

LEGAL TECH ADOPTION JENGA: ALT LEGAL

In this monthly series examining how legal tech companies succeed and fail at encouraging tech adoption, Alma Asay and Haley Altman examine IP docketing company Alt Legal.

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“It’s a tool made for what I do.” This is how Mitesh Patel, an intellectual property lawyer at Hopkins & Carley, describes Alt Legal, a legal technology that helps law firms and companies of all sizes automate trademark docketing. The company was founded in 2013 by Nehal Madhani, formerly an attorney at Kirkland & Ellis LLP.

To listen to Patel speak about the process of onboarding and using Alt Legal is to hear a lawyer whose practice has truly been transformed by the adoption of modern technology. Patel helped drive the firm’s transition from an older IP docketing system to Alt Legal.

With a tool like Alt Legal, the key to adoption is in the pre-sales process. IP docketing (and IP offices) evolved from manual processes to the digital world years ago. Like timekeeping systems, once a firm licenses the software, individual user adoption will follow. Trademark teams must use software to keep track of the vast amount of data and deadlines to maintain their practice. As Madhani explained, this is about the lawyers’ livelihood, they need to access the docket information daily. “Nine out of ten

times,” the adoption challenge for Alt Legal is convincing these firms that the pain of transitioning to a new system is less than the pain they’re currently experiencing with their legacy system.

From our conversations with Patel and Madhani, Alt Legal’s approach toward adoption reflects four tenets:

1. Make your customer happy. We could hear the joy in Patel’s voice as he described his experience with Alt Legal. As Patel put it, Alt Legal “is our dashboard, we live in it.” When you think about technology this way, it’s easy to understand why making customers happy is important. What customer wants to “live in” a place that’s messy and difficult to navigate? You could hear Patel’s happiness as he remarked on Alt Legal’s “simple elegance” and the ability “to find things just from looking.”

Sarah Tavel, general partner at Benchmark, writes about the value of creating happiness with respect to marketplace businesses such as Uber and DoorDash: “The marketplace that wins is the marketplace that figures out how to make their buyers and sellers *meaningfully*



happier than any substitute.” The same can hold true for B2B software in legal. As Tavel explains, buyers “don’t care how big you are. They care how happy you make them versus any substitute.” We can’t think of a truer example of this than the way Patel described his experience with Alt Legal versus the legacy systems he previously had used. Patel and his colleagues were excited to use Alt Legal.

2. Focus on a constrained problem. Another key to Alt Legal’s success at gaining adoption is its laser focus on a constrained problem: How to make *trademark docketing* better? Tavel explains the principle here (tying to her original point to make customers happy): “To maximize happiness, pick a constrained problem where you can win.” Alt Legal isn’t trying to get a broad spectrum of users to adopt a product designed for a wide range

of legal practice. The old adage, “you can’t make everyone happy” turns out to be a powerful lesson for legal technology adoption.

Wondering how constrained is too constrained? As Tavel explains, “[i]f you’re worried you may have chosen too small a market, then you’re probably on the right track.” Alt Legal nailed it by focusing on trademark docketing. As Patel explained, prior systems were primarily designed for broader IP docketing and treated trademarks as an “afterthought.” In other words, Alt Legal distinguished itself from its competitors and delivered a better customer experience by taking an afterthought and turning it into the primary focus.

3. Be an expert in the industry, not only your software. A by-product of focusing on a constrained problem is the ability to become an expert in that field. Patel remarked on the Alt Legal team’s expertise in trademark docketing beyond the tool itself. Patel pointed, for example, to the resources that Alt Legal makes available on its website, which include everything from a trademark paralegal course to IP news roundups to discussions about trademarks making news (e.g., SPACE FORCE and BLM) to “Most Wanted Holiday Gifts for IP Trademark Lawyers and Professionals.” Patel also noted that level of acumen extended both to the documentation (containing clear step-by-step instructions) and support team: “When we talk to Alt Legal

support, they know exactly what we’re going through.”

4. Be hands-on and flexible during the transition (and beyond). Alt Legal’s expertise also shines during the transition process, according to Patel and Madhani, during which the Alt Legal team takes a hands-on role that considers the needs of each customer. Alt Legal provides free data migration – eliminating switching costs—which can usually be accomplished within a week. Alt Legal also provides (at times) lengthy free trial periods to ensure the customer is comfortable before turning off their old system. As Madhani puts it, “Everything is about building trust along the way because we’re asking for a huge amount of trust when we say switch over all of your deadlines.”

Prompted to find any challenge with Alt Legal’s onboarding and adoption process, Patel explained that the “biggest hassle about making the switch was not integrating into Alt Legal, it was getting our data out of our old provider.” This is a common problem, apparently. Sophia Ottinger, Alt Legal’s director of Customer Success, explained that a lot of adoption success comes about because Alt Legal isn’t “forcing your people through a strict structure of this is what has to happen to migrate, rather, [we]’re reacting to what they have.” As a result, a lot of Alt Legal’s “good tech is related to migrating.”

Alt Legal’s strategies have paid off. More than 850 law firms and

companies now use Alt Legal. Moreover, Alt Legal is seeing increasing activity from attorneys, and from in-house counsel who are using Alt Legal to manage their own trademarks and collaborate with outside counsel via the platform.

*As Global Director of Business Development and Strategy at Litera, **Haley Altman** is expanding customer development opportunities and helping to define and execute the strategic vision of the company. Prior to the company’s acquisition by Litera, Haley was founder and CEO of Doxly. She has over a decade of experience working on complicated transactions in the corporate, private equity, and venture capital verticals. Her practice has extended from the Midwest at Ice Miller to the West Coast at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati.*

*In her role as Evangelist at Litera, **Alma Asay** works on various initiatives of importance to the company, engages with clients and the legal community to understand how Litera can best meet their needs, and enhances Litera’s expertise in the litigation space. Prior to Litera, Alma was the founder and CEO of Allegory, a cloud-based litigation management platform, which was acquired by Integreon in 2017 and Litera in 2020. Before founding Allegory, she was a litigator at Gibson Dunn in New York, where she worked on some of their most high-profile matters.*

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