where vulnerability exists.

4.4.2 Emergent intrinsic factor in Thai IP law firm context

Reflexive self-development through continuous learning represents a significant emergent factor. Participants described how teaching and sharing actually enhance their own learning. One partner articulated:

“I feel good sharing my knowledge. Without sharing, there’s no self-development. When others take what I share and build on it, their insights come back to me—I learn too.” (IPFIRM 1).

Another partner used a memorable metaphor:

“The brain needs to release old knowledge to receive new knowledge. Sharing forces that release, creating space for learning.” (IPFIRM 2).

A senior associate explained:

“When lawyers research and learn without sharing, they may forget. But when they share, others offer different perspectives—which makes us want to learn more and develop ourselves.” (IPFIRM 4).

This factor reveals that sharing is not merely altruistic giving but a reciprocal learning process. The act of articulating knowledge for others requires the sharer to organize, clarify, and deepen their own understanding. Feedback and questions from recipients further stimulate learning. Thus, knowledge sharing creates a virtuous cycle where sharers themselves benefit through enhanced expertise and continuous development.

4.5 Summary of Key Motivational Factors

The findings identified two main groups of motivational factors affecting knowledge sharing among IP lawyers and legal counsels: extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors. The key extrinsic factors are organizational culture, team interaction, management involvement, technology, business development, and institutional sustainability. These factors reflect organizational conditions and external support that encourage knowledge sharing within IP law firms.

The key intrinsic factors are recognition, professional reputation, altruism, trust, and reflexive self-development. These factors reflect personal and relational motivations that encourage IP lawyers and legal counsels to share knowledge with colleagues. Trust supports open communication, while reflexive self-development shows that knowledge sharing also helps the sharer learn and improve through the process of explaining and exchanging knowledge.

Some other factors, such as salary increase, bonus receipt, promotion, knowledge champions, time allocation, and annual appraisal, were mentioned by a smaller number of participants. However, these factors were not strongly repeated across the interviews. Therefore, they were not included in the final framework. Figure 2 presents the key motivational factors most relevant to knowledge sharing in the context of Thai IP law firms.

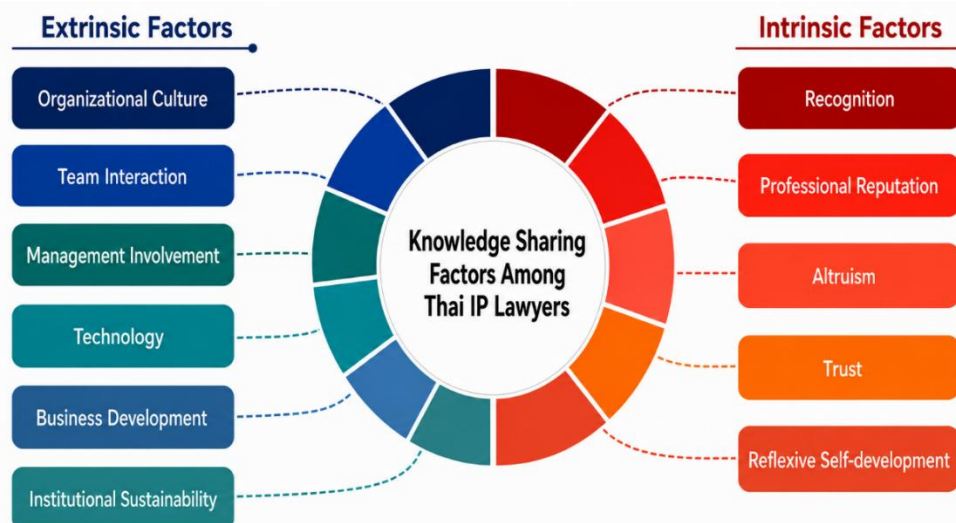


Figure 2: Knowledge Sharing Factors Among Thai IP Lawyers

5. Discussion

5.1 Knowledge Types in IP Legal Practice

This study identifies four categories of knowledge shared among IP lawyers and legal counsels in Thai IP law firms: legal knowledge, professional practical knowledge, IP-driven business strategy knowledge, and personal skill knowledge. These findings extend previous classifications of legal knowledge, which commonly distinguish between declarative, procedural and analytical knowledge (Apistola & Gottschalk, 2012; Edwards & Mahling, 1997). The findings show that IP legal practice requires an integration of formal legal knowledge, procedural know-how, commercial understanding and experience-based professional judgement.

