

# About us



**NIEDERER KRAFT & FREY**

# About us

*“... a ‘high-quality firm’, which takes a ‘business-aware approach’ to client dealings.” (Legal 500, 2010)*

Established 1936, Niederer Kraft & Frey is a preeminent Swiss law firm with a proven track record of legal excellence and innovation.

Throughout our history, we have continuously worked on the most important and demanding cases entrusted to Swiss law firms. This is the foundation of our distinct market knowledge, expertise and experience as well as capacity for innovative thought.

We work and think internationally. As a market leader in Switzerland we have built long-standing relationships with the world’s best international law firms. The majority of our lawyers have undertaken further training at American, British or other foreign universities and many of us have gained professional experience in partner law firms abroad.

Thanks to our heritage and market position we offer innovative and sustainable services, and avoid being influenced by short-term trends. We attach great importance to combining a highly professional approach and persistence in pursuing our clients’ goals with being easy to work with, even in the most demanding situations.

# Our values – *The distinctive difference*

We are proud of our distinct culture. It is the product of specific values to which we have been committed for decades. We are:

## ■ **Quality-Driven & Solution-Oriented**

Quality of service is our priority. Equally, we use our experience and judgement to help our clients achieve their desired commercial results. By combining the two, we focus on practical solutions in line with our motto: as much as necessary, as little as possible.

*“Niederer Kraft & Frey AG is a ‘high-quality firm’ which takes a ‘business-aware approach’ to client dealings.” (Legal 500, 2010)*

## ■ **Authentic**

We are straightforward and reliable. We are guided by what is right for our clients even if sometimes this is difficult to convey. In this way, we stand alongside our clients.

*“They are a well-balanced team and don’t overwhelm their clients with lots of legal jargon.”  
(Client quote from IFLR 2011)*

## ■ **True Partners**

We are a team of partners with equal rights, driven by our entrepreneurial spirit and mutual respect. This is the guiding force behind our commitment to clients, our cooperation with law firms abroad and our approach to authorities and third parties.

*“Niederer fits in with our concept of a globally seamless service like no other. They always work at eye level and fit outstandingly well into teams.” (Partner in a Magic Circle law firm)*

## ■ **Efficient**

We organise ourselves efficiently. We are not hampered by cumbersome internal systems or standardised rules. This allows us to focus exclusively on the interests of our clients.

*“... they are well organised and coordinated, which makes them highly efficient in multifaceted transactions involving several layers and large legal teams.” (client quote in IFLR 2010)*

## ■ **Innovative by Experience**

More than 75 years of experience provide us with the basis on which to develop innovative solutions for the complex challenges faced by our clients – day-after-day in a creative and confident manner. This is demonstrated by our influence over numerous pieces of legislation, judgments and transaction structures.

*“NKF is particularly recognised for its experience in innovative and complex matters.” (Legal 500, 2010)*

## ■ **Seeing the Whole Picture**

In times of increasing complexity, we attach importance to a broad skills base of every lawyer. Intellectually flexible generalists, with specialist knowledge in various fields, help our clients maintain an overview and overcome problems in a holistic manner. At the same time, this enables us to involve fewer lawyers and to share the benefit of these efficiencies with our clients.

*“The NKF partners we work with typically have a wealth of experience and broad knowledge of banking, capital markets and M&A law which enables them to provide holistic and not merely compartmentalised solutions. This makes them particularly valuable in today’s critical times where hyper-specialisation and commoditised suite of products are over.” (Client quote from IFLR 2010)*

# International

*“We like to retain a very close relationship with the lawyers from Niederer. They are just outstanding individuals, fun to work with.” (Partner in a Magic Circle Firm)*

## **Global Perspective**

Work at Niederer Kraft & Frey is, by its very nature, embedded in a global context. Today, hardly any clients are purely local. Links between Swiss law and foreign legal systems, in particular those in the United Kingdom and the USA, are part of our day to day work. Many of our clients operate internationally and our assignments have, for decades, come from all parts of the world, from the United States to Japan, from Russia to South Africa.

