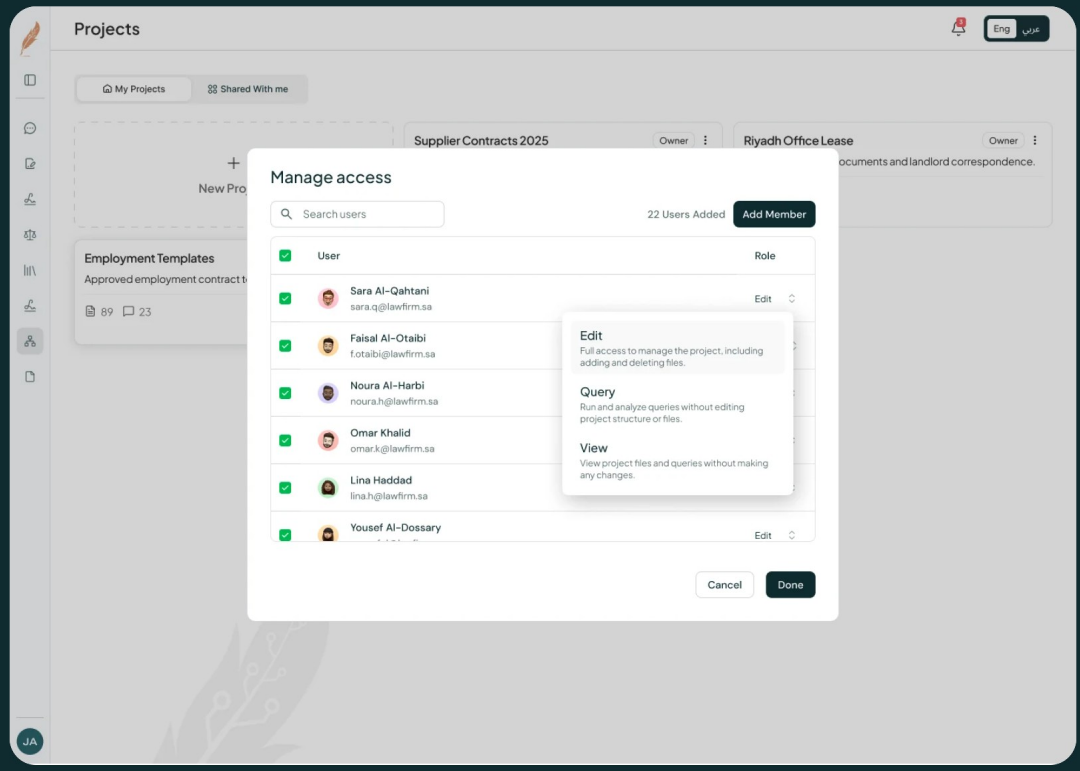
CASE STUDY · PERMISSIONS · LEGAL TECH

Who can *see*, *ask* and *change* a confidential contract

Designing Malakah's permission system, from organisation roles down to a single contract.

Abdullah Omer

Product Designer · Stixor, for Malakah · 2024–2026



AT A GLANCE

One permission model, four levels

Problem

Contracts were shared by email and WhatsApp, so every share made an uncontrolled copy.

Insight

Not everyone who needs a contract needs to change it. Approvers needed answers, not edit rights.

What I designed

A four-level access model, a self-explaining role picker, visible pending invites, owner-aware views and an audit trail.

Outcome

Shipped across organisation, project, contract and signing, used by 1,000+ legal professionals.

01 · THE PROBLEM

Every share was a copy nobody could recall

12

interviews with legal teams

6

contracts followed end to end

9 of 12

had sent an outdated version at least once

Drafts went back and forth by email; finance approved in WhatsApp. One workspace fixes the copies, but only if sharing inside it is **as easy as forwarding an email, and much safer.**

01 · THE PROBLEM

Three groups, three kinds of access

In-house counsel

Own the contract. Draft, edit and decide who else gets in.

Law-firm associates

Work on specific matters. Edit what they’re assigned, nothing more.

Business approvers

Need to understand and approve the contract. Rarely need to change it.

