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Episode title: CLOC Conference 2022 — Finding the next generation of technology for legal ops

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Gina Jurva: Thank you for joining us for our Thomson Reuters Market Insights podcast. My name is Gina Jurva, Attorney and Manager of Market insights and Thought Leadership for our Corporate and Government businesses. Today we have a special episode dedicated to our upcoming appearance at the Corporate Legal Operations Consortium, CLOC as many know it at their global Institute, which runs from May 2nd through May 12th in Las Vegas, the panel we're going to discuss is titled The Modern Legal Department Transformation and Next Gen Tech for Legal Operations. This multi-day conference is dedicated to helping legal professionals collaborate with each other and with other industry players, including law firms, technology providers, and law schools. CLOC works to help set industry standards and practices for the profession and we are very excited to be a part of it. Joining me today are two rock star legal professionals who are actually part of our panel. First, is our moderator, Kelsey Nicol, who is the go-to-market strategy and planning director here at Thomson Reuters and Lindsay Wurst, Legal Operations Manager at Securian Financial. Ladies, thank you both for being here today.

Kelsey Nicol: Thank you, Gina.

Lindsay Wurst: Thanks, Gina.

Gina Jurva: Kelsey, I'd like to start with you up and really talk about CLOC. CLOC is a global community of experts that are focused on this area called redefining, really redefining the business of law. That's the whole purpose. It's in their mission statement. So why, in your opinion, is it important to redefine the business of law, especially now more than two years after the pandemic? Or some would say we're still in the pandemic, of course, but more than two years after the beginning of the pandemic?

Kelsey Nicol: Sure, you know, so interesting question and honestly you know I'll start at the end of that question when we think about the pandemic / the last two years in moving forward, and in particular what was a really interesting finding that that we at Thomson Reuters uncovered and it would have been our 2021 State of the Corporate Legal Department report. So, two issues ago if you will, but it was very fascinating to see that from the legal departments that we see surveyed there was a very clear distinction that those who had a legal operations function within their legal department actually fared better or felt that they were more prepared for reacting to the pandemic and really in my mind and in conversations I've had with legal departments it really comes down to legal ops, whether that's a person or a team of people. Being able to be that that center of the wheel if you will, and so whether that was you know, making sure folks had printers or had the right laptops, had their VPN, the legal ops team was able to have a very clear definition of what that looked like to enable and support the business to ensure that the business of law was able to continue and the law department was able to continue to support the business, make sure the business was running as needed. You know, the other piece of this as well would be again just the ability to have the legal operations team push out communications. Here are our metrics. Here's going to be our key focus or our key area of need and so really again when it comes back to you, know how important it is to redefine that business of law, for me, it's really how do we continue to allow the legal department to enable the entire business of the organization. So how are they

ensuring that sales targets are met? How are they ensuring that our contract turnaround is happening timely and that we're able to execute on those pieces. Again, last example is, you know, I think of a lot of legal departments that we're looking for force majeure clauses really at the beginning of the pandemic. So, I think those are all really great examples of how the legal department is continuing to evolve and be redefined to ensure that they are those business enablers of the entire organization and not be the "department of no" as we all kind of commonly joke about over the years, and as CLOC has continued to evolve.

Gina Jurva: Yeah, the "department of no" I've heard that many times as well and I think that what you said earlier about how and it's an interesting finding about how those law departments that had the legal operations function were able to pivot much more quickly or efficiently, when we had this crisis, this this pandemic, right? And so having that in play and having that set up at the outset was helping those law departments really function and continue to function during the pandemic so that is an interesting statistic. I'd like to talk also just about this concept of when we talk about it at Thomson Reuters and with a, you know, general counsel about the modern law department. What does a modern law department look like? For most general counsel today, I think it's not enough to just drive down legal costs and to manage efficient legal workflows, although those are very important, but if you want to truly build a high performing law department and deliver that superior value that we all talk about, you need to strategically use legal technology in the legal operations space. I'd like to have you talk a little bit about that and how you see that playing out with the customers you work with?

Kelsey Nicol: Sure, I think that's a great one and certainly a common theme as we do talk with a lot of our customers and a lot of our just overall legal departments within this space. You know, we go through what we would call a sophistication spectrum and it's a way to really allow a legal department to evaluate how far they have to go, but also, how far they've come when it comes to legal technology and being able to use legal technology. So, for example, we would very kindly and politely categorize a legal department that maybe doesn't have e-billing software yet as a chaotic legal department, and so knowing that really, they probably don't have billing guidelines, you know, they may be doing paper invoicing or today probably PDF invoicing from their law firms, and so they're very much acting as kind of a reactive business and a reactive legal department. But then we continue down that spectrum and really at the end or the end goal and results, which to be fair, not a lot of legal departments are at is a predictive and proactive legal department. So how can I use this data this information, the technology to inform those decisions to better predict whether that's my spend, whether that's my contracting, what my work, my legal department like what my workflow is within the organization, how I'm managing and staffing my matters, all of those data points come in and then again at the end of the day to say that you're predictive and you understand where your business is going and how to support that business based on the technology that you're having you have and that you're using, so you know, again, it's an interesting exercise and one that kind of, you know, holds a mirror up to say, OK, where really are we at? But also, where can we get better and how can we? Whether that's working with other legal departments for best practices or working with certain vendors, if there is need, being able to really kind of take that look in the mirror and evaluate where you're at, but also where you can go and what steps you can take to get there.

