

10 Ways Legal Ops Has Evolved to Meet the Future of Corporate Law

Law Department Management



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Five years ago, the Head of Legal Operations role was largely defined by efficiency. Legal Ops leaders focused on budgets, process improvement, and technology implementation — important work, but often perceived as back-office support.

Today, that same role has become one of the most strategically vital positions inside corporate legal departments. The modern Head of Legal Ops sits at the crossroads of business strategy, technology innovation, and enterprise governance — shaping how legal teams operate and how they enable the business at large.

Having served in legal operations roles at Zuckerman Spaeder and Amazon, and now as Senior Director of Legal Operations at Lowe's, I've witnessed this transformation from three very different vantage points: a law firm, a global tech company, and a Fortune 50 retailer. Each experience underscored how rapidly the expectations of Legal Ops have expanded from tactical management to strategic leadership.

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Here are 10 ways the role has evolved — and what that evolution means for the future of corporate law.

1. From process owner to strategic business partner

Five years ago, Legal Ops was primarily focused on cost control, process improvement, and outside counsel management. The role was often seen as a functional support position for the legal

department, with KPIs tied to efficiency metrics.

The Head of Legal Ops is now a strategic partner to the CLO and senior leadership, driving department-wide transformation, aligning legal strategy with enterprise goals, and shaping how resources are deployed, how risk is managed, and how the legal function delivers measurable business value.

2. From tool implementation to platform architecture

In the early days, Legal Ops success meant deploying a matter management or eBilling tool. Now, leaders design full technology ecosystems that connect intake, workflows, AI copilots, analytics, and eBilling platforms into a unified operating model.

Legal Ops professionals have become platform architects, responsible not only for adoption but for data integrity, interoperability, and governance across the legal tech stack.

> Legal Ops is now, by definition, a global discipline.

3. From cost manager to value and data leader

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

This principle now defines Legal Ops. Where the focus once was on cost savings, today’s leaders use analytics to demonstrate value creation. Dashboards now tell stories about efficiency gains, risk reduction, and legal’s contribution to enterprise goals. The role has shifted from financial oversight to strategic data leadership.

4. From departmental role to enterprise integrator

Legal Ops previously managed legal technology in a vacuum, and collaboration with other functions was limited.

Legal Ops is now a cross-functional connector, aligning legal’s processes with Finance, HR, IT, Procurement, and Compliance to deliver enterprise-level visibility and control. The Head of Legal Ops is helping drive enterprise-level automation and service delivery models.

5. From administrative function to change management and culture driver

Legal Ops was often viewed as an internal project management or administrative role, responsible for implementing tools and ensuring compliance with process checklists. The function had limited involvement in organizational design or behavioral change and was rarely positioned to influence how attorneys and business partners adopted new ways of working.

Legal Ops has evolved into the change management engine of the legal department. The modern Head of Legal Ops leads change management and digital adoption across attorneys, paralegals, and business stakeholders. Modern Legal Ops leaders must balance empathy and execution — building

cultures that embrace innovation rather than resist it.

Legal Ops has become both a people and process leader, guiding not just what tools are used, but how work gets done, how success is defined, and how the department evolves in response to change.

> The best Legal Ops leaders are translators — turning complexity into clarity.

6. From reactive to predictive

Yesterday's reports described what happened. Today's dashboards predict what's next.

Using analytics and AI, Legal Ops can now forecast case volumes, staffing needs, vendor spend, and even litigation outcomes.

The role has become proactive, enabling legal leaders to anticipate challenges instead of reacting to them.

[READ MORE: How Legal Ops Leaders Are Driving AI-powered Legal Departments]

7. From vendor management to ecosystem orchestration

Legal Ops once focused on managing law firms and vendors independently.

Now, the emphasis is on orchestrating an integrated ecosystem, bringing together law firms, alternative legal service providers, technology platforms, and AI tools to deliver consistent value. There is an increased trend towards enterprise-level agreements to harmonize spend and ensure consistent service delivery.

8. From US-centric to global operations leadership

Legal Ops international associates historically held limited-scope, support-orientedroles focused on document review, administrative coordination, or regional compliance tasks, and strategic decision-making remained centralized in the United States, with minimal global integration. Today, the scope and impact of international associates have expanded well beyond a support apparatus.

As legal departments globalize, Legal Ops must navigate differences in language, law, and infrastructure. At Lowe's, our teams span the US, India, and Shanghai, operating around the clock. That global footprint requires consistent systems, shared data, and compliance with regional privacy and security laws.

Legal Ops is now, by definition, a global discipline.

9. From tactical communicator to executive storyteller

The modern Head of Legal Ops must be as skilled at storytelling as they are at reporting.

It's no longer enough to present data — you must explain what it means to the business.

C-suite leaders don’t want to see metrics in isolation; they want to understand impact, trends, and risk signals.

The best Legal Ops leaders are translators — turning complexity into clarity.

10. From innovator to AI governance steward

Innovation is still part of the role, but it now comes with new responsibility: governance.

Legal Ops is often the first function to deploy generative AI within legal — tools like LegalMation, ChatGPT Enterprise, and custom agents, and the Head of Legal Ops is responsible for ensuring technology adoption aligns with data privacy, confidentiality, and ethics frameworks.

Legal Ops has become both an innovation catalyst and a compliance steward — a balance that reflects the maturity of the discipline itself.

> Legal Ops has moved far beyond “running the business of law.” Today, it’s about running law as a business.

The next frontier: Legal Ops as the COO of Legal

The Head of Legal Ops is no longer an operational adjunct — coordinating workflow, maintaining systems, and supporting leadership with administrative execution. As legal departments have become larger, more complex, and more integrated with enterprise strategy, the Head of Legal Ops increasingly functions as the Chief of Staff to the CLO.

In many organizations, the title is now explicit. This role extends far beyond operations: it includes managing leadership rhythms, driving strategic planning, helping shape org design, coordinating cross-functional initiatives, and ensuring the CLO’s priorities translate into executable work across the department.

Acting as both a force multiplier and a strategic proxy for the CLO, the modern Legal Ops Director is the connective tissue that ensures alignment, accountability, and momentum at the highest levels of the legal organization.

Legal Operations has moved far beyond “running the business of law.” Today, it’s about running law as a business — one that’s data-driven, technology-enabled, and strategically aligned with the enterprise.

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Gio DiLuca is the Senior Director of Legal Operations at Lowe’s, where he leads legal operations, fiscal governance, and technology strategy. Serving as a strategic advisor to executive leadership, he drives long-range planning, budget strategy, outside counsel optimization, data analytics, and operating model transformation. He drives strategic alignment across legal functions, overseeing budget governance, outside counsel management, data analytics, and operational modernization to ensure the department operates with enterprise-level rigor and accountability to ensure the legal

function operates with enterprise-grade discipline, financial stewardship, and measurable business impact.

With 20 years of experience in the legal industry, DiLuca brings a uniquely comprehensive perspective shaped by leadership roles in-house, at law firms, and at a global legal services provider. Prior to Lowe’s, he held legal operations leadership positions at Amazon and Zuckerman Spaeder.