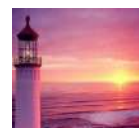


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In-house Legal Teams Caught in a Growing Digital Divide

Graham Richardson



Graham Richardson
Partner and Head
Eversheds Sutherland
Consulting

Biography

Graham Richardson is the Head of Eversheds Sutherland Consulting (www.eversheds-sutherland.com) which was launched in 2011. A qualified lawyer for over 20 years and a litigator by background, Graham has been a Partner with Eversheds Sutherland for more than 16 years and sits on the Eversheds Sutherland Senior Management Team. He has undertaken numerous compliance, technology, strategy, business process re-engineering and consulting projects for in-house legal teams including clients such as HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group, BAE Systems, Volvo AB, GE, JP Morgan and FTSE 350 companies. Graham has also delivered projects across the world including Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Switzerland, Sweden and North America. In his previous role as a practice group head he led over 450 lawyers and Eversheds Sutherland's off-shoring projects.

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Abstract

The legal sector is currently undergoing significant change owing to market consolidation, globalization, and regulatory change, and unless law firms and in-house legal teams begin to make a serious effort to join the modern digital age now, they risk losing clients – and talent. With the digital divide hobbling in-house legal teams, this has prompted international law firm Eversheds Sutherland to make use of its own digital transformation (DX) journey to assist legal professionals as Graham Richardson, head of Eversheds Sutherland Consulting explains.

Introduction

In-house legal teams are increasingly being seen as key strategic advisers to business, but they are unable to optimize productivity and efficiency due to a lack of technological tools, which is leaving them straddling an ever-widening digital divide, according to a report.

The Winmark report, dubbed *Raising the bar: Digital technology and the enhancement of legal services – The Looking Glass Report 2016*¹, assessed the views of more than 200 senior legal leaders from international in-house and private practice teams to find out how digital technologies are transforming the delivery of legal services around the world. Despite looking carefully at technological options that could put the legal team at the epicenter of business – two thirds (64%) said they had difficulty securing a technology budget, a further three in five (59%) had

problems integrating new technology with existing systems, and 56% concurred that they lacked the time when it came to deploying digital document management systems.

Despite having technological knowledge, 51% did not feel they had the knowledge to make procurement decisions and could not understand, or dedicate the time to understanding digital innovation and how it can improve their operations. Whereas, 33% went as far as saying they had concerns about their teams having the skills to use digital technology appropriately.

Legal leaders are all too aware that the legal landscape is re-shaping. They need to transform to better respond to changing business expectations. But with DX challenging traditional ways of working and putting new operational demands on teams, they are unsure of how to move forward.

Morphing role of in-house legal departments

In-house legal departments are increasingly being asked to demonstrate their value. Yet, according to the report, 40% of these teams do not have ready access to required collateral to do their job. For example, 37% do not have access to document templates whilst 21% are unable to easily generate tailored reports or look up interactions via a dashboard, now part of everyday processes in other business departments.

In addition, a changing workplace is creating more pressure. Work is no longer being done exclusively on desktops at office desks. Employees want to get work done outside of office hours and need to use their mobile devices to work remotely. User-centric digital workplace expectations are growing from lawyers with experience at other companies and those who are looking for flexible working, such as those with young families or the semi-retired.

A way forward

These challenges and the lack of attention shown by technology providers to closing the digital divide with solutions that in-house teams can easily deploy have prompted Eversheds Sutherland to step up to the plate. As a result, its consulting arm has unveiled a digital matter lifecycle management solution specifically for in-house legal departments, with its technology provider, email and document management expert Repstor.

ES/Unity is a software/service collaboration between Eversheds Sutherland Consulting and Repstor, which helped the international law firm digitize its own matter lifecycle management as part of its digital transformation (DX). The software, built exclusively for the Office 365/SharePoint platform, has been developed with direct input from lawyers. It combines Eversheds Sutherland Consulting 'Unity' system and the 'Custodian' platform developed by Repstor.

Organizations can run the software, which provides in-house legal departments with the tools, process and data needed to run effectively, either internally or in the cloud. Whichever route they take, they can be safe in the knowledge that they can call on lawyers who have been through digital change for advice.

The need for in-house legal teams to be brought into the digital workspace has never been higher. Having the right digital tools enables better knowledge management and collaboration and allows legal to provide business with the increasing support it requires.

Reference

¹ http://lookingglassreport.eversheds.com/