DESIGN GOAL

Anyone can see who can see, ask about and change a document, and change that in two clicks.

02 · ACCESS MODEL

Four levels, each answering one question

1 · ORGANISATION

Who is on our team?

Admin or Member

2 · PROJECT

Who works on this matter?

Edit, Query or View

3 · CONTRACT

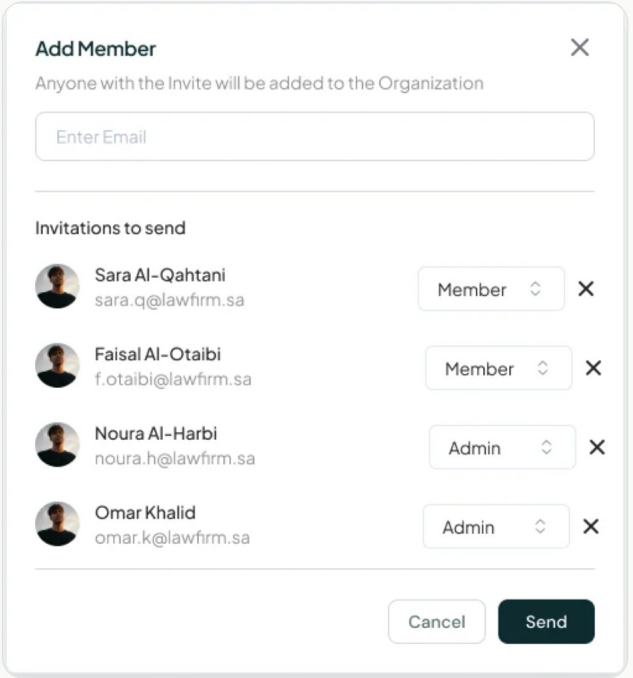
Who can open this document?

Per person, per file

4 · SIGNING

Who signs, in what order, until when?

With an audit trail



Organisation level: invites reviewed as a list, each with its own role.

03 · KEY DECISION

A role for asking, not editing

A finance approver doesn’t want to read a 60-page supply agreement. They want to ask: *“what are our payment terms and penalties?”*

SIMPLER · NOT CHOSEN

Edit and View only

Familiar, fewer choices. But approvers get edit rights just to use the AI: the over-sharing we set out to remove.

CHOSEN

Edit, Query and View

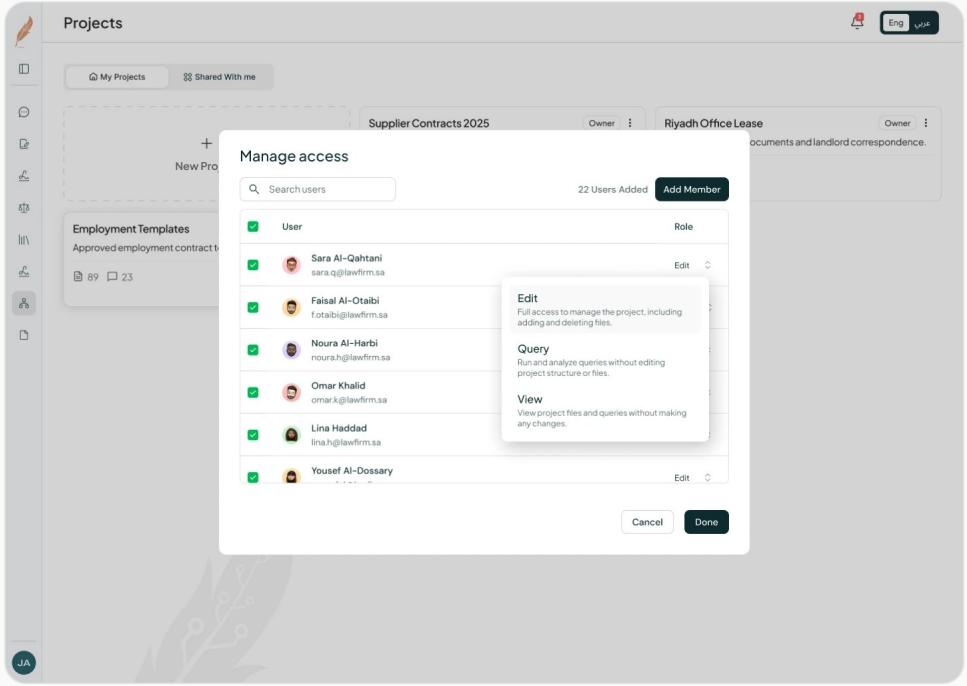
Query runs questions across a project’s files without changing them. One more option, so each role carries a one-line description.

