

Technology Tools

Transforming Legal into a strategic business partner with smart use of tech



Introduction

74 percent of legal operations professionals say their current legal technology infrastructure does not meet their needs¹, despite the advancements in legal technology over the past few years. Probably the reason why legal technology still takes centre-stage in many in-house teams' agendas!

Indeed the proper strategy around legal technology offers the potential to make your in-house team more streamlined and efficient. However, putting legal technology on the agenda is the easy part, but choosing the right technology, and how and when to implement it, in what order and to solve which problem is more challenging.

When considering how technology might help you, the first step is always to define the problem. This is the most difficult but also most important step. To understand the real problem, you need to diagnose the situation, not the symptoms. Four watchwords can help you: process, people, data and technology. By breaking down your processes into component parts to identify scope for efficiencies, you are better equipped to utilise the right people for the right work. By using data, you can better understand the 'what' of the problem which will give you a more accurate and holistic hypothesis. Only then you can deploy the right technology for the job. The technology should always be intended to solve the problem and support the process, not vice versa.

Why do in-house legal departments need tech?

A mature legal department will be one that is data-led and makes decisions based on insights. As such, technology is a pillar of the legal function of the future, because it is the means to collect, structure and analyse the necessary data to articulate your legal function's value to the business and optimise its operations by automating tasks otherwise done manually by your in-house lawyers.

By leveraging technology and becoming data-driven, your department will become more efficient, realise cost savings, provide a better user experience for your business users and deliver on its business objectives.

Adopting technology enables an in-house legal team to strategically align itself more closely to the business it serves. Unlike the function's peer teams such as sales or finance who are becoming further integrated through the deployment of technology, it is less common for legal functions to be included in the integration process.

Whilst the legal function is highly valued, its disconnection from other integrated teams makes its contribution less visible. However, technology offers in-house functions the opportunity to integrate legal processes with other business functions, paving the way to becoming a strategic business partner.

“79 percent of legal operations professionals said they expect their technology spend to increase in the next 12 months”

Consero Group 2020 Legal Operations Report

¹ Consero Group 2020 Legal Operations Report

Is a tech strategy or roadmap really necessary?

The purpose of a technology strategy or roadmap is to keep your legal function and key decision makers focused on the end-goal, instead of taking a multi-pronged approach or buying new and shiny tools each time. The main benefit is to avoid acquiring or building point solutions that are siloed. Looking at technology from a macro level will enable you to keep your eyes on the prize and ensure you are future-ready by making the right executive decisions along the way. Below are the key reasons to develop a tech strategy or roadmap:



For legal functions in large, global or complex matrix organisations

Crucially, it helps you to consider how your technology hangs together and how data flows between systems. What integrations are available within your existing tech? Is there any enterprise-wide technology that the business use which you can repurpose for Legal? Does your data architecture enable you to collect the right data to manage the business? Can you build APIs to connect tools you already have and enhance their usability? It may be that – in doing this thought exercise – you realise there is actually no need to buy a new tool, and instead you can invest time and resource into integrating your tech stack further.

Once you have designed a technology roadmap and contemplated the above, it is important to keep reviewing your strategy regularly to maximise investment. Your strategy is likely to evolve and your budget may fluctuate over time; some technology providers will make huge technical leaps and others will lag behind. These factors may impact your decisions as to whether you should rationalise your tool kit by retaining or sunseting certain tools.



For legal functions in small to mid-size organisations

You have an advantage in not having archaic legacy systems in place. A fresh slate will allow you to build up your foundational technology from the bottom up. Not only will this mean minimal re-engineering of processes, but you will have fewer limitations in selecting your tool kit. However, if you do not create a plan for the future and instead opt for new tools as and when you need them, you will end up in a similar position to organisations forking out millions for redundant, inflexible technologies.

Do your research and seek internal and/or external advice. Many tools in the market have overlapping functionality, so it can be overwhelming to know which is best for your legal function. Industry experts can help you to identify stakeholder pain points, assess prospective tools against your needs and create an implementation plan. To help make sense of the growing legal tech landscape, we have developed a taxonomy to define all operational processes, which can be customised to your department. Together with our technology assessment scorecard, comparing tools by features, technical requirements and against your stakeholder values, these frameworks equip us with the ability to find the optimal blend of tools to meet your needs.

How to select the right technology?

There is still no single technology provider that offers an end-to-end, out of the box solution that can meet all the demands and needs of the in-house legal team. With such a product not expected to surface in the near term, the pressure on in-house teams to actively navigate an over-crowded legal technology market is mounting. However, in order to do this successfully, the in-house function needs to be clear on: what is my role in the business, how can we be better aligned to the target operating and strategic model, and what technologies will aid us in accelerating their development in this role? As such, there are some common themes to the challenges in-house teams face in their search for a preferred technology provider:

- Reading between the lines of a sales pitch and the technical jargon to select the right tool for you
- Ensuring your legal technology provider is future fit – a tech company could appear to be cutting edge but could be eclipsed by another company or even change its product development road map into a new direction
- Generating buy-in from the purse-holders and securing budget
- Overcoming resistance to embracing new ways of working
- Identifying the processes which benefit the most from technology, for both your function and your business

How to successfully implement technology?

The technology roadmap is only the beginning of your journey. Successful implementation depends upon the buy-in of both the end-users i.e. your lawyers and the business, as well as necessary supporting activities, to ensure sustainable progress.



Align your legal technology strategy with your broader legal strategy by building a business plan that shows steps toward achieving your department's and company's objectives. Avoid developing either strategy in isolation, otherwise this may hinder progress on both sides, especially relating to the use of people and proper deployment of process.



Change management and stakeholder engagement are both vital to driving adoption of technology. Introducing new technology to your team without properly embedding it or generating buy-in across the business will lead to ineffectual use. If you listen to your team and stakeholders and take their concerns into account during the early stages, this will encourage them to use the tool and provide regular feedback when it's implemented.



Establish a **dedicated tech support team** or product owners with specialist skill sets by hiring new people or consolidating existing skills. This team will lead on the technology strategy, assist with technical queries and be responsible for implementation.



Create a **data strategy** outlining how to process, capture and store data in order to maintain data governance and facilitate large data sets flowing freely between all systems. It should inform the data format, structure, flow and architecture of each platform, preventing data silos and enabling better data processing. Furthermore, a data strategy will allow the development of appropriate KPIs and analytical insights.



Review your company policies and business processes to check that they are fit for purpose and will drive your legal technology forward, rather than slow it down. Outdated, manual processes risk inhibiting effective use of tools as it will still feel clunky to the users. Entrust a team (familiar with internal compliance and regulatory requirements) with the tasks of process mapping and a comprehensive policy review to identify opportunities for efficiency.



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Stéphanie, Head of Legal Operations Consulting, was previously at Barclays where she headed up what would become the Legal operations team for over three years. Under her leadership the department won "Legal operations team of the year" at the 2019 UK Legal 500 Awards. When transforming your in-house legal function, Stéphanie is ideally placed to advise on improving the management of your legal department.



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Tammy, a Legal Operations Consultant, was formerly the Group Company Secretary and Senior Legal Advisor for Zurich Insurance's Southern African operations. With 17 years experience within the professional services, corporate and start up environments, Tammy has extensive expertise in corporate governance, stakeholder management, strategy formulation, operational design and delivering business transformation projects.

NRF Transform

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The Legal Operations Consulting Practice helps General Counsels and in-house legal teams optimise the delivery of legal services to their organisations, enabling them to go beyond managing legal risk and become a strategic business partner, supporting the wider objectives of the business.

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