The emergence of IP-driven business strategy knowledge as a separate category signifies the commercialization necessity in modern IP practice. This category shows that IP lawyers do not merely advise clients on registration, prosecution or enforcement, but also help clients understand how intellectual property can be protected, commercialized and used as a business asset. Such knowledge includes licensing, technology transfer, IP portfolio strategy, emerging technologies and client-specific commercial considerations. This finding suggests that IP law firms operate not only as legal service providers, but also as strategic advisors in innovation-driven business contexts.

The significance of personal skill knowledge underscores the enduring relevance of tacit knowledge in legal practice, notwithstanding technological advancements. Although explicit legal knowledge can be documented in databases and manuals, the experiential wisdom necessary for effective client counselling, strategic judgement, and nuanced communication is inherently personal. This supports Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000), who argued that tacit knowledge is embedded in action, experience and values. Therefore, mentoring, apprenticeship and collaborative work remain essential mechanisms for transferring professional knowledge in IP law firms.

5.2 Extrinsic Motivational Dynamics

The findings show that extrinsic motivation for knowledge sharing in Thai IP law firms is shaped mainly by organizational and contextual conditions rather than direct financial rewards. The key extrinsic factors were organizational culture, team interaction, management involvement, technology, business development, and institutional sustainability. Although salary increase, bonus receipt, promotion, knowledge champions, time allocation, and annual appraisal were mentioned by some participants, they were not strongly repeated and were not retained as core factors. While some participants confirmed that financial rewards and performance-related incentives operate in their firms, others stated that these incentives are not directly linked to knowledge sharing. This variation may reflect differences in firm size, ownership structure, including Thai-owned firms and international affiliates, and management philosophy. It may also suggest that knowledge sharing has not yet been systematically integrated into formal performance management in many Thai IP law firms, consistent with Forstenlechner's (2005) observation that knowledge management in law firms remains underdeveloped.

Management involvement emerged as a particularly important factor. Leaders influence whether knowledge sharing becomes normal professional practice or remains dependent on individual initiative. This supports Disterer's (2003) view that consistent and credible management behavior helps foster a knowledge-sharing culture. In this study, management support was reflected through formal policies, active participation, modelling of sharing behavior, training junior lawyers, and encouraging cross-team discussion.

Technology was also recognized as essential, but participants' dissatisfaction with current systems indicates an implementation gap. Shared drives, internal servers, email, Line groups, Google Workspace, DIP databases, e-filing systems, specialized IP databases such as Darts-IP, and one internal AI chatbot supported communication, document storage, legal updates, and procedural work. However, these tools remained largely supportive rather than transformative, especially where knowledge retrieval depended on folder structures, file names, personal memory, or informal consultation. This suggests that technology in Thai IP law firms is embedded in daily practice, but knowledge management remains partly people-dependent. Technology must therefore evolve beyond document repositories toward more active knowledge support, while tacit and strategic knowledge still requires mentoring, interpretation, and collaborative discussion. This aligns with calls for KM systems to move from lawyer-to-information toward lawyer-to-application stages (Gottschalk & Terje Karlsen, 2009).

The emergent factor of business development through knowledge sharing reveals an important instrumental motivation in the Thai IP law firm context. Participants recognized that knowledge sharing does not only support

internal learning, but can also create external value for the firm. For example, writing articles, preparing newsletters, speaking at seminars, and sharing legal updates can demonstrate expertise, strengthen professional visibility, and attract potential clients. This is particularly relevant in IP practice, where clients often seek lawyers who can show specialized knowledge of legal developments, emerging technologies, and commercial IP strategy. Thus, knowledge sharing functions not only as an internal knowledge management activity, but also as a mechanism for reputation building and client development.

The other emergent extrinsic factor, institutional sustainability, reflects participants' concern that legal knowledge should not remain concentrated in individual lawyers. Several participants viewed knowledge sharing as a way to develop successors, reduce dependency on specific individuals, and preserve the firm's accumulated expertise across generations. This factor is especially important in small and medium-sized IP law firms, where tacit and experience-based knowledge may be closely tied to senior professionals. Knowledge sharing therefore supports organizational continuity by helping junior lawyers acquire practical judgement, procedural know-how, and client-related experience. In this sense, institutional sustainability links knowledge sharing with the long-term resilience of the firm.