03 · KEY DECISION

Each role says what you can do

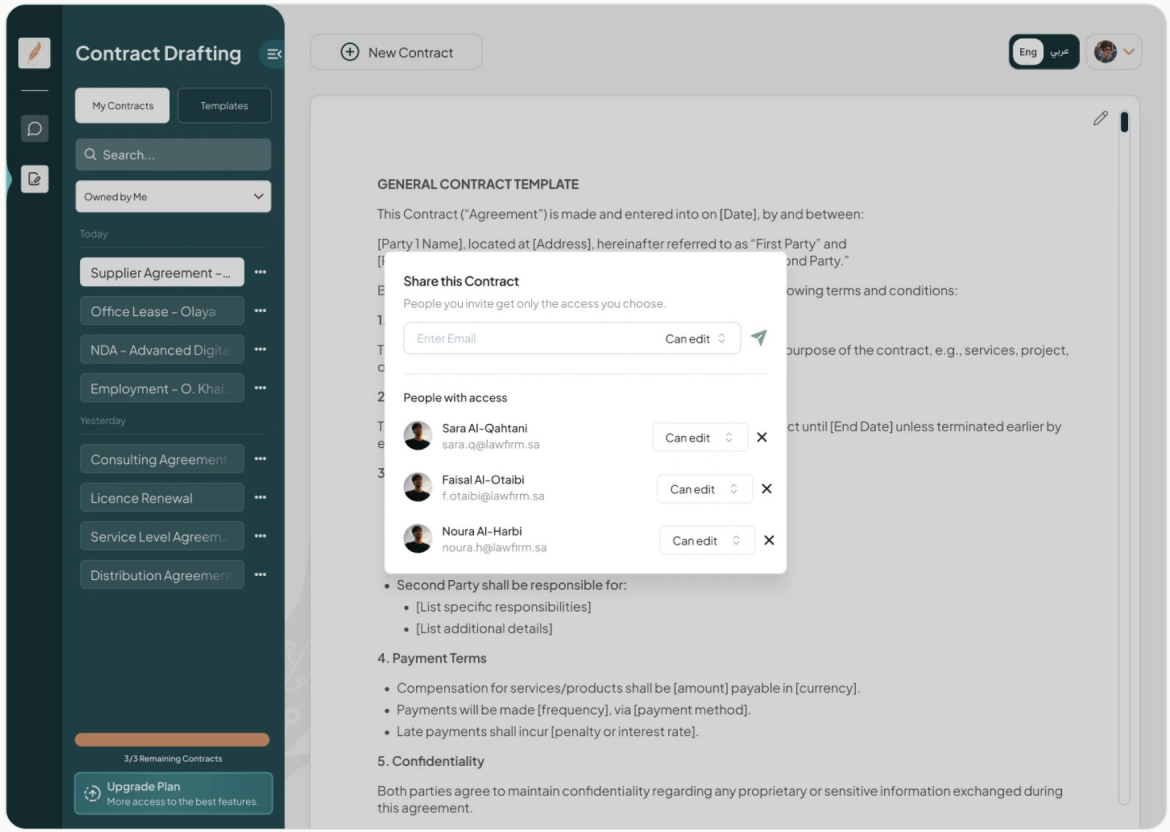
Role	Can do	Can’t do
Edit	Manage the project, add and delete files, run queries	—
Query	Ask the AI questions and see the answers	Edit the structure or files
View	Read files and earlier queries	Make any changes

Choosing a role means reading one sentence, not checking a help page. That mattered even more across Arabic and English.



