

A Word about a Word

By Sumi Trombley, Senior Advisor, UpLevel Ops

Staff. In the legal profession, for years, there has always been Attorneys and Support Staff. The distinction is made as if to say that the Support Staff is an “other.” These professionals have different skills, yes, but not less or more. As my career took me toward legal operations, the community welcomed and appreciated the value I provided. I was not shunned because I was trained as an attorney. Instead, my analytical thoughts were appreciated and considered. I am part of the team.

In a world where stakeholder capitalism is becoming more important to organizations and the individuals who comprise them, attorneys should recognize that legal departments are well positioned within organizations to effect change. They should also value those around them that can facilitate the change management to achieve the organization’s goals. These allies on the legal team are professionals trained to build consensus and drive initiatives forward (many through vast experience managing challenging transitions and some with MBAs or Psychology degrees). As a legal team (one that includes attorneys and other allied professionals), we are powerful.

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You don’t need the metrics, numbers, and benchmarks to see the value legal operations and other allied professionals bring to managing change. (And if you do need the metrics, reach out to us at UpLevel Ops and we can help you build the return on investment). For so long, I have heard the mantra that “lawyers are not taught management in law school.” So if we are not (which is the topic for another article altogether), then we need to look to people who can manage. Value the skills these professionals bring. Learn from them. They are part of the legal department. They make US as a team look GOOD. They are Allies. They are Professionals. They are Allied Professionals.

Sumi Trombley practiced in law firms and in-house legal departments for more than a decade before coming to UpLevel Ops. Sumi previously served as Director, Legal at enterprise legal services provider Marshall Denning, LLC, where she managed and trained a team of junior and senior attorneys and developed and implemented resource optimizing processes for RFPs and pre-litigation disputes. She is known for her ability to provide strategic guidance and cost-effective solutions.

Prior to joining Marshall Denning, Sumi was Legal Counsel at Hewlett Packard Enterprise, serving as a de facto general counsel to top enterprise IT outsourcing accounts. She started her legal career at the law firms of Paul Hastings LLP in New York and Latham & Watkins LLP in DC, practicing corporate finance and securities law.

Sumi holds a JD from Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, and a BA in Political Economy from Georgetown University. She is based in Maryland.

About UpLevel Ops

UpLevel Ops leads the evolution of the legal operations practice. We are trusted advisors providing practical guidance, mentorship, and coaching that goes beyond consulting. With our custom, high-end service – born of extensive corporate in-house experience – we partner with clients to craft actionable solutions. We create a roadmap to success that empowers teams with best practices, tools, and workflows tailored to their unique business objectives.

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