## **International Network**

Thanks to our market position, we have been working with the world's leading law firms for decades. Our clients and foreign colleagues can therefore place their trust in a network of contacts that has proven itself over many years. We are frequently integrated into joint teams and appreciate the recognition of our colleagues. This well-coordinated network with leading law firms from other jurisdictions is part of our success.

## **International Education and Work Experience**

The CVs of many of our lawyers feature international education. This is supplemented by professional experience and secondments with leading law firms in the USA and the United Kingdom. All employees are involved on a daily basis in deals taking place in several languages and in negotiations concerning complex international matters.

# Our history

Our history began in 1936 when Dr. René Niederer opened a law firm at Talstrasse 11 in Zurich. He did not remain alone for long and teamed up with Dr. Werner Kraft just one year later. Their colleagues Dr. Werner Niederer, Dr. Hugo A. Frey and Dr. Max Schucan followed soon after. The young law firm was now known as "Niederer Kraft & Frey". Several generations of lawyers have followed since then – all of whom have shared the desire for excellence. Today, we are a firm of 170 of which 100 are lawyers and 29 of which are partners.

Professional qualifications and an international approach have been core values from the very beginning. As early as the 1940s, Werner Niederer qualified as a university lecturer in private and public international law at the University of Zurich. Hugo Frey had already spent many years working in the USA during the 1930s and 1940s, and published works on international currency law at a time when this subject was known only to a few insiders. Thus, it was predictable that "NIKRA" – the abbreviation used by the law firm at the time – adopted a strongly international approach from the very outset and had many foreign clients. With the internationalisation of the business world following the Second World War, Niederer Kraft & Frey was a natural first choice as an internationally-operating law firm.

In subsequent generations, we have continued to produce many outstanding lawyers who have made their presence in the Swiss legal world. The list of the 10 most influential lawyers in Switzerland\*, published by the magazine "Die Bilanz" in 2006, included no fewer than three partners from Niederer Kraft & Frey. Hans Niederer was described by "Legal 500" as Switzerland's Mr. Bond having advised on thousands of bond transactions, and there are many further examples of how partners of Niederer Kraft & Frey have developed an outstanding reputation in their specialist areas. Niederer Kraft & Frey has likewise continued its tradition of academic work. As professor for commercial and capital markets law at the University of Zurich, Peter Forstmoser has exercised a decisive and practical influence on Swiss corporate law and, to this very day, many of our lawyers continue to engage in academic work and to lecture at universities.

Niederer Kraft & Frey has always grown organically. We never experienced an exodus, nor have we entered into mergers. By the early 1990s we had grown to a size that necessitated some strengthening of our internal organisation. For example, a managing board headed by managing partner was introduced in 1994 and in 2008 the partnership became one of the first law firms in Switzerland to be converted into a stock corporation (Aktiengesellschaft).

Our long history as a premier Swiss law firm and the notable role that we have played not only in landmark transactions but more generally in how law is made and practiced in Switzerland has enabled us to build up a valuable and trusted network of relationships with policy and decision makers at both private and public level.

In accordance with our culture, change was introduced quietly. We take pride in the fact that we have maintained and expanded our leading position throughout the years and are today considered part of the circle of premier law firms which includes only a few of those in the world's most important jurisdictions.

\*(BILANZ 12/06 dated 20.06.2006 business lawyers: The paragraph kings)

# Rankings and awards

## Rankings

Niederer Kraft & Frey and many of our lawyers are regularly ranked leading by independent directories of the legal profession.

For example, Chambers, Legal 500, IFLR and PLC all come to the conclusion that our firm has, for many years, always been among the best in Switzerland in the following fields:

- Banking & Finance
- Capital Markets
- Corporate / Mergers & Acquisitions

Publications and other data providers that cover the legal industry also consistently recognize our firm and lawyers for their legal excellence in many other practice areas.