04 · CONTROLS · SHARE A CONTRACT

Grant access where you can see it



Access list inside the share window

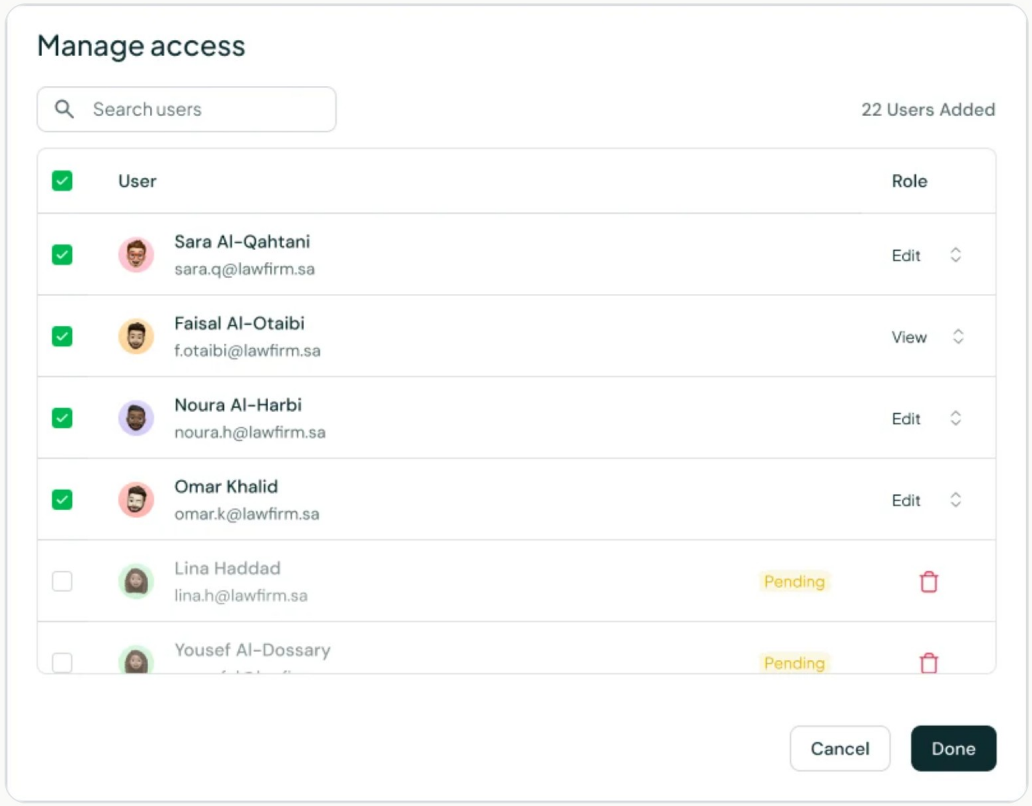
You never grant access without seeing who already has it.

Reversible in one click

Each person has their own level and a remove button, in the same place access was granted.

04 · CONTROLS · MANAGE A PROJECT

Pending access is shown, not hidden



Pending is its own state

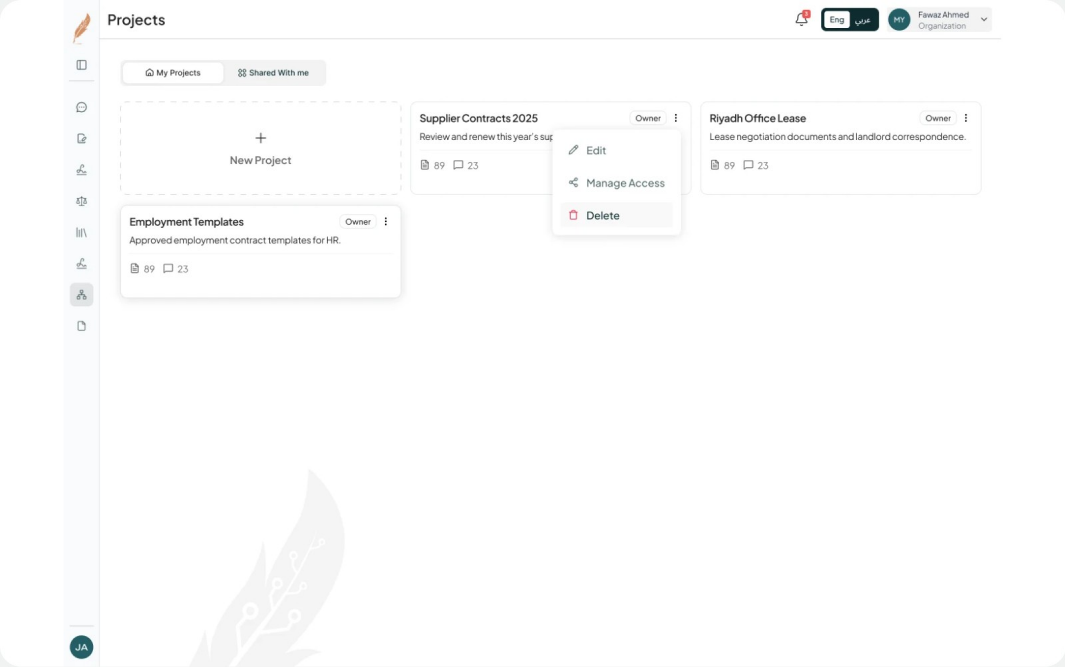
Invited people appear greyed out until they accept, and can be withdrawn before they ever get in.

