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## How Law Firms Are Using Legal Tech To Boost Atty Retention

By Sarah Martinson

Law360 (September 12, 2022, 12:25 PM EDT) -- A handful of law firm leaders say that implementing new legal technology, such as document and workflow automation, artificial intelligence-assisted searches and process improvement tools, is helping them with attorney retention.

The firm leaders told Law360 Pulse that their attorneys have reported to them that legal technology is making their jobs more efficient and satisfying by automating and streamlining work processes.

Karen Buzard, a partner at London-based international firm Allen & Overy LLP and member of the firm's markets innovation group, said that process improvement tools like Definely, which allows attorneys to cross-reference terms while drafting contracts, don't get as much as attention as automation or AI tools, but they have an immediate impact on attorneys' work.

Buzard said that she showed 20 associates how to use Definely, and they all quickly adopted it into their practice, while one associate started showing others how to use it.

"Process improvement tools are the ones that we're actually seeing people kind of just grab onto," she said. "They're often low-hanging fruit, but there's an impact almost immediately."

Another process improvement tool that Allen & Overy uses for closing deals and helps with attorney retention is contract management platform Legatics, Buzard said.

Buzard noted that some Allen & Overy partners require associates to use Legatics on deals because the platform provides time savings and risk mitigation.

"You're not going to miss a document because it's on this platform, and it didn't get just mistakenly dropped off in a turn of a Word document," she said.

Allen & Overy is also one of several law firms that have launched an innovation lab or technology subsidiary to explore new tools for the firms. Allen & Overy **founded** its innovation lab Fuse in 2017. Other firms with an innovation lab or **technology subsidiary** include Reed Smith LLP, Dentons, Holland & Hart LLP, Norton Rose Fulbright, Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP and Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC.

Holland & Hart's Innovation Lab director Jason Adaska and patent partner Michael Drapkin told Law360 Pulse in a recent interview that one of the best benefits of legal tech tools created by their lab is they help with attorney retention.

The Innovation Lab has created about 40 AI-powered tools with capabilities ranging from patent drafting to email automation, according to Adaska.

According to the lab's data, its tools have been used more than 9,800 times in the past six months and more than 75 times per day.

Adaska said that attorneys are incentivized to stay at Holland & Hart because they will lose access to tools that automate mundane tasks for them if they leave the firm.

"When other firms try to solve these problems and they don't leverage technology in the lab, those

firms have a lot of turnover," Drapkin added.

Orrick chief innovation officer Wendy Butler Curtis echoed Drapkin in an email to Law360 Pulse, saying that great tech is part of why the firm has had better attorney retention than its law firm peers over the past couple of years.

Orrick has about 40 legal technologies at its disposal for attorneys to use, including contract drafting tool Draftwise, deal closing management platform SimplyAgree and litigation and trial preparation and management tool Opus2, according to Curtis.

Opus2 is also used by law firms Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP, Norton Rose, Dorsey & Whitney LLP, Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease LLP and Bartlit Beck LLP, according to its website.

"I think a lot of this is intuitive: If you have a great technology experience in every other aspect of your life, you're going to expect it at work. That's what we're aiming for," Curtis said in an email.

While law firms weren't able to provide Law360 Pulse with quantitative data showing that attorney retention improved after implementing certain legal technology, leaders said they know their firms' legal technology is helping with attorney retention because of the feedback that they have received from attorneys.

Reed Smith global head of legal personnel Casey Ryan and Reed Smith chief innovation officer Dave Cunningham told Law360 Pulse in a recent interview that it's too early for them in the legal tech adoption process to have data showing that attorneys are staying at the firm as a result.

Cunningham added that the firm has surveyed its attorneys on their job satisfaction, and their feedback suggests that they will stay at the firm in part because of the legal technology that the firm has adopted. Attorneys have reported that they feel their work is fair and interesting and those are indicators that they will stay at the firm, he said.

"We certainly can say, in the time we've been doing this, we've moved the needles on those indicators sometimes by 50% improvement," Cunningham said.

Buzard said that Allen & Overy recently received positive feedback from associates when the firm asked them to create videos about how legal technology is helping them with their work for the firm's partner conference.

"Associates were filming videos about the ways in which advanced delivery has made their work-life balance better [and] has made their work more interesting because they've been able to explore different technologies [and] different ways of practicing," Buzard said.

Curtis said that 96% of Orrick associates who participated in pilot training with legal bootcamp startup AltaClaro reported that it made their work better. The firm put associates through training with AltaClaro as part of an overhaul of the firm's approach to corporate transactions like mergers and acquisitions and private equity financing, she said. Orrick invested in AltaClaro as part of the firm's legal tech investment initiative.

AltaClaro is also used by more than a dozen law firms including Holland & Hart, Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP and Husch Blackwell LLP, according to its website.

Reed Smith's Ryan said one of the challenges of trying to implement legal tech that improves attorney retention is finding tools that lawyers want to use in their practice.

"We try to meet attorneys with what they actually want and need to be stronger practitioners," she said.

Buzard noted that because lawyers are adverse to risk and change, law firms need to introduce tools to attorneys in a targeted way by showing them how tools can be used on specific types of transactions or cases.

"If you try and just roll something out broadly, nobody pays attention to it," Buzard said.

Law firm leaders' advice for other firms that are interested in implementing legal tech that can boost attorney retention is to seek input from their lawyers and have them test products before adopting them.

Curtis said in an email that Orrick's associates are their biggest allies in figuring out what legal technology to adopt.

"Our associates love piloting and using technology. And they are great partners in innovating and working smarter," she said.

--Editing by Nicole Bleier.

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