## Awards

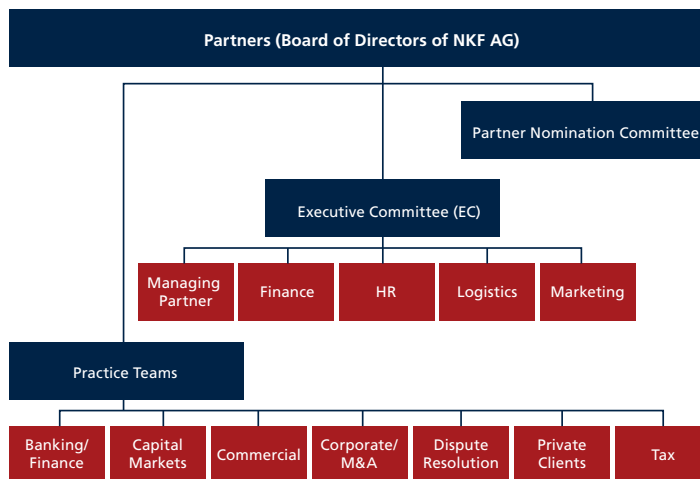
Niederer Kraft & Frey has been tier 1 for decades and we regularly receive recognition for our work. Recent awards include the ILO Client Choice Award in 2010 the Award for Swiss Corporate & Capital-Markets Law Firm of the Year by Finance Monthly in 2010.

# Organisation

*“In terms of their expertise and organisation they are comparable to a big law firm in the UK”, says one international client. (Quoted from IFLR 2010/11)*

Niederer Kraft & Frey was originally organised as a partnership. In 2008, we became one of the first law firms in Switzerland to be converted into a stock corporation (Aktiengesellschaft). It was, however, important for our partners to maintain the spirit of partnership in the new format. Consequently, all partners are members of the Board of Directors of Niederer Kraft & Frey Ltd and all have the same rights and obligations.

The day-to-day business of the firm, which today has about 170 employees, is managed by a committee (Executive Committee) appointed by the Board of Directors. In addition to a Managing Partner, a further four partners in the Executive Committee share finance, human resources, logistics and marketing responsibilities.



Niederer Kraft & Frey is a stock corporation (Aktiengesellschaft) with a flat hierarchy. We regard ourselves as a partnership which offers the individual lawyer the necessary independence and freedom to do what is necessary from a legal perspective and in the interests of our clients. We believe that excessive regulation is undesirable and wish to enable partners and employees to deal flexibly with the requirements of our clients. We do not have sales targets and do not consider ourselves under any pressure to sell services that the clients do not need. This independence – including independence from the internal constraints that are commonplace today in large law firms - constitutes the distinctive difference that clients expect from genuine advisors. Our traditional understanding of the role of a lawyer puts the interests of our clients at the very top of our priorities list.

Our partners, associates and junior associates all belong to a team. These teams are: Banking & Finance, Capital Markets, Commercial, Corporate / M&A, Dispute Resolution, Private Clients and Tax. They handle cases in their respective specialist areas. At the same time, the teams are open and our organisation spans teams, thus enabling us to draw on the required specialist knowledge for each case. Our associates and junior associates therefore work with numerous partners and become familiar with various working methods and styles.

This flexible organisation enables us to work in small teams but also to form large teams at short notice if necessary, for example when urgent or particularly complex transactions call for swift action.

# Short profile

Established 1936, Niederer Kraft & Frey is a preeminent Swiss law firm with a proven track record of legal excellence and innovation.

Throughout our history, we have continuously worked on the most important and demanding cases entrusted to Swiss law firms. This is the foundation of our distinct market knowledge, expertise and experience for which we are known for decades.

We work and think internationally. As a market leader in Switzerland, we have built long-standing relationships with the world's best international law firms.

We currently employ around 100 lawyers, including 29 partners (as per 1 January 2012). Together with our non-fee earning staff of around 70 people, this adds up to approximately 170 employees. Our offices are located on Bahnhofstrasse, near Paradeplatz, in the heart of Zurich's banking and financial centre.

Niederer Kraft & Frey is a stock corporation (Aktiengesellschaft) with a board of directors composed of all partners of the firm. In its non-assignment-related business, the firm is managed by an executive committee of five partners headed by the managing partner. The current members of the executive committee are:

Andreas Casutt	Managing Partner
Daniel Eisele	Human Resources
Thomas Graf	Finance
András Gurovits	Logistics
Philippe Weber	Marketing

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**Languages:**

German, English, French, Italian, Czech, Dutch, Hebrew, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish

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