
Preface

Much has been said about the digital transformation, disruption, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, about the flat world. But what does that mean to us, the **legal professionals**—working in an in-house legal department (LD), for an international or small law firm (LF) or for a legal process outsourcer (LPO) in 2016? Will we still have job in 2020? Likely. But what will this job look like? Will we be surrounded by the same people, doing the same work the same old way, or will we perform tasks like legal research, legal drafting, collaboration, etc., significantly differently from today? If so, in what way? Is this something we can influence or will we be “moved” into this future without much influence? And will we have the right skills to do the “new job”? And beyond, what is the role of the legal ecosystem surrounding those legal professionals? Will law schools of the future adjust their legal education? Will there be the war for talents and, if so, how is legal recruitment changing? What is the state of the legal associations and what is going on the world of legal academia?

When the three coeditors of this volume met in Walldorf in February 2015 for a conference, we started to exchange on the questions above and observed: The picture portrayed on stage, supported by fancy power points, and shared eloquently in panel discussions looked innovative, attractive, and almost too perfect. The arguments made sense, everything flowed nicely, and in the end, even though the presentations or speeches were criticizing one or the other aspect, or argued for innovation or change, the audience was left with the overall feeling: “We are doing ok. Legal is fine, everything is under control, and we know what to do.”

But when one starts asking the same questions to colleagues around the world in direct and personal conversations, the picture suddenly looks very different: At least the lawyers we talked to are actually very concerned about the state of the industry, and not few of them wonder if they will still have a job in a couple of years, and if so, what this job will look like.

One friend working for an international law firm stated: “We hear all these bold statements about the disruption and the necessity to change, followed by very little tangible actions. It seems everyone is carefully watching his peers—and as long as they don’t change, why should we?”

An in-house lawyer claimed: “Getting things done in the most efficient and effective way is the aim—but the reality looks quite different! We have all this

simplification programs and initiatives, which seem to result only in greater complexity. Projects claim ‘massive savings’ and ‘huge efficiency gains’ and they may do so on paper—but then they too often result in insular simplification here, while adding complexity there—while the calculated head-count cuts still happen. I’m open to new technology, as long as it truly positively impacts my work!”

A colleague working for a world leading LPO, however, has a very different perspective: “We wouldn’t exist without the change you described: The flattened world, the rise of the Internet, the new technology are the foundation on which LPOs are built, today. Data extraction, data analytics, machine learning, and even AI are not only buzzwords—I’m dealing with new technology every day! We always adopt, learn, take on new services, and constantly challenge ourselves and the status quo. So instead of hunting for the best law graduates in terms of high marks, we are looking for a specific mindset: ‘some problem-solving-techie’ with legal background.”

When sharing all of our findings, conversations, and observations, the three of us concluded that legal reality is quite different from the way it is being portrayed officially and that we should take the initiative to create a platform for these strong voices to be heard and to create an initial holistic picture of the change that is coming towards the legal industry.

So we sent out a call for paper, presenting our view of the status quo of the legal profession, and invited friends and colleagues from our legal network to share with us an abstract with their ideas for book articles. The “by invite” approach and the assessment of the received abstracts allowed us to carefully steer and maneuver in the direction which we considered as most beneficial for the book intent: provide a platform for strong and future oriented leaders and their views concerning our legal profession.

Based on all abstracts we received, we carefully developed the book outline, and upon passing the critical mass in terms on consents to publish, we gave it a go! A publisher was soon found and all formalities with Springer cleared.

Right from the beginning we considered law firms, in-house legal, and LPOs as the basis—with academia, legal HR, and the associations being added to ensure a holistic representation of the legal ecosystem. A few months into our journey, we noticed that we had forgotten to include voices from the legal tech scene—a huge omission, as Legal Tech is far more than solution providers; they are rather change agents of their own kind! So we did a second round of call for papers to fill the gaps.

With that addition, we also reconsidered the title of our book: *Run Legal as a Business* was a catchy header, but did not quite cover our intent, because it seemed to focus exclusively on in-house-legal departments. We explained to our authors the new book title: “Liquid Legal—Transforming legal into a business-savvy, information-enabled and performance-driven industry,” and we got the feedback that it resonates. We intend to establish the term “liquid legal” as a brand for our joint idea—a kind of *meme* that evokes open and dynamic interfaces, holistic resource views, and a nonhierarchical and process-oriented culture of collaboration across departmental and organizational borders.

Although supported by our senior management, such a private engagement comes on top of an already busy workday—so smooth collaboration was key: We three co-editors conducted weekly update calls to monitor the progress of article submissions, and we held in person editorial board meetings in different venues to set the golden thread, go through all articles over and over again, discuss timing and marketing options, and make adjustments in the book structure and positioning, where required.

What started as a formal commitment to jointly go the extra mile for the better of our profession turned into a remarkable experience. First of all, the editor onsite meetings were an intense, creative, and joyful exercise; we often forgot the hour, skipped lunch, and spent even the whole dinner to discuss our authors' thoughts and ideas and the bigger picture that this could create.

For each author, one editor was appointed the main point of contact, and the work started: 30+ authors (some single writers, some teams) had to be managed. We edited the articles and provided detailed comments to the authors, making sure the article included a new message or line of thought that propels the development of our legal profession and that it was also easy, ideally even fun, and entertaining to read . . . And the authors followed us: With fantastic drive and commitment, they thought through our comments and provided new drafts. We developed an *esprit de corps* that motivated them as much as they motivated us!

True to the motto *divide et impera*, we also shared responsibilities on the constitutive elements of the book, but selected one main author: The preface was written by Kai, Roger contributed the Call for Papers,² and finally Dierk created the bridges between the articles.³

Although all three of us invested private time and money to realize this book, Dierk and I want to thank our NetApp and SAP chain of commands for their support of the book, especially Luka Mucic, Matthew Fawcett, and of course also Tim Cummins from IACCM who open the book with their forewords. This executive support provides proof to our initial agenda: Our collective strong voices have been heard!

We thank all authors for their hard work and dedication and would like to end with the words of a student that supports us in driving the messaging in social media on this book. After spending only an hour in a restaurant in Rome with her, explaining to her the vision that we want to spread with this book and the great panel of authors, this is what we got back:

. . . I assume we all agree, that liquid legal is not just supposed to be a book title. [. . .]. Liquid legal will become the common noun for 'future legal', encompassing its digitalization, transformation, and more. It will be known as the one source of accumulated knowledge and information people worldwide will think of and reach out to. Liquid legal will indicate trends and thus give guidance regarding future legal for companies, industries,

²The original Call for Papers is included in this volume as *Introduction: "Run Legal as a Business!"*.

³These bridges between articles are referred to in the book as "Liquid Legal Context."

for millions of people. [...] Establishing the brand LL is the first step to create value and more value around it. [...] Liquid legal will be a leader of change.

She reflected back what we did not dare to state. Well, if this is what a young talent in our industry has taken from Liquid Legal, we are eager to hear what you will take from this book. We hope that we encourage the readers to be leaders of change towards “liquid legal.”

It’s time to lead!

Walldorf, Germany
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Liquid Legal

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Enabled and Performance Driven Industry

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