5.3 Intrinsic Motivational Dynamics

The intrinsic factors identified in this study align with and extend prior research. Holinde (2015) found that the desire to help colleagues motivates sharing, and the universal endorsement of altruism in this study confirms that finding. The strong presence of altruism suggests that knowledge sharing was also supported by concern for colleagues' development and team success. Recognition and reputation also operated as powerful intrinsic reinforcers. This is consistent with prior studies showing that intrinsic rewards can strongly influence knowledge sharing in law firms and professional settings (Holinde, 2015; Evans, Wensley & Frissen, 2015; Van den Brink, 2003). In this study, internal recognition reflected the feeling of being valued within the firm, while professional reputation reflected being acknowledged as an expert within and outside the organization.

Trust emerged as a foundational enabler rather than a direct motivator. Without psychological safety, sharing—particularly tacit knowledge involving uncertainty and vulnerability—cannot flourish.

This finding is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that individuals are more willing to engage in exchange behavior when they perceive the relationship as safe, reciprocal and beneficial (Emerson, 1976; Blau, 1986). In the context of knowledge sharing, trust reduces the perceived risk that shared knowledge may be misused, judged negatively or appropriated without recognition, thereby enabling deeper forms of tacit and strategic knowledge exchange ((Kankanhalli, Tan & Wei, 2005, 2005; Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006). Evans, Wensley and Frissen (2015) demonstrated that trustworthiness mediates between social-cognitive factors and sharing behavior, a finding that this study supports.

The findings also reflect cultural and relational nuances in Thai IP law firms. Values such as helpfulness, mutual support, and concern for junior development encouraged knowledge sharing, particularly in mentoring and successor development. However, hierarchy, respect for seniority, relational sensitivity, and workplace harmony may affect how junior lawyers ask questions, seek feedback, or express uncertainty. This is consistent with studies showing that hierarchy and interpersonal sensitivity influence communication and feedback seeking in Thai professional contexts (Andrews & Chompusri, 2013; Areemit *et al.*, 2021). These cultural dynamics help explain why trust, team interaction, and management involvement were important in creating a safe environment for tacit knowledge sharing.

The emergent factor of reflexive self-development represents this study's most significant theoretical contribution. While previous research has recognized that sharing benefits organizations, the finding that sharing directly benefits sharers through enhanced learning has received limited attention. Participants described knowledge sharing not only as helping others, but also as a process that improves the sharer's own understanding. Explaining knowledge to colleagues requires lawyers to organize their thoughts, clarify assumptions, and respond to questions or alternative perspectives. This process deepens the sharer's expertise and creates a reciprocal learning cycle in which sharing generates further learning. In this sense, knowledge sharing is both a contribution to others and a mechanism of self-development.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to knowledge management theory in four main ways. First, it extends understanding of knowledge types in specialized legal contexts by identifying IP-driven business strategy knowledge as a distinct

category. This suggests that knowledge classifications in law firms should reflect the specific nature of each practice area.

Second, the findings show that motivation for knowledge sharing is not strictly divided into extrinsic and intrinsic categories. Factors such as business development and institutional sustainability serve organizational purposes while also supporting individual reputation, professional identity, and personal satisfaction.

Third, the finding on reflexive self-development challenges the view that knowledge sharing only benefits recipients or organizations. In this study, sharing also enhanced the sharer's own learning by encouraging reflection, clarification, and deeper understanding.

Fourth, the study contextualizes knowledge management theory in Thai IP law firms. The findings suggest that knowledge sharing is shaped by professional relationships, trust, hierarchy, mentoring, and concern for institutional continuity. Therefore, knowledge management models should be adapted to the cultural and organizational context in which they are applied.

5.5 Practical Implications

For law firm management, the findings suggest that effective knowledge sharing requires both organizational support and personal motivation. Firms should strengthen leadership involvement, encourage regular team interaction, build trust, and recognize lawyers' contributions to knowledge sharing.

Technology should be improved not only for document storage, but also for knowledge retrieval and reuse. Searchable repositories, better classification of work products, AI-assisted retrieval, and clear documentation practices can help lawyers access prior knowledge more effectively. However, technology should support, not replace, mentoring, interpretation, and professional discussion.

Firms should also frame knowledge sharing as part of professional development rather than an additional burden. Training, mentoring, internal presentations, and case discussions can be used as learning opportunities for both sharers and recipients. In addition, knowledge sharing may be recognized in evaluation and professional development processes, not necessarily through direct financial rewards, but by showing that mentoring, documentation, and cross-team support are valued contributions.

5.6 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. The sample, while representing leading IP firms, may not reflect practices in smaller or less prestigious firms. Findings may not generalize to other legal practice areas or to non-Thai cultural contexts. The qualitative design, while providing depth, cannot establish causal relationships or quantify factor importance.

