

XLNC Partner Portraits – Interviews with Members

Jeremy Lederman



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Established in 1953, Harold Benjamin is a distinctive firm with a passionate and business-minded approach to the law. Its pioneering and problem-solving ethos alongside the use of the latest technology in the legal sector has helped establish the firm's outstanding reputation in a wide range of sectors including corporate, real estate, disputes and private wealth as well as other areas.

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BENJAMIN**

“ **XLNC: Mr Lederman, who are you and what is your firm doing?** ”

Jeremy Lederman: I am Jeremy Lederman. I was born in London. My father was an electrician and my mother worked in the clothing trade. I studied in London, Manchester and Nottingham. I initially worked for the UK Government dealing with social security for unemployed and homeless people. I have worked at various London firms of lawyers. I joined Harold Benjamin in 2015. I am a Partner. I specialise in commercial litigation and issues with an international element. I have done so since becoming a lawyer. My work includes contractual disputes, fraud, recovery of debt, shareholder disputes, professional negligence and challenging government decisions. We are a leading mid-sized firm. We have just under 100 people. We have two modern offices in London. We are specialised in Real Estate, Business Law, Litigation and Private Client. We have very wide and deep expertise in those areas. We have well known clients including listed companies and state-owned entities. We are recognised in the Legal 500.

“ **XLNC: Why did you become a lawyer?** ”

Jeremy Lederman: I became a lawyer as I liked challenging the status quo, to change things and wanted to help people.

“ **XLNC: What were your dream professions when you were a child?** ”

Jeremy Lederman: Various an astronaut, soldier, train driver and being involved in politics.

“ **XLNC: What is special about your firm?** ”

Jeremy Lederman: We have a strong focus on real estate but also on corporate and commercial law, litigation

and private client. Among the sectors we work in are, Banking and Finance, Development and Construction, Fine Art, Restructuring, Retail and Leisure. Although we are a mid-size firm and carry out a wider range of work, we stay connected with our clients and those we work with. We are interested in relationships. Our people and clients are very diverse. We invest heavily in technology to help manage the work we carry out and have won awards in this respect. We were in a good position to work remotely following Covid. It changed the way we work and we anticipate increased use of technology and further developments as to how we work going forward.

XLNC: What was your most difficult professional moment / experience and why?

Jeremy Lederman: Telling an aggressive North American lawyer who had instructed us on a multi-jurisdictional fraud claim worth in excess of USD1.2 billion at current value, that we would not take any further comments he and his team had on English court proceedings we had prepared. Thus, was because we needed to get the claim filed at court that afternoon to make sure we met the relevant time limit as they had instructed us at a very late stage and we were concerned the claim would be time barred. The lawyer said he would hold us responsible for any missed point. There were no missing points and the case settled.

XLNC: What was your most exciting or rewarding professional experience and why?

Jeremy Lederman: There have been many. A few that come to mind are as follows.

As a trainee I obtained an emergency order to stop a construction of a now iconic building on the side of River Thames, London, next to property owned by our insurance company client. We obtained an urgent order that cranes should not enter our client's airspace and building should not take place on our client's land. On a later visit to the site, I noticed our opponents were in breach of the court order and we pursued the developers for contempt of court and breach of the order. That resulted in our opponents settling and confirming my view that my area of practice should be litigation.

I also acted for a group of businesses urgently challenging part of a wide ranging EU law concerning the regulation of chemicals (REACH) due to its severe prejudice to certain products and industries, as their concerns had not been properly been taken account of by the drafters of the law and experts. The multinational legal team had to learn organic chemistry, about monomers and polymers and product safety in a period of a few weeks to help us apply get the case referred by the English Court to the European Court of Justice. Due to the UK leaving the EU I strongly doubt I will have the opportunity to do this again.

Obtaining a breathing space of a year for a US aircraft provider to refinance when their credit line was cut by hundreds of millions of dollars following a financial crisis, by defending and prolonging claims brought against them.

XLNC: Which two or three personalities influenced you the most and why?

Jeremy Lederman: My parents as they impressed on my brother and I to "do the right thing".

My first head of department who reminded me of the qualities required for a litigation lawyer to be tough, resilient and pragmatic.

XLNC: What are your most developed professional skills and why?

Jeremy Lederman: Managing difficult situations, which is what clients come to me with most of the time.

Looking for points that make a difference for clients and to their cases.

Being commercial and pragmatic to get the job done in a speedy and cost-efficient way.

Some emotional intelligence to understand and try and predict how clients, opponents and judges think and how to present to them.

