
THE EVOLVING ROLE OF LEGAL OPERATIONS



“According to findings in IDC’s Modernization of Corporate Legal survey, sponsored by CT, over the past five years, 73% of legal departments have embraced legal operations.”

Today’s legal departments no longer operate on a “this is the way we’ve always done things” approach. Neither do they make their decisions based on gut instinct. Instead, they are a proactive business partner where every decision is data driven.

According to findings in IDC’s [Modernization of Corporate Legal](#) survey, sponsored by CT, over the past five years, 73% of legal departments have embraced legal operations. That said, investments in legal operations headcount are slowing down. Businesses are more likely to add paralegals than legal operations or attorney roles. Paralegal roles increased 13.8% as opposed to legal operations at 7.9% or attorneys at 10.9%.

Indeed, legal departments have recognized that they can’t ignore the operationalization of law that leverages data and insights if they are to compete in the modern environment. The same survey found that the most impactful outcome associated with the integration of a legal operations function included greater efficiencies (24%) and improved reliability and security (20%).

In this article, we explore what legal ops is, why it matters, and best practices for implementation.

WHAT IS LEGAL OPS?

Legal operations or legal ops is a phrase used to encompass activities that optimize corporate legal services.

Specifically, the [Corporate Legal Operations Consortium](#) defines legal ops as the following:

“[Legal ops is] a set of business processes, activities, and the professionals who enable legal departments to serve their clients more effectively by applying business and technical practices to the delivery of legal services. Legal ops provides the strategic planning, financial management, project management, and technology expertise that enables legal professionals to focus on providing legal advice.”

BENEFITS OF LEGAL OPERATIONS

When a department assembles data analysts, business leaders, and paralegals who approach a company’s challenges in a different way, it opens new avenues and provides solutions to the problems that businesses face today. A legal ops team can also help large or growing legal departments run more smoothly.

A legal ops professional most commonly oversees vendor management and internal processes and introduces new technologies that improve efficiency and reduce cost. For instance,

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they can manage departmental finances through budgets, e-Billing, forecasting, reporting, and other details that impact the bottom line. Taking these details off the plates of legal staff frees up the legal department to focus on pressing legal issues while ensuring the department runs smoothly. They can also assist general counsel to achieve their vision.

LEGAL OPS BEST PRACTICES

The survey reported that the biggest pain points to incorporate into the legal ops function is implementing technology (62%) and training on that new technology (48%).

How can legal departments make the best use of legal ops resources? Consider the following best practices.

1. Re-examine workflows

Whether you're part of a large or small legal department, it's a struggle to keep track of all work that is being performed. Effective legal project management requires having the ability to view and assess all projects, including those assigned to internal departments and to outside counsel. Doing so allows you to make better-informed decisions, such as prioritizing projects and allocating resources accordingly.

Review workflows to address redundancies and other inefficiencies, and re-examine them at regular intervals to consider changing priorities or introducing new technologies.

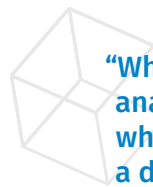
2. Leverage technology strategically

Today's regulatory environment provides the opportunity for in-house counsel to become the driving force in bringing stakeholders, management, and legal counsel together with shared systems and processes. For example, a centralized entity management platform allows for efficient collaboration and communication among department members and prevents compliance gaps.

3. Outsource strategically

Legal process outsourcing (LPO) works well as a complement to existing in-house services, providing the benefits of immediate expertise. Law firms and corporate legal departments have increasingly relied on legal process outsourcing as a cost-effective solution for carrying out repetitive work that requires a high level of accuracy. LPO can also relieve the overflow of work during high-volume seasons.

However, while outsourcing may reduce costs, it's critical that you choose the right legal services provider — a reputable and responsive company offering high-quality work.



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And be sure that the relationship is managed by your enterprise's legal professionals. In the IDC survey, 45% of respondents said their legal operations staff manage the provider relationship to ensure work quality.

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