Built for teams of 20+

Bulk selection with a running count of who has access.

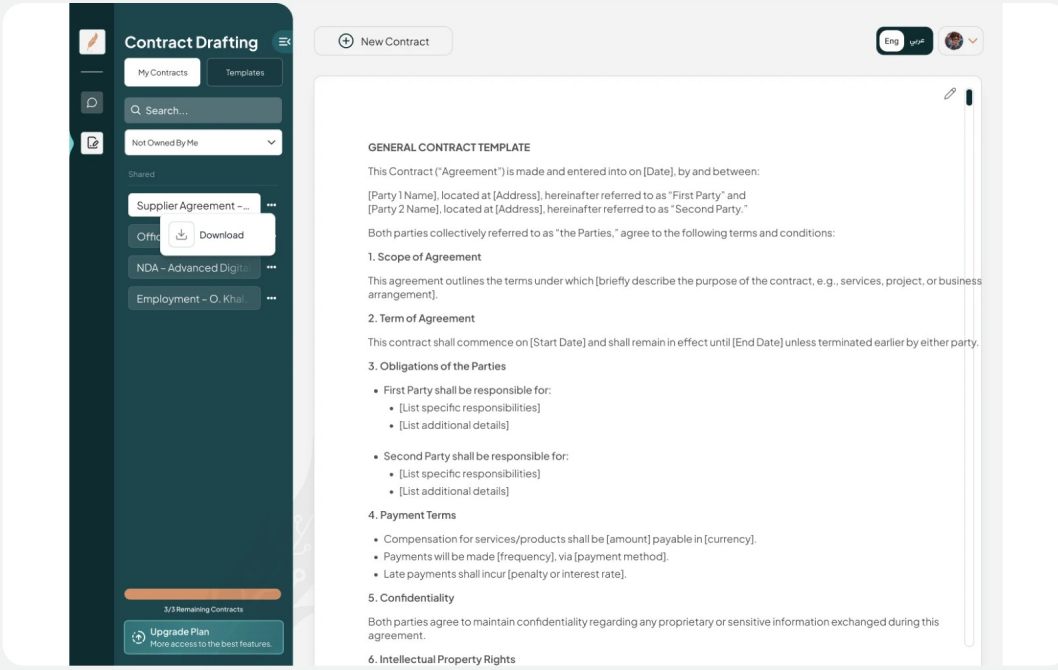
04 · CONTROLS · OWNER-AWARE VIEWS

The interface reflects your access



Ownership is labelled, not implied

Owner badges, plus separate “My projects” and “Shared with me” views.