“ XLNC: *The best professional advice you received was... And from whom?*

Jeremy Lederman: Think and be careful what you say and to whom. This came from my first head of department who was very good indeed, but did not always follow his own advice. This only goes to show we are all human and no-one is perfect. He also said not to be bothered by what others say.

“ XLNC: *What is your business credo?*

Jeremy Lederman: Deal with each situation as it arises and be ready to adapt.

Treat clients and colleagues as you would like to be treated.

For others it depends on the nature of the matter. As part of the work I do, in a number of cases one has to be aggressive to achieve a client's objectives, but in other scenarios a different approach is required. I remember a mediator I got appointed used great charm to achieve a settlement.

“ XLNC: *In your spare time, what is your passion and why?*

Jeremy Lederman: Spending time with family and friends. Unfortunately this is not always possible as my wife has a balloon and event décor business involving her (and sometimes me) in working on this at weekends and evenings. In addition my teenage son is now not that interested in spending time with me, other than the variable experience of watching Tottenham Hotspur or my acting as a taxi driver.

“ XLNC: *What do you collect, if ever, and why?*

Jeremy Lederman: My wife and I have collected the work of a few artists on a small scale. The work looked good and I was told they would appreciate in value. Some of the work was a token of appreciation for help provided.

“ XLNC: *Beer, wine, or water?*

Jeremy Lederman: Beer followed by wine. I'm a big fan of Belgian beers and beer from US micro-breweries, although the latter is harder to get in the UK. I also like a glass of wine. I'm always keen to learn about and try new beers and wines.

“ XLNC: *Your favourite cuisine?*

Jeremy Lederman: I like a number of cuisines. I do like Indian, Italian and Middle Eastern style food.

“ XLNC: *The best place to be other than your home or your office?*

Jeremy Lederman: Anywhere high up with a good view on a clear day. Recently I visited Glastonbury Tor. It's not very high but you can see a good distance over the plains below. It was very atmospheric.

“ XLNC: *What is your greatest concern?*

Jeremy Lederman: The maintaining of standards of conduct by government, businesses and individuals.

I am also concerned about the growing lack of cohesion.

“ XLNC: *Where do you see your firm in the next five years?*

Jeremy Lederman: Larger and offering more services to a wider range of clients. We will have invested more on our business both in technology and people. We see more hearings being conducted online but still see the majority of meetings and more substantive cases being carried out in person.

“ XLNC: *Your best advice for clients?*

Jeremy Lederman: Be careful who you do business with and on what terms. Enter into proper agreements

and keep good written records if possible. A lot of negative situations arise when people trust others too much or don't check what is said. Try and keep emotion out of disputes once they arise. I appreciate all of this is difficult and that one has to strike a balance as otherwise nothing would get done.

“ XLNC: *Your best advice for younger professionals?*

Jeremy Lederman: Work hard. Read and make sure you understand what you have to do. Be ready to learn from others and develop your people and communication skills. Use the telephone, video conference or meet with people rather than email or message.

Sometimes it is better to say less.

Remember you are providing a service to a client.

“ XLNC: *What is your favourite movie and why?*

Jeremy Lederman: Diva (1981). I love the look of the film, the music, the romance, the escapism and the plot. I went to see it as a student at a university film club held in a lecture theatre, not knowing what I was going to see and was awestruck. I have seen it perhaps once since.

“ XLNC: *What are the qualities you most like in a person?*

Jeremy Lederman: Honesty and modesty. I fully appreciate there is sometimes a tension between the two.

“ XLNC: *Which talent would you most like to have and why?*

Jeremy Lederman: I would like to be better at sports. I like having a go but I am not very good. My son and his friends were beating me at most sport from a young age.

“ XLNC: *What is your greatest regret?*

Jeremy Lederman: Not studying and pursuing more science when I was younger. I am interested in how things work. In a number of cases I have to learn about clients' businesses and sometimes this involves science or technical aspects. Whilst I enjoy that and of course we can involve experts I am curious and it would be good to know more.

“ XLNC: *What would you like to say to fellow XLNC members?*

Jeremy Lederman: We look forward to meeting fellow members, developing our relationships and working with colleagues for our mutual benefit. We very much hope we can help you and your clients and refer our clients and contacts to you. I think there is great potential and we all need to work to fulfil that. It would be good to grow the network. Let me know the next time you are due to be in London or nearby and we will be delighted to see you. In the meantime please feel free to get in touch for any reason, for example if you would like to exchange or bounce ideas or seek recommendations.