UpLevel Ops
Take Legal to the Next Level

Steps Towards Workflow Automation

By Elizabeth Lugones, UpLevel Ops, COO / Senior Advisor

Are your days filled with trying to figure out what the team is working on or answering business leaders on the status of their requests to the legal department? Is your team complaining about wasting time on administrative tasks that distract them from more strategic or priority work? If so, you are most likely considering workflow management tools to centralize the intake of legal service requests and automate the associated workflows for those requests to the appropriate resources, including self-service. Below are five steps to prime the pump for a successful workflow tool implementation.

1. **Process Identification**
   Identify early on the initial workflows you desire to implement. Typically, you will want to focus on those requests that are high volume, repetitive or are a point of frustration for the legal team and/or business partners. Start with 1-3 workflows, solicit feedback from high frequency users, and adapt. Need a few ideas for potential workflow automation to inspire your thinking? Here are some frequently used workflows: marketing collateral review, FAQs, policy questions, third party risk review/onboarding, or trading pre-clearance requests.

2. **Process Mapping**
   Hold process mapping sessions with appropriate stakeholders (legal and business) capturing all the steps throughout the lifecycle of a request (intake through completion of work). DO NOT implement a broken process into a tool because it will only make matters worse and result in a failed implementation.

   This is the ideal time to enhance and streamline processes. Challenge the status quo and evaluate the type of data that is necessary vs. nice to have information. Collect information that is required to properly commence the work. Also, determine if there is an opportunity to enable the business towards self-service with appropriate guardrails or enablement tools to mitigate risk.

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3. **Prime the Environment for Success**
   Although your team has been complaining about being bogged down by administrative tasks or taking on roles that belong to their business partners, do not be surprised if some on the team resist the idea of letting go. This is a natural reaction. Lawyers by nature are risk adverse. Their entire job is to mitigate risk and deliver high quality product. Ensure understanding and buy-in by working with your team on identifying what they can be doing with the additional capacity created by automated workflows. For example, team members will have extra time to focus on things like: high risk or strategic projects; cross-train in another areas of practice interest; expand their skillset and growth; go to the gym or have dinner with family.

4. **Identify Success Measures**
   Ensure that you identify success measures from the outset so they can be monitored and reported. Commonly tracked metrics include reduction in manual workarounds, increase in time saved, and reduction in response times. Celebrating and communicating when success measures have been achieved will create momentum to take on additional process improvements and automation. Your team and business stakeholders will be very pleased with the transparency and the ease of accomplishing desired outcomes.

5. **Partner with Legal Ops**
   The above activity is an ideal area to partner with Legal Operations. Legal Ops teams are uniquely positioned because they collaborate cross-functionally and have visibility of work across the legal department. If you do not have a legal ops resource, consider partnering with a consultant dedicated and experienced in legal ops to get you started with initial implementation. You will benefit in learning the ropes to be able to "rinse and repeat" with future implementations.

Elizabeth Lugones is COO/ Senior Advisor of UpLevel Ops who has built and managed Legal Operations teams in various industries in both public and private companies over her 20+ year career. She excels in global project management and business reengineering, with particular expertise in process improvement, change management, cross functional collaboration and team building, but her true passion is helping others find their own strengths and talents and harness them for the value of all.

Before joining UpLevel, Liz served as the Senior Director of Legal Operations at WeWork. Prior to WeWork, Liz served as Director of Legal Operations at a diverse range of companies, including UnitedLex, DXC Technology, Becton Dickinson, and MetLife. She also worked at Citigroup as Manager, Strategy and M&A.

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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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