Implementation of New Processes in the COVID-19 Landscape

Law Department Management

When the COVID-19 lockdowns were first implemented, continuing regular operations was a challenge for some companies and a monumental struggle for others. Successful in-house counsel realized creating and implementing new processes during the pandemic is a matter of perspective.

Getting the C-suite on board with your new process during the pandemic can be much easier than under normal circumstances; more minds are open and ears are listening. The key will be formulating a strategy composed of clear communication, monitoring and adaption, and minimizing change resistance.

Communication

Implementation of new processes should begin with communication. Counsel should study available channels and — most importantly — the target audience.

The communication strategy should not have email as a primary conduit. I cannot agree more with this popular sentiment: Email is one of the worst communication methods ever.

Instead, make trainings the cornerstone of your communication plan. Trainings should be interactive with live online sessions, followed by short videos. These videos should not necessarily star the subject matter expert, but instead feature two of the target audience discussing the transition from the current process to the updated one.

Quick Notes can also help communicate the new process. Keep in mind that Quick Notes should not exceed eight to 10 words. Brevity helps not only to highlight the new concepts in the updated process, but also to avoid potential misunderstandings.

To share an informational Quick Note with the staff, add it to your email signature, create new company screensavers (or Zoom backgrounds), or a send a company-wide text message (if your regional Data Privacy Policy permits).

Feedback and adaption

Gather feedback from all levels through periodic assessments, meetings, and one-on-ones.

Take comments and inquiries seriously and use them as an opportunity to conduct a refresher for all audiences. Short videos, infographics, and other engaging methods are more effective than the traditional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

However, if your team doesn't have the bandwidth or resources, an easily accessible link to the FAQ with accompanying images will illustrate the point more effectively.

Monitoring

Depending on your organization's culture and environment, monitoring can take the form of periodic implementation reports from other departments or samples to demonstrate a snapshot of the implementation process.

Either method requires you to interact with internal clients by requesting information from them. Keep this interaction positive by using a supportive attitude, understanding that processes have been enhanced to enable business, rather than acting as an inspector who is there to ensure there is no deviation from the process.

Minimize change resistance

Of course, implementing a new process will lead to change resistance, an unwillingness of employees to embrace new ways of work. There is a way to channel their frustrations into positive energy. For those who complain the most, gather their feedback about the current process's gaps and pain points.

Listen, detect, and admit.

Change resistance is a very basic element to the implementation of a new process. However, it can be minimized. Before implementing the new process, try these easy steps to pave the way for a smooth transition:

1. **Build trust and gather insights:** Carefully listen to stakeholders and their understanding of the current process (e.g., regular steps, exceptions, struggles, and pain points).
2. **Designate ambassadors:** Employees who voice their suggestions and share experiences with the previous process's issues can be the ambassadors for the new process.
3. **Monitor and analyze:** Document the current strengths, gaps, and failures.
4. **Use pragmatic solutions** based on a current situation and new legislations and regulations. Imagine two scenarios, using a current process as a solid base or building a new solution.
5. **Harmonize solutions** with the current issues. This may lead to gradual implementation or phases.

Afterward, you'll have a framework for the new process. It won't be free of difficulties or change resistance, but at least you will have ambassadors who will champion the change.

Haytham Abdulrazek

Legal manager

Novartis, Egypt

Haytham Abdulrazek is currently a legal manager at Novartis, based in Egypt, and is certified from the Association of Corporate Counsel. He has more than 14 years of legal experience; diversified between private practice and in-house, with areas of practice started from business litigation and labor disputes, passing through international commercial arbitration, until acting as strategic business partner providing legal support for executive management level in form of Legal Advisory and

Contracts (negotiations and drafting) in several industries (FMCG, telecommunications, and pharmaceuticals) in areas of strength include general commercial, cross-border transactions, IPR, manufacturing, tech-transfer, anti-trust, consumer protection, and data privacy. Abdulrazek obtained his experience from Egypt and other middle east countries (mainly GCC countries). In addition, he obtained his LLB in 2006 from the Cairo University School of Law, then an International Commercial Arbitration Diploma from Ain Shams University School of Law. Afterward, Abdulrazek pursued his post-graduate studies in the Arab Academy for Science & Technology by accomplishing four semesters from the LLM Program for the International Legal Transactions in 2010.

Follow him on LinkedIn**.**