

Maximizing the Value of an ALSP

By Sumi Trombley, Senior Advisor, UpLevel Ops

When a GC is faced with an overburdened team, it may be tempting to jump to an outsourced model. In fact, the use of Alternative Legal Service Providers (ALSPs) has increased significantly over the past few years. The 2021 Thomson Reuters Alternative Legal Service Provider report shows that more than 70% of corporate law departments are using ALSPs. These legal departments note that some of the top drivers of using ALSPs include freeing up internal teams to work on higher value-add or more strategic matters and driving greater efficiencies. But as with most Legal Operations' initiatives, the key to success and to achieving these efficiency goals is planning. Below are a few tips to maximize the value of an ALSP relationship with your organization.

Map your Process and Be Explicit

Unfortunately, at the beginning, planning looks a lot like doing it yourself. Think of the ALSP as an extension of your Legal Department. You wouldn't throw an experienced in-house attorney into the mix without outlining the basic parameters of their responsibilities. How explicit you are depends on the level of work you are having the ALSP perform. For example, if you want the ALSP team to review and mark up NDAs, provide them with a detailed playbook and process map for when they need to seek internal team approvals. Is there technology you would like the ALSP team to use? Give them training on how your organization uses the technology (i.e., a standard operating procedure).

If you don't have time to do this but want to start anyway because the internal team is feeling the pain, then consider a mentorship model. Give the ALSP team ample opportunities to ask questions and feel out the risk tolerance of the organization. In order for the mentorship model to succeed, the internal team will have to acknowledge that growing pains will exist and they will not see immediate wholesale relief. Instead, during the transition period, the internal team will receive incrementally increasing relief. During this time, the ALSP can design a bespoke playbook and working process for you.

Identify Key Metrics that Define Success

You should set expectations around the ALSP's performance, just as you would for any member of your team. Bringing on an ALSP is like any other legal operations initiative: You have to define success. If you are leveraging an ALSP to achieve greater efficiencies, then what does success look like? Maybe the business is clamoring for faster NDA review. Maybe success means that the average time to signature for an NDA is two business days, or maybe it means that the average time the NDA spends with your organization is one business day. Develop metrics that are achievable, measurable, and aligned with the business' objectives.

Once you understand what success looks like, discuss with your ALSP how you can capture this data to show progress or areas of improvement. If you don't have internal tools to monitor this success, you may want to ask them for ideas. Many ALSPs have their own tools that they can leverage to help you improve on your existing process. The relationship between the ALSP and the legal team should be one of partnership and continuous improvement.

Schedule Regular Feedback Sessions

To facilitate a positive and productive relationship, remember that the ALSP is an extension of your legal department. So give regular and constructive feedback as you would to any new hire. Keeping the communication lines open allows you to remediate issues quickly rather than have them fester and either tarnish the reputation of the internal team or fail to gain adoption of the use of the ALSP, which continues to leave the internal team overburdened.

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The ALSP is just one part of the people and process continuous loop. Neither can improve efficiency alone, but together they can continuously improve.

If you're looking for help managing your ALSP relationships or exploring other ways of building efficiencies into your Legal Operations team, **UpLevel Ops** is ready. From workflow to eBilling to document management, we can take your legal to the next level.

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.

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