

Workday Legal Transformation



Workday



As a “leading provider of enterprise cloud applications for finance and human resources,” Workday by the very nature of its business, leans into, and in many cases leads, when it comes to investing in innovation and technology. That said, its legal team like many others continues to strive for greater efficiency and optimization — actively combining skills-based talent development with state-of-the-art AI to create it — while working to ensure Workday is always operating at scale to meet the demands of its rapid growth.

“Our company mission is to operate at scale, and we take that also as our mission in LLCA (Legal, Compliance and Corporate Affairs),” said Aine Lyons, vice president, deputy general counsel, and chief strategy officer, Global Legal Services. “It’s one of our top five strategic goals; everyone owns operating at scale. It’s not one team that owns it; everyone owns operating at scale.”

Investing in Current and Future Staff



Workday legal (or the LLCA), contributes value to the business in a variety of ways, and one critical way is through investing in the people who work there today, and those who may do so in the future. Through its Legal Fellows program, current law students are given the opportunity to rotate through different departments and teams, learning directly from organizational leaders and gaining valuable, hands-on experience that is not taught in the classroom.

“One of the unique components of the fellowship program is the rotations that we give people during the summer program,” said Lyons. “It’s a really comprehensive curriculum and they get a lot of practical experience in learning and presenting to large groups.” Recalling a recent town hall where program participants presented before staff and leadership, the GC said the students “blew her away.”

“They were so innovative in how they took legal concepts and told a compelling story in their presentations, which is one of the things we were trying to teach them — how to marry communication and storytelling with supporting the business and translating complex legal

concepts to the business,” she explained. The curriculum is designed by 16 members of the team, whose goals include developing the robust components of the program. The team’s efforts are resonating with the lawyers in training.

“The satisfaction rate is high from last summer,” said Lyons, referring to students overwhelmingly positive reaction to the fellowship. “All four, despite having many offers from law firms, decided that they would like to come back in September, when they will start an 18-month rotation, and will have the opportunity to rotate into four different departments of their choice.” The curriculum will be a mix of substantive legal work and operational AI, and include those skills related to operating within a business as in-house counsel that are not always taught in law school.

A focus on (AI) Training



Speaking of the skills needed to operate in a modern, in-house legal department, Workday is committed to the continual professional growth of its team, and places significant emphasis on AI skills training.

“Augmenting humans is our catch phrase,” said Lyons. “We wanted to augment all the legal folks that work on the Workday LLCA team, to augment their work by using AI; show that they could have more bandwidth, more time to also focus on the strategic work, but also things that they want to do, like the fellows program, and put more time into their passion at work for things that really matter and are going to have big impact — not just at Workday, but in the legal industry.” As a result, the team, via a relationship with one of its firms who had previously used Alto Claro, decided to partner with the legal training solution that provides “cutting-edge Legal Prompt Engineering training.”

Through Alto Claro’s comprehensive training, the legal team learns how to best leverage AI to automate tasks, streamline workflows, and enhance legal research and analysis, and in turn, increase efficiency and improve decision-making. This is critical to clearly demonstrating the value add of the department, and its alignment with organizational strategy and priorities. “One of the things that we do every year, is listen deeply to the company strategy, where the company is going,” said Lyons, noting the company’s acquisition of Evisort, an AI-powered contracts analysis tool, as an example. “AI is a huge play for us, so we’re investing massively in it.” This means embracing AI and ensuring her team is trained and ready to support the business in doing the same, now and in the future.

“For people not to feel like their left behind, you have to invest in their skillsets for the future, because the future is an AI powered future, but it has to have human insight and judgement,” said Lyons. “If we don’t train lawyers, that could be somewhat problematic for the industry as well.”

Training its lawyers is clearly an ongoing priority at Workday. “We decided we would invest in

this training with Alto Claro and over 80 percent of the team has gone through it,” said Lyons. “And we will continue to invest in AI skills into the future. We’re only getting started.”



Tips from the Legal Team at Workday

Legal teams may want to think about implementing some fun ways to integrate a culture of innovation. For example, Workday has an “Everyday AI” champion program, and “AI Fridays.” According to Lyons, AI Fridays at Workday began with discussions and demonstrations related to the technology, where the team would just “talk about AI.”

“In a world where AI is going to become omnipresent, I think all of us need to understand it,” she said. In addition to weekly discussions, each team within the LLCA nominates a champion who is charged with carrying out discussions around AI within their group.

Lyons recommends being cognizant of the risks associated with AI, to help the business understand those risks and be responsible with its use, as well as how its regulated and legislated. She stressed that to be able to adequately advise the business and create efficiencies which help it “operate at scale,” the lawyers must understand the technology itself, which goes back to training. “Legal teams and lawyers have a place in helping companies navigate the complexity of AI and the risks, but if we don’t know how it works, and we don’t use it ourselves, it’s very hard to also be credible with the business.”



Talking Outcomes

Using the accomplishment of taking a five-page self-service NDA down to a one-pager that’s globally used as just one example, Lyons pointed to several tangible improvements made possible through her team’s willingness to learn and embrace technology, specifically AI, and invest in its people (interns and staff alike). Due to NDA optimization, LLCA reduced cycle times and note a 20 percent reduction in legal team inquiries; through implementing a streamlined Universal MSA process and optimization, they’ve reduced cycle times for key segments, decreasing the average 19.4 business days to 11.7; increased “no touch” processing to 63 percent of all deals; and report a 100 percent conversion rate from summer interns (fellows) to full-time hires.

In addition, Lyons credited the company’s Transformation Council, Customer Experience Council, and the Center of Excellence with contributing to organizational innovation. “We take a very intentional approach, and we’ve dedicated resources to be that center of excellence engine to drive scale and innovation, and everybody owns it,” she said.

That said, when asked what she was most proud of, Lyons didn’t emphasize that stats, though she of course acknowledged them and the work the team put in to achieve them.

However, it's the team she's most inspired by. "The transformation mindset that the team has, the cultural change that you need to effect in a legal department to really embrace the new, modern legal department, and how they need to work, that's a big shift. I'm most proud of the cultural change," she said. She went on to highlight the team's embracing of innovation, as well as the ideation that comes from those on the front lines.

"Everyone wants to be involved now in executing on innovation and helping LLCA scale to help the business. Unlocking that level of enthusiasm and all those ideas, and making people feel safe in an environment of change, that's what I'm most proud of."