



The Perks of Beta Testing New Legal Technologies According to Mike Haven of NetApp

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce



"The risk of trying new technology tools available to in-house lawyers is not as high as the risk of being left behind," says Mike Haven, senior operations and litigation counsel at NetApp, a Fortune 500 data management and storage company headquartered in Sunnyvale, California. NetApp's passion for embracing sophisticated tools to run a more efficient and effective legal department is contagious.

This enthusiasm is also unusually high for the conservative legal profession, which has been reluctant and slow to embrace twenty first century technology. After all, most legal professionals reason, why change the path that generations of lawyers have walked for hundreds of years?

NetApp and Haven's passion for advanced legal technology is a combination of their innate interest in technology and their long history of immersion in Silicon Valley's cutting edge environment. Using the same forward thinking that non-legal departments use to improve effectiveness and efficiency, they are inspired to apply technology to the legal profession. "After all, why not law?" Haven rhetorically asks. "Technology and innovation will continue to turn the legal industry on its head. It will create efficiencies, increase value, and decrease spend."



Efficiencies produced by technology in law have become especially important since the Great Recession, which started in 2008. In-house legal departments, like all other organizations, were mandated to do more with less. "Now, finding efficiencies has become an absolute requirement and the legal industry as we once knew it is becoming extinct," according to Haven.

As a result, there has been a rise of Corporate Legal Operations professionals like Haven. For

example, Adobe, Google, Yahoo, Flextronics, and many other large corporations have very active legal operations teams. Moreover, there is a rise of related legal operations professional organizations such as CLOC (Corporate Legal Operations Consortium, legaloperations.org) and the new ACC Legal Operations Section that focus on creating legal efficiencies through technology and process.

According to Haven, "The legal industry will never revert to being technology-free. Those who resist this change will find themselves on the wrong side of history." Haven predicts that "the law firms that refuse to embrace this change and adapt will find themselves short on or out of business sooner rather than later." These new legal technologies are simple and user-friendly. There is no reason why they should not be embraced.

It takes supportive legal leadership for a company to begin embracing technology. For example, Haven observes that Matt Fawcett, NetApp's general counsel, and Senior Director of Operations Connie Brenton, are very innovative. They support trying new technology and encourage their team to be beta testers. In fact, at any given time NetApp Legal is beta testing at least one technology. They consider new technology and carefully select those that look interesting and might address the company's needs. NetApp tends to beta test technology that has the potential to change the course of history and the way law will be practiced in the future.

Once a new technology product or service is on-boarded by the NetApp team, its capabilities are thoroughly tested and explored. NetApp often takes time to recommend changes to the vendor and help improve the product or service. Vendors are happy to receive this feedback. This way, NetApp's legal department operates on the cutting edge of legal solutions, shapes the future of legal products and services, and pushes boundaries of the legal industry.

According to Haven, "If you wait to be second, you may miss out on critical time and ability to shape the future." When it comes to legal solutions, NetApp Legal prefers to take smart, calculated risks. As Haven describes it, "We make sure the risks are smart and calculated. If a solution doesn't work, we give it up fast and move on. If you want your legal department to advance, you have to take risks, otherwise you won't progress."

In order to change the conservative legal industry for the benefit of clients and firms, both must be open minded to new technologies. Of course, some law firms are more resistant than others. Haven believes that "those law firms that adopt new technology quickly and embrace the new normal are more likely to survive in the long run."

Ultimately, Haven firmly believes that the new legal technology "benefits both law firms and in-house legal departments because it facilitates deep, long term relationships of trust." He often has to explain why a new legal solution is good for both parties, and law firms are almost always open to discussion.

According to Haven, "Adopting legal technology to improve efficiencies is a war worth fighting." Haven is optimistic that NetApp's work is shaping the legal industry for the better.

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