

# Take another look at billing through the Legal Lens

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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After decades of lawyers charging clients for every minute of their time - from "perusing an email", to taking a call, or even for their time spent driving out to a client - we are slowly starting to see changes to the way the legal industry invoices for their services. One company, however, has decided to help shift this sharply into the 21st century and call lawyers out for their unethical and improper billing practices. Here we talk to the founders of Legal Lens about what they do...



Yusha Davidson and Catherine-Jane Paulse

## ■ *Who are the brains behind Legal Lens?*

**Yusha Davidson:** Legal Lens has four co-founders. Catherine-Jane Paulse is the CEO; she is an admitted attorney with experience at ENSAfrica and Werksmans. I am the COO, and an admitted attorney with experience at Werksmans. We have a great tech team working under the guidance of our CTO, Carlton Ngwenya. We also have an additional silent co-founder, as well as a team of experienced attorneys who assist Legal Lens in reviewing invoices.

## ■ *Tell us about the Legal Lens and the inspiration behind the startup?*

**Catherine-Jane Paulse:** The idea behind Legal Lens came to us while shopping. We received our till slip and being the pedantic lawyers which we are, we reviewed the slip, line by line, to check if there were any errors. We wondered whether this is the reality when receiving any form of slip or invoice? In the legal space, when a client receives an invoice from a lawyer, more often than not, the client has absolutely no idea what each line item entails and whether the action justifies the amount charged. So how do you know whether your legal invoice has errors or whether the amount is in fact justifiable?

Unfortunately, for many South African companies and individuals, you simply don't know. We then called some of our friends and family to ask them what they did when they received a legal invoice. The overwhelming answer was, "I was shocked at how high the fees were, but I paid."

This realisation had us doing a few months of intense research into legal fees in South Africa. In September 2020, the South African Law Reform Commission released a report on the investigation into legal fees, which alerted the public that unethical and improper billing practices by lawyers is a pervasive reality in South Africa. The Commission noted that access to justice is severely hindered by excessive legal fees, which is exacerbated by unethical and improper billing practices by lawyers.

Following our own extensive market research, and from personal experience as attorneys, we found that legal invoices reflect a number of errors and billing practices that result in legal fees being inflated by up to 60%. Our team also found that companies and individuals alike are unable or reluctant to review legal invoices due to the administrative nature of the task, a lack of understanding of what constitutes a justifiable basis to seek a reduction, and a fear of disrupting the close relationship with their attorney.

So we developed Legal Lens during 2020 and we are now servicing both companies and individuals.

Legal Lens has been developed to serve as the only effective solution to prevent improper and unethical legal billing. Legal Lens utilises artificial intelligence, machine learning and experienced attorneys to digitally review unpaid legal invoices and reduce legal fees of companies and individuals by up to 60%.

We handle all discussions with attorneys regarding fees in dispute to ensure that the relationship between the attorney and the client is maintained. Legal Lens also maintains analytics on invoices and to provide clients with better insight on their legal spend.

### ■ ***So how does the Legal Lens system work?***

**Davidson:** Our client will simply upload their unpaid legal invoice, fee structure, engagement letter and any other relevant documents onto our secure online platform or send it to Legal Lens via email. Our code will red-flag narrations in the legal invoice which our experienced attorneys have identified as resulting in inflated legal fees. Experienced attorneys then review the red flagged narrations and provide the client's attorneys with a list of objections to the legal invoice.

Legal Lens handles all discussions with the attorneys regarding the disputed fees to ensure that the relationship between the attorney and the client is maintained and strengthened. Once Legal Lens and the clients' attorneys reach agreement on the reduced fees, the client will be provided with a newly reduced invoice. The client will pay of our fee and the reduced legal fee to their attorney. On average, Legal Lens is able to reduce legal fees by 10%, but has seen reductions up to 60%.

### ■ ***At the end of the day, everyone needs to earn a living. What is your finance model?***

**Pause:** For our services, Legal Lens charges 17.5% of the saved amount. If we are unable to reduce the legal fees, we do not charge a fee for our services.

### ■ ***Where do you see the Legal Lens in the next five years?***

**Davidson:** We plan on expanding throughout Africa and cementing Legal Lens as the leading company in legal spend management on the continent.

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