

5 Leadership Skills for Corporate Legal Ops Professionals

Law Department Management



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Corporate legal operations professionals are increasingly recognized as key players in enhancing the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and overall strategic direction of in-house legal departments. As legal ops continues to evolve, so too does the expectation for professionals in this field to exhibit strong leadership skills. Here's how you can develop those critical capabilities to elevate your impact and success.

1. Build cross-functional relationships

Leadership is not just about authority; it's about influence. As a legal ops professional, you are likely working with teams from various functions such as IT, finance, procurement, and HR. To develop your leadership skills, it's essential to build and maintain strong relationships with these stakeholders. Developing a deep understanding of their challenges, priorities, and workflows can help you effectively collaborate, ensuring the legal department's needs align with broader organizational goals.

Start by identifying key partners in other departments and setting up regular check-ins or working groups. Cultivating a spirit of collaboration helps position you as a trusted advisor and leader within your company.

The **ACC 2027 Legal Ops Con** will be hosted in Chicago, Illinois, April 18-20.
Register here.

2. Develop strategic thinking

Leaders think beyond the day-to-day operations. As a legal ops professional, it's important to cultivate a strategic mindset that aligns the legal department's goals with the broader objectives of the business. You can start by identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) for the department and linking them to the organization's growth targets. Being able to communicate how legal operations can drive value beyond just cost savings will strengthen your leadership credibility.

Take time to study your organization's business model and strategy, and think about how legal operations can proactively support and enable those goals. Additionally, consider asking for a seat at the table during strategic planning sessions to contribute to decision-making.

3. Enhance communication skills

Strong communication is at the heart of effective leadership. Legal ops professionals need to articulate complex legal concepts in ways that are clear and actionable for non-legal stakeholders. Whether you are discussing budgets with the finance team or presenting workflow improvements to leadership, being able to present information clearly and persuasively is a key leadership skill.

> Effective communication isn't about just delivering a message, it's about listening with purpose and making sure the message isn't only heard, it's understood."
>
> Andrea Kirimis, AVP, Legal Operations, CNA

To improve, focus on honing your presentation and negotiation skills. Taking part in leadership communication training or public speaking forums can also help refine how you deliver messages, especially in high-stakes scenarios.

4. Embrace change and innovation

The corporate legal landscape is continuously changing. Legal ops professionals must be comfortable with change and be at the forefront of innovative solutions. Leaders in this space don't just react to change — they drive it. Whether it's adopting new technologies, implementing process improvements, or exploring new outsourcing models, staying ahead of trends is crucial for leadership growth.

Take proactive steps to learn about emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and legal tech tools. Experiment with different approaches to legal operations and continually refine your processes to be more effective and efficient.

5. Invest in professional development

Leadership is a skill that can always be developed further. Consider seeking out leadership development programs tailored to in-house professionals or those focused on legal ops. Many industry groups, including ACC, offer valuable resources and networking opportunities that can accelerate your growth as a leader.

Additionally, seek out mentors — both within and outside of legal operations. A mentor can provide guidance on overcoming challenges, offer insight into leadership best practices, and help you grow

your professional network.

Maximize your impact

Leadership skills are essential for legal operations professionals looking to maximize their impact within their organizations. There is no better place to do it than at ACC's 2025 Legal Ops Con. By building relationships across functions, developing strategic thinking, improving communication, embracing change, and continuously investing in professional development, you can enhance your leadership capabilities and drive meaningful results in your legal department.

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