



How In-house Leaders Can Use Technology to Better Prepare for the Next Crisis

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce



Members of my team recently asked me a question that many in-house lawyers have likely been hearing in one form or another: “The [COVID-19 crisis](#) is hurting the small business community. What are we, as a company, going to do about it?”

During a crisis, corporate counsel deal with many unknowns that make answering a question like this a tricky business. We often need to make decisions long before all the facts are revealed. There are no rulebooks; no straight lines that lead to all the right answers.

We can, however, take advantage of technology to ensure we are better informed during a crisis and better able to assist employees and clients. The use of technology tools can help you take decisive action now while also building continuity and stability into your business systems. This way, you are prepared to deftly manage any future crisis too.

Use technology to provide the stability employees crave

Saying the coronavirus pandemic accelerated remote work arrangements is an understatement. Rather, it forced the change like a mother bird pushing a baby out of the nest. During the pandemic, many employees feel overwhelmed, distracted, and unable to focus even if the switch to remote work is not new.

At a time when employees crave order and consistency, technology provides dependable direction. Project management tools support remote coordination of tasks and responsibilities. Remote workers stay more engaged with a system that tracks and records milestone events. Automatic notifications inspire fast action and move projects along reliably. Everyone stays in the loop through informative dashboards.

In many ways, the push to rely more on technology now is helping teams build trust in digital frameworks that provide a strong sense of structure, inclusion, and consistency — the very bedrock of the longed-for stability employees need in the virtual workplace.

Spread your influence with automation

In-house leaders can use technology platforms as a vehicle to spread their influence throughout an organization. Through enterprise-wide automation, you dictate which actions are the inevitable result of a confluence of factors.

For example, Contract Management Software (CMS) automates the creation of contracts based on the information it receives from requesters. But you create the language options the software pulls from during automation. You develop the decision-trees the software uses to suggest alternative language. The result is the uniform inclusion of pre-approved language and clauses in contracts.

In-house leaders also expand their influence by developing training programs and instruction manuals that help others apply technology in dealing with everyday business problems. These efforts help ensure seamless and long-lasting consistency — especially during the flux of a crisis.

Eliminate chaos with a uniform source of truth

Recently, GCs have needed to collaborate with outside counsel and internal executives to handle employment issues and determine what new legislation, such as the US Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, means for their business systems.

It is much easier to assess the effects of recent events and legislation when documents are centralized and searchable within a single cloud-based platform. Everyone accesses the same

information, which is stored in one location within tools such as client, employee, or contract management platforms. Data is more readily accessible, accurate, and up-to-date than that obtained from manually maintained spreadsheets and long and twisted email chains.

The resulting uniformity reduces chaos in a crisis. Technology platforms offer a single source of truth that helps companies clarify priorities in navigating the ever-changing business and legal landscapes.

Understand business relationships

If you want to craft offers of assistance that are truly useful and meaningful to your business, you must understand the full nature of your contracts. Contract analytics help legal leaders navigate business relationships while centralizing the data and details lawyers need to empower business leaders to help themselves.

Your team can quickly answer questions like, “Can we create an offer that aids clients whose contracts renew in the next 30-90 days?” Or “Are there enough renewals to make it a worthwhile effort?” In other words, you can empower your team to have a much more functional and transparent relationship with contracts.

CMS and document management platforms also improve how you interact and work directly with others online. Simultaneously collaborating on the same document and communicating in real-time enhances mutual understanding and promotes the free flow of information and ideas.

Technology as a guiding tool

Technology’s usefulness has never been more apparent. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed companies to rely on technology as a source of stability in the virtual workplace. Lawyers are finding they can trust automation to facilitate predictability, ensure reliability, and enforce uniformity in decision-making.

Ultimately, using technology now results in faster, easier access to more data-driven insights later, which helps us deal with uncertainty and chaos during a crisis and guides us in making decisions that are beneficial for our companies, our employees, and our clients for years to come.

For more advice and information on the pandemic, visit [ACC's Coronavirus Resource](#) page.

[Olga V. Mack](#)



Fellow

CodeX

Olga V. Mack is a fellow at CodeX, The Stanford Center for Legal Informatics, and a Generative AI Editor at law.MIT. Mack shares her views in her columns on ACC Docket, Newsweek, Bloomberg, VentureBeat, Above the Law, and many other publications.

Mack is also an award-winning (such as the prestigious ACC 2018 Top 10 30-Somethings and ABA 2022 Women of Legal Tech) general counsel, operations professional, startup advisor, public speaker, adjunct professor, and entrepreneur. She co-founded SunLaw, an organization dedicated to preparing women in-house attorneys to become general counsels and legal leaders, and WISE to help female law firm partners become rainmakers.

She has authored numerous books, including *Get on Board: Earning Your Ticket to a Corporate Board Seat*, *Fundamentals of Smart Contract Security* and *Blockchain Value: Transforming Business Models, Society, and Communities*. She is working on her next books: *Visual IQ for Lawyers* (ABA 2024), *The Rise of Product Lawyers: An Analytical Framework to Systematically Advise Your Clients Throughout the Product Lifecycle* (Globe Law and Business 2024), and *Legal Operations in the Age of AI and Data* (Globe Law and Business 2024).