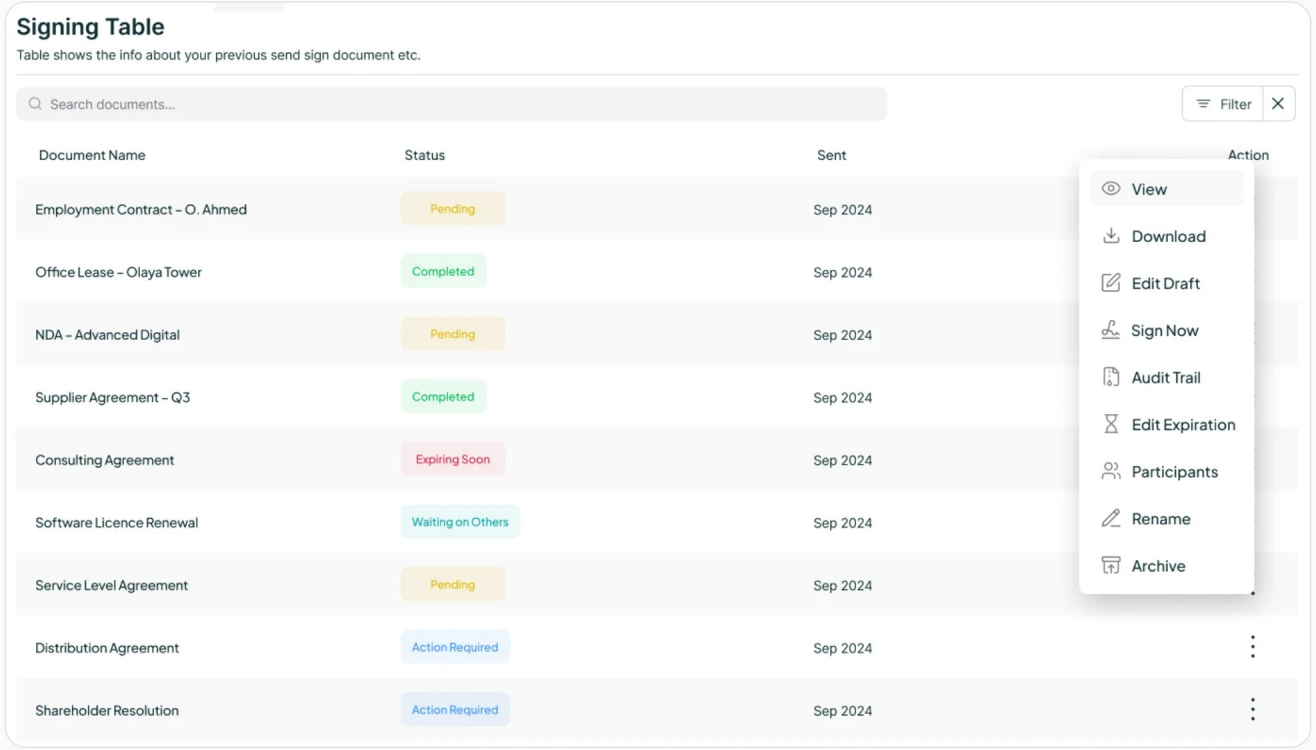


Unavailable actions are removed

A viewer never meets a button that fails. The menu itself tells them their access.

05 · AUDIT

Every signature leaves a record



Access that expires

Signing links for outside parties don’t stay open forever.

A trail you can export

Every view and signature, as a certificate if a signature is disputed.

Five shared statuses

Everyone sees the same state, from Pending to Completed.

06 · MEASURING SUCCESS

How I’d know it’s working

Task success

Share completion rate

Share windows that end in an invite, and how long it takes.

Accuracy

Role changed within a day

A sign the first choice was wrong.

Least access

Query vs Edit share

Whether approvers get Query instead of Edit.

Hygiene

Stale pending invites

Access offered and forgotten for weeks.

Support

Access-related tickets

“I can’t open this” and “who can see this?”

Adoption

Contracts shared in-app

Versus sent as email attachments.

07 · REFLECTION

What I took from this

01

AI creates new kinds of access

“Can ask about this” differs from “can read” and “can change”.

02

Describe the action, not the role

One line of “what you can do” beat any role name, in two languages.

03

Show access where it’s granted

The list inside the share window did more than a settings page.

NEXT An access review per contract: “who can see this, and since when?”

Thank you.

Questions are welcome, on the Query role, the trade-offs or bilingual design.

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