

Transforming TIAA's Law Department to Optimize Efficiency



Managing more than \$1 trillion in assets, TIAA, formerly TIAA-CREF (Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund) serves more than 5 million active and retired employees by providing financial services to over 15,000 institutions in more than 50 countries. Since 1918, TIAA has been

the leading provider of financial services in the academic, research, medical, cultural and government fields. Headquartered in New York City, TIAA has more than 70 offices throughout the United States.

As TIAA law department's chief operating officer and chief of staff for the past two years, Brad Rogers was tasked with transforming the entire legal operations function by bringing together law department employees and vendor partners from across the world to streamline processes and implement a comprehensive technology platform with capabilities rooted in process, workflow and collaboration that would allow the best use of each law professional's time.

"We've been adding a whole bunch of new financial products which had complicated our lives and our legal situation. We needed to build a transformation toolkit that would enable best-in-class, commercially focused legal capabilities empowered by talent, technology and systems to support our enterprise's growth."

Rogers began by questioning how many lawyers were needed in-house. By the end of his evaluation, he concluded innovative new technologies, capable and efficient legal services partners, a lean staff, brutal economic forces, and macro changes in legal operating models were the driving factors changing the way modern legal teams operate.

"We had to rethink our partnerships, internally and externally, even our own internal environment. And we knew that we wanted to build partnerships with technology and people to help drive this revolution."

Having worked in various departments in TIAA for the past 11 years, Rogers saw analogies to other disruptive "revolutions" such as computer-aided design, managed health care and the dot com revolution. Another disruptive

"...the fact that Onit's Apptitude has flexibility around processes helped us realize there were a lot of other processes that we have that could be enabled and streamlined with these tools that come with the platform."

Brad Rogers, Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff for TIAA Law Department

revolution that had a closer connection to corporate counsel was offshore and outsourcing for businesses. He began to question the nature of in-house counsel's work, trends in legal operations functions and the optimal resource mix.

Rogers knew that he wanted to build out services into more efficient processes through an assemblage of tools and technology and his first step was to determine what his department's list of core legal operations capabilities were. His list included: external resources management (vendors); internal resources management; technology and data; project execution and process management; metrics and analytics; litigation support & eDiscovery; enterprise records management; knowledge management; and others.

Rogers and his team knew they could not build the platform they needed themselves and began a rigorous selection process for choosing a technology partner that could help them with streamlining business processes through better workflows and not just better databases.

By utilizing Onit's Apptitude, Rogers' team was also able to build tools to manage their day-to-day working list of matters. With Apptitude they were able to develop what they needed quickly into easily configurable dashboards and collaborative workspaces with real-time visibility into the process.

"We scoured the earth but we had been on this journey before and you're living with these teams seemingly forever. And the software you buy today might not be the software you want to live with in three years. I wanted a commitment from the leadership of whatever company we chose."

TIAA and Rogers found the commitment they needed and partnered with Onit to help with matter management, e-billing, and other solutions. "We knew what we were getting into with Onit and that they were not going to let us fail. Eric M. Elfman, Onit's CEO, and his leadership team gave me that commitment and that meant a lot to me."

One of the TIAA law department's core principals in choosing a company was ease of user experience. Onit's Apptitude was used to streamline processes including access to virtual resources and managing outside counsel. The ability and flexibility to make changes and easily make improvements in-stream as often as required was also an important factor.

"Onit's Apptitude platform has tremendous flexibility and we quickly realized that there were many other processes we could streamline. We liked that and our lawyers liked that as well."

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From the beginning, it was Rogers' belief that this transformation would help build partnerships with TIAA's technology and its people beyond just lawyers to ultimately enable them to be more productive. He believes the use of platforms like Onit will be critical for lawyers of the future.

"We're enabling every individual in our company to be 'cocktail conversant' in what a bot is, how they work, what AI could do for us and what Onit's Aptitude is. The use of bots delivered us an ROI of 500 percent. That's part of the innovation toolkit."

TIAA's law department has continued to automate workflows supported by Onit's business process management platform and by what Rogers calls "future-proofing talent." By transforming the way his legal team operates, he sees two ways to look at innovation. While most people see the problem first and look for innovative solutions after, Rogers sees it the other way around.

"With this toolkit, we're going in the other direction. We have an innovative solution. Now, we go find some problems. That's heresy to some people but that's the game changer here."

In his previous role at TIAA as the operations excellence leader for asset management, Rogers led a radical reinvention and major re-engineering of the alternative asset business, delivering innovative operating capabilities for the global real estate investing business, propelling it to #2 in the world. Now, with the help of Onit's solutions, Rogers is leveraging this opportunity to rethink, streamline and measure their activities and processes to transform TIAA's law department by integrating best practices into smarter workflows, better processes and operational efficiencies.

"For every hour that we give back to our lawyers on some task that they don't want to do, they can plow back into something that is wildly productive to our company. That's the sell. That's what we were going after."

The Onit logo consists of the word "onit" in a lowercase, blue, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is a solid blue circle, while the other letters are outlined in blue.

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