Future research should test identified factors through quantitative methods, examining their relative influence on sharing behavior across larger samples. Comparative studies across different legal practice areas and cultural contexts would reveal whether findings are IP-specific or generalize more broadly. Longitudinal research could examine how motivational dynamics evolve as firms implement knowledge management systems. Investigation of technology's role, particularly AI's potential to transform knowledge sharing, represents another important direction.

6. Conclusion

This study explored knowledge sharing motivations among IP lawyers and legal counsels in Thai IP law firms. The findings identified four categories of knowledge shared in this context, as shown in Figure 1: legal knowledge, professional practical knowledge, IP-driven business strategy knowledge, and personal skill knowledge. Among these, IP-driven business strategy knowledge represents an important insight, as it shows that IP lawyers are not limited to providing legal advice but also support clients in understanding the commercial value and strategic use of intellectual property.

The study further identified two main groups of motivational factors influencing knowledge sharing behavior. The key extrinsic factors were organizational culture, team interaction, management involvement, technology, business development, and institutional sustainability. The key intrinsic factors were recognition, professional reputation, altruism, trust, and reflexive self-development. These factors were summarized in Figure 2 as the core knowledge sharing factors among Thai IP lawyers.

The findings suggest that knowledge sharing in Thai IP law firms is shaped not only by organizational systems, but also by professional relationships and personal motivations. Technology supports communication, storage

and access to knowledge, but it remains insufficient without mentoring, interpretation and collaborative discussion. Trust also plays a crucial role by creating psychological safety for sharing tacit and experience-based knowledge. In addition, the finding on reflexive self-development shows that knowledge sharing benefits not only the recipient or the organization, but also the sharer, as the process of explaining and exchanging knowledge helps lawyers clarify, deepen and develop their own expertise.

This study contributes to knowledge management research by extending understanding of knowledge sharing in a specialized legal context in Thailand. It highlights the importance of combining organizational support, relational trust, technology and intrinsic motivation to promote effective knowledge sharing. For practice, the findings suggest that Thai IP law firms should strengthen leadership involvement, improve knowledge-sharing technology, encourage mentoring and team interaction, and recognize knowledge sharing as part of professional development and institutional continuity. As IP legal work becomes increasingly complex, effective knowledge sharing will be essential for maintaining service quality, developing junior professionals and sustaining firm competitiveness.

AI Declaration: The authors declare that basic AI tools were used only for language assistance during manuscript preparation. All content has been reviewed and approved by the authors, who assume full responsibility for the work's originality and scholarly integrity.

Ethics Statement: This study strictly adhered to all ethical principles. The entire research process, including the methodology and interview protocol, was reviewed and approved by The Research Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects: The Second Allied Academic Group in Social Sciences, Humanities and Fine and Applied Arts at Chulalongkorn University. This approval confirmed that the research protocol is in accordance with established international ethical guidelines, including the Declaration of Helsinki, the Belmont Report, CIOMS guidelines, and the International Conference on Harmonisation – Good Clinical Practice (ICH-GCP). Furthermore, all participants were provided with detailed information about the study's objectives and gave written informed consent prior to their interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

Conflict of Interest: The authors state that they have no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this research.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Part 1: Knowledge Sharing for Lawyers and Legal Counsels

1. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of the knowledge held by lawyers and legal counsels in an IP law firm?
2. What are your views on knowledge management for lawyers and legal counsels in an IP law firm?
3. Do you think it is necessary for lawyers and legal counsels in an IP law firm to share knowledge with one another? Why or why not, and in what ways?
4. What methods do you use to share knowledge within the firm? And what types of knowledge do you typically share?
5. In your view, what would an ideal knowledge-sharing process for lawyers and legal counsels in an IP law firm look like?

Part 2: Motivational Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing

6. How does your organization's culture promote knowledge sharing within the firm?
7. What are some of the reasons that motivate you to want to share your knowledge at the firm?
8. What do you think would help to influence knowledge sharing at the firm?
9. How do you believe you personally benefit when you share your knowledge at the firm?
10. How do you feel when you have shared your knowledge with colleagues at the firm?
11. Does the management play a role in promoting knowledge sharing among lawyers and legal consultants at the firm? If so, how?

Part 3: Additional Suggestions or Comments

12. Do you have any other suggestions or comments on how to promote knowledge sharing among lawyers and legal consultants at the firm?