My Take: Better Legal Tech for Your Team

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce

Recently, I wrote about law department management and championing innovation in the department and profession. Indeed, my last message focused on the challenges and opportunities involved in incorporating legal operations into the legal function. An aspect of bringing legal operations into your organization often includes introducing new technologies, which can present its own set of challenges.

With so much to consider (keeping cost low, proving our value to the business, and consistently improving), it's no wonder that general counsel and legal operations professionals alike often turn to technology to manage it all. In fact, according to the 2020 Chief Legal Officers Survey, more than half of respondents either plan to adopt a new technological solution or have recently done so. Further,

69 percent of CLOs expect the use of artificial intelligence in legal technology applications to accelerate, while just seven percent see AI as a temporary trend.

Whether a trend or hype, legal technology is something many lawyers and organizations in general have been grappling with for years. One cannot deny that advances in technology have made our lives easier — the invention of e-signatures alone has saved time and money, not to mention allowing for business across continents to be completed much more efficiently.

Nevertheless, while you may be hard-pressed to find anyone adamantly opposed to all technology, some are still reluctant to embrace it. Hesitance is often related to implementing something that will cause change in one's daily routine. Change is never easy; therefore, careful consideration is needed before introducing any new tech into the business.

A recent ACCDocket.com article, ["Legal Tech Roadmap: Where to Start Your Technology Journey,"](#) points out that it's important to think of technology as an enabler, not the solution. The author reiterates the fact that there is no quick fix for bad planning, processes, and practices, stating that, "technology will merely turn a bad process into a digitally bad process." We can all identify pain points in our departments, as well as areas that could benefit from efficiency enhancements. New technologies can address these issues. That said, when evaluating potential new tools, a good place to begin is asking yourself — and your team — how this new technology will increase legal department capacity and/or cut legal department spend.

Everything goes back to value. The legal function is expected to be cost-effective and add value, while unfortunately being perceived simultaneously as a cost center. Therefore, you will need to prove return on investment when attempting to invest in new, and often costly, technology. Will this new tool increase your department's bandwidth by freeing up some lawyer time that can be redeployed to more strategic work? Will it reduce the need for some headcount? Streamline and improve internal processes? Reduce what you spend on outside counsel? Budgets are a fact of business life, and if you happen to work for a company that prioritizes IT, you may face less opposition to spending more upfront to cut costs later (especially if you get buy-in from other areas of the business, including HR). The fact remains that many of us don't work for organizations that can invest large amounts into technology. So, what can we do?

Perhaps start by looking at those challenges that are most persistent within your department, as well as the current processes in place to address them. Gather your metrics and personnel intel in order to identify exactly what you need to address the issue. Do this for all known challenges and then evaluate whether the legal tech solution you are considering would solve the problem today, addresses top challenges, is easy to use and implement, and will help you achieve more with less. Then identify and prioritize which solutions or tools make the most sense for your organization, and work to get buy-in from other departments and finally leadership. Other suggestions include accessing tech tools through your existing suppliers such as law firms or alternative legal service providers, working directly with tech providers on a trial basis and forming a test committee internally to see if the solution really works for your organization before investing (this is especially true for solutions that are company-wide and pricey).

These are just a few tips I've picked up from ACC resources. Luckily for us, there are plenty more legal tech tips where those came from. I encourage you to check out recent and upcoming online education on the topic, which includes the March webcast "Setting up a Legal Operation Function and What to Expect in the First 100 Days: An ACC Legal Operations EMEA Virtual Roundtable," and June's "Ethics & Technology: Understanding Your Duties When Using Tech Resources." Find
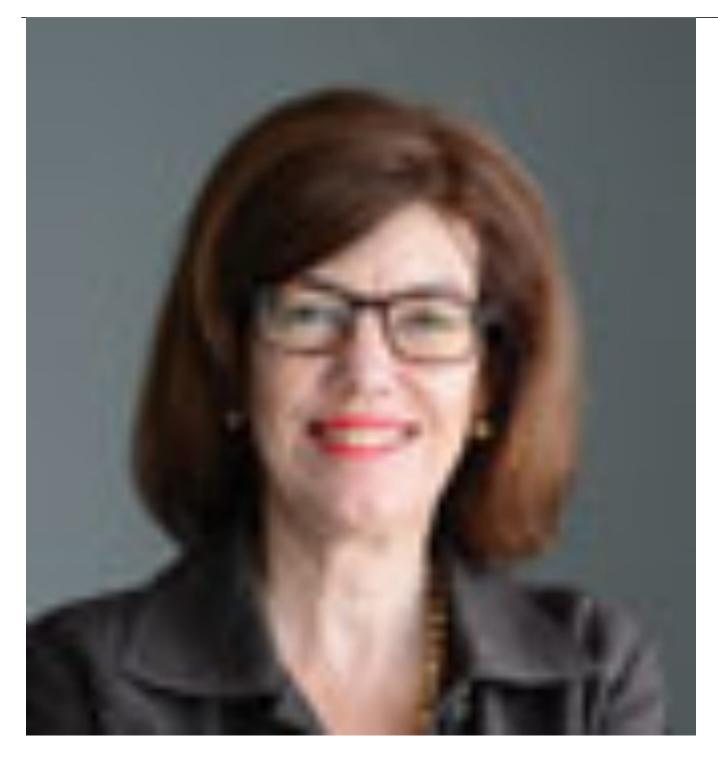
additional content on this topic and more [here](#).

Further, get inspired by your in-house peers. For example, 2019 ACC Value Champion AbbVie successfully brought all the pharmaceutical company's data collection and processing in-house. They added a data processing platform and forensic examiners to the department, essentially becoming an eDiscovery vendor — saving more than US$2 million annually. Read [more of their story](#) and see what other winners have done at www.acc.com/valuechampions.

Legal tech is a leading ACC Docket topic. In fact, the article I mentioned earlier, "Legal Tech Roadmap: Where to Start Your Technology Journey," is part of an ACCDocket.com series. Other articles include ["Beyond the AI Buzzword: 5 Questions to Ask About Your Legal Tech Solution,"](#) and ["A Guide to Proving Legal Tech's ROI."](#) Speaking of the Docket, this employment and HR issue includes articles on how employers can stop trade secret thefts before they happen; incorporating wellness into the workplace; managing employment and labor litigation with practice liability insurance; understanding India's new compensation law; and how law departments can advance and retain diverse talent at partner firms.

In the end, one thing is clear: No matter the issue crossing your desk, chances are there's a technology — and an ACC resource — you can turn to for help

[Anneliese Reinhold](#)

General Counsel and SVP Legal Affairs

Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company