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Legal Tech Roadmap: 6 Tech Trends to Inspire Your Legal Department

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce

Technology for in-house teams is a big focus right now in corporate legal circles. In [our first article](#) in this series, we discussed the challenges and pain points GC and in-house lawyers deal with and what to think about when looking to technology to relieve the pressure. In this article, we will discuss

what I have identified as six trends in what legal departments are focusing on right now when looking to technology to streamline their legal operations and service delivery.

1. Legal intake and self-service

Legal departments have started to look for ways to better engage with, and service, the legal demands of their business. This will generally free them up to handle higher-value work and not get bogged down with low-value, routine tasks. For example, Sky Legal recently launched a new app, Legal Front Door, a system that allows members of its organization to easily instruct the legal team with a variety of legal requests.These types of systems deliver dynamic updates to the relevant business user and legal team (with automated workflow and notifications) and provide business users with self-service tools such as automated contract assembly and, in some cases, simple chatbots to help them easily get the legal output and advice they need without the direct involvement of the legal team.

2. Legal operations management

Many in-house teams are still trying to manage their operations with outdated and unsuitable tools such as MS Excel and Outlook. Matters and contracts are tracked and managed manually in spreadsheets with little to no collaboration, no automation, and no dynamic reporting. Legal documents are too often stored on local drives or on non-enterprise-grade cloud tools (e.g., Dropbox, Box, and Google Drive) with transparent and social collaboration almost nonexistent.

For the above reasons, legal teams are now looking to consolidate and optimize their work in a central hub that helps them efficiently manage their matters, control spend, track contracts and securely store, share and sync important legal documents. Legal departments are harnessing technology to help simplify and streamline their legal operations management.

3. Vendor and outside counsel management

Not much has changed in the way legal departments interact with outside counsel. Interaction is normally carried out over the phone or by email, and status and budget updates are sporadic. When any spend information is provided, it is accompanied by an invoice that regularly breaches billing guidelines.

It's clear that a better way needs to be found for in-house teams to work with external counsel. Many legal departments have turned to online portals to help them manage their relationships with law firms and legal vendors. These portals act as a channel for outside counsel to share matter updates, status reports, timelines, spend information and project risks in one central repository. The portal can also be used to share key documents and collaborate on matters.

It can also be used by the outside counsel firm or vendor to provide value-add services such as know-how and training. These portals are redefining the client-law firm relationship and are delivering more consistency, transparency and value for the legal department.

4. Data insight and analytics

This isn't something that can be tackled first, or in isolation; this is really the icing on the cake when it comes to technology deployment for legal departments. Once teams have implemented technology

tools to assist with the three areas outlined above, the next logical step is to harvest the data from those systems to drive better insight, analysis and decision-making.

In-house teams can use data to track outside counsel performance, spend and billing against guidelines; risk profiles across contract portfolios; response times; matter outcomes; team utilization; and quality of legal product. If the data point is being recorded in a system, then it can be analyzed. Legal departments are therefore investing in business intelligence and data visualization tools to help them better interrogate the data they are gathering through their technology tools.

5. Intelligence and workflow automation

With legal departments servicing more work in-house, without a corresponding increase in resources, the automation of their workload can only be a good thing. Legal teams looking at technology tools for their team are therefore prioritizing systems that have intelligence and automation capability built-in.Whether it's document automation, contract analysis, reviewing invoices against billing guidelines, status and progress tracking, or contractual approval processes, the more of the workflow that can be carried out without manual intervention, the better.Light touch is definitely the name of the game. In most cases, the knowledge and activities surrounding certain tasks can be automated so that in-house counsel can focus on what they do best: delivering strategic advice and expert opinions to their organization.

6. Unified user experience

The success of technology deployment will depend on how many people actually engage with the systems you put in place. One surefire way to turn people off from technology is to create a poor user experience. If it's not simple, intuitive and enjoyable to use, people avoid it like the plague.

For this reason, legal teams favor technology platforms that can deliver many different solutions within one unified user experience. There's nothing worse than having to remember several login details for multiple tools, moving data between systems or, even worse, repeating the data entry.In-house teams are increasing their use of powerful technology platforms that have seamless user experience. The other benefit, of course, is that having people work on one unified platform means that data is being collated in one central location — allowing for quicker and simpler interrogation and analysis.

Conclusion

With all of the current legal technology tools on the market, it can become difficult to cut through the hype to find what applications and systems are most beneficial to you and your team. By analyzing the challenges your legal department faces, and by thinking in terms of these six key trends in legal technology deployment, you can begin to find the correct tool to optimize your in-house legal team. In our next article, we will discuss how to successfully implement and deploy new technology, and the final steps to take before deciding what tool to use.

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