

## Be a Change Agent To Drive Business Value to Your Organization

**With the right approach to digital transformation, you can position yourself as a true agent of change that drives meaningful business value to your organization.**

*By Jean Yang and Nick Whitehouse*

The legal profession has long had a reputation for being late adopters of technology. While it's second nature for in-house attorneys to be cautious and mitigate risk, we can no longer be hesitant about technology and innovation if we want to drive value and help our businesses succeed.

Corporate legal departments, much like the rest of the legal industry, are undergoing significant digital transformation. This transformation offers in-house attorneys the opportunity to act as change agents for our organizations, championing innovation, advancing digital transformation and bringing demonstrable value to the business in the process.

### **Changing Perceptions and Championing Change**

Legal departments have long been in an unenviable position of reacting to urgent requests and trying to protect the business whilst placating stressed and sometimes not-so-rational stakeholders. With the many advances in technology readily available to us, we have the opportunity to change this situation and help ourselves and the entire legal department be seen as leaders in problem-solving and innovation—not simply a participant or hurdle.

Dismantling the archaic “late adopter” reputation starts with positioning the legal department as technology leaders who understand the

problems facing the organization and want to help fix them. Instead of reacting to change in a restrictive way, use the stream of information that legal has to proactively guide the broader organization through change. This means getting involved in projects early.

### **Where To Start**

While getting involved early as a change agent is a significant step to assisting the wider organization in evolving, many legal departments struggle with knowing where to start with their own transformations. Legal departments are rightfully seen as the gold standard in their organizations for mitigating risk, so acting on impulse or anecdotal information is not ideal. Instead, legal digital transformation efforts should start where the data is—in areas where you know you can make an impact with relatively little risk. For example, look to areas where the most service requests are coming in, determine which ones are most time-consuming and what's causing the organization the most strife and target the recurring issues that are causing friction between your organization and its goals.

The go-to starting point for any team wanting to improve efficiency and engagement—legal or not—is standardizing processes that are high-volume and of relatively low complexity. Legal work is filled with repetitive,



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time-consuming and low-value tasks that create a great deal of frustration.

A perfect example of this is routine contracts such as nondisclosure agreements, data privacy agreements or business associate agreements. Organizations process hundreds, if not thousands, of these types of agreements each year. While they are largely standardized, they still require legal assets to draft, review and approve them—which takes time.

A quick win is to use AI to review and manage these routine contracts. Automating away the time-consuming aspects from a high volume of work allows you to create space for the legal team to focus on more complex tasks and transformation projects, as well as enabling a more engaging service model for departments like sales and procurement, boosting efficiency, encouraging cross-collaboration and bringing measurable value to your organization.

### Keys to Success

Digital transformation looks different for every organization, but two key factors underpin all successful transformations: transparency and control.

The wider organization needs a clear channel of communication with the legal department to understand the what, the why and the how of your legal digital transformation. Transparency via this channel is critical in supporting that communication as well as building trust and engagement for your projects. By using test cases, scoring early wins with low-risk changes and authentically communicating when things don't go to plan, you'll be able to show the measurable outcomes you're achieving. The ability to demonstrate value, commitment to change and dedication to meeting metrics will build confidence across the organization. The more confidence you can build, the more you'll be seen as a leader and will be able to identify and enlist innovation champions across your organization.

The other key to success is control. This means defining precisely what the changes you implement are going to do and what processes you'll use to validate their performance. Implementing out-of-the-box solutions is a great way to experiment, test ideas, encourage innovative thinking and achieve quick results without large amounts of investment in time or money. Your ability to customize solutions to the way your organization works is integral to maximizing adoption and achieving lasting digital transformation. Like your department itself, your solutions shouldn't be black boxes that give no insight into your processes. Control comes from being able to configure and customize your tools to your unique needs to create demonstrable value.

### Driving Digital Transformation

Successful digital transformation requires a pragmatic approach and

a realistic understanding of what it is you're trying to achieve. One important thing to keep in mind is that transformation won't happen overnight. Instead, you should understand that you're going to be on a journey with multiple projects and phases that will ultimately make up your transformation.

Innovation and technologies like AI aren't meant to replace people or the work they're doing but to augment them and allow them to focus on higher-value work. That means you need to gradually evolve your tools and processes to meet the needs of your employees rather than forcing abrupt change. Your organization is likely currently using a massive number of tools. Addressing that application sprawl and standardizing everyone down to a more reasonable number of solutions are a delicate process that takes time but will result in significant benefits.

Sometimes you need to slow down to speed up in the long run. If you want your innovation and change champions to support your transformation efforts, you need to give them time to adapt to new solutions while they're also mired in demanding jobs. Realistically, when implementing new tools and projects, you need to allow for as much as 20% of your people's time to focus on the new process and learn the new tools. Without that space, it will be incredibly challenging, if not impossible, to get adoption and meaningful participation in new ways of working. Investing the time upfront will put your transformation efforts in the best position to succeed.

The perception that lawyers are late adopters of technology is but a myth from years past—with the ever-growing legal operations industry, burgeoning alternative legal service provider market and billions being invested into legal tech, the legal

department has never had such diverse backgrounds, choice of roles or been so adaptable. The conversation has matured from an inward-facing immediate need to an outward-facing strategic transformation, and there are countless leaders out there that have not only shifted this perception but executed on the strategic transformation. With the right approach to digital transformation, you can position yourself as a true agent of change that drives meaningful business value to your organization.

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