Gina Jurva: And this is another question about that when you're talking about where, when you and your team you're talking to law departments about driving technological transformation within the legal department. I mean, what do you see as some of the ways that law departments should be using

technology, but maybe aren't using it yet, you talked about e-signature a little bit. Is there anything else that you would say that they should really be looking at to drive efficiency.

Kelsey Nicol: Yeah, you know, it's one it seems so simple, but it really is starting small and you know CLOC has a great report, you know, Thomson Reuters we have our State of the Corporate Legal Department Report that does highlight where legal departments are at with the different technologies that they use, how often though, each of those technologies are used, and so it is starting with the basics, so e-signature or e-billing really making sure you've got some of those basic workflows instituted and then it's building off of there and really, I'm probably jumping the gun a little bit, but it is a bit about, you know, where are my urgent needs? So, what is the most critical pain point use case within our legal department? And let's start there and then we can prioritize off of really what that assessment and that evaluation is.

Gina Jurva: And it also depends too, I mean, I know we're talking a little more generally here, but it also depends on the size of your law department. I think that kind of goes without saying, but right?

Kelsey Nicol: Absolutely yeah, absolutely.

Gina Jurva: You know, it's funny I was, you know, when we talk about the large law departments, they have a bigger budget. They are able to, you know, utilize technology, maybe a little bit more, experiment, maybe in some ways more. I was just talking to an attorney here in the Bay Area who runs a law department, and her law department is like 7 people. And so, I asked her about legal operations and she's like I would love somebody who is legal ops, I would love to have that. She's like I kind of have a project manager right now. I said "Well, yeah, that's a good start." It's a good start. It's a start, but they're also in like this hyper- She was telling me that they're in a hyper growth mode so they're hoping to expand their department and so with that expansion will come more support.

Kelsey Nicol: Yes, and, you know, it's funny because I mean that's the first step is knowing, not to make light of it, but knowing I need legal ops. You know how can I - it might not be in the budget for this year, but I know that I need it, and I know I need to grow into it going into next year or years to come, so that's great.

Gina Jurva: Well, last question for you and, you know, this is really about - I think the focus of legal operations has shifted in the last 10 years or so. I mean, I think before the focus was on risk management, just trying to reduce, trying to help reduce outside counsel costs. Today legal operations is really integrated and is a trusted part of the business and a trusted partner to the entire organization. And for those law departments, like we just said, that are actually utilizing legal ops, they're helping the attorneys identify opportunities to automate processes, strategically use service processors to drive efficiencies, while still reducing costs. So, as the industry continues to evolve, what changes do you see ahead for the future of legal ops and legal tech in general? Like what takeaways do you want those who attend CLOC and come to your session to walk away with?

Kelsey Nicol: So, I'm going to probably sound like a broken record, but I do see a future in which AI is very much a part of that story and I think the challenge over the last few years when AI has kind of become that buzzword is there has to be a need for it. So just as talk, saying AI is not going to drive, change or solve the problems that it has been created to solve for us and so I really think that as we look at AI we need to go one step deeper and say OK, but how can AI support better staffing, whether that's

internally or externally on my matters, how can AI look back at what I've spent with outside counsel and allow me to better negotiate rates. How can AI tell me what my risk is within 3,000 contracts that I, you know, that I have within my organization, and so it's really, it's AI, but it's taking it a step further to really identify what it's solving and allowing it to then get you that data-driven decision. So, how can I become that predictive legal department using AI as a tool to get me there and to answer some of those questions and help me solve those problems, so I think that that's, you know, that's kind of the buzzword for me. And then lastly, I would just end, you know, to your question of kind of key takeaways from CLOC and I'm so pumped and excited that we're all going to be in person, which I'm just delighted for, but there is such excitement and enthusiasm around legal ops having the power. You are the champions of the legal department, you know, what data you have, you know, what opportunities you need to improve on, and so it really is how can you - whether that's ensuring you've got executive sponsorship and leadership from your GC buying to maybe purchase new technology to solve a specific need, or whether that's a new process change, so is there a better process workflow that we're going to go ahead and champion and enforce within our legal departments. It's really again coming back to legal operations and knowing that all of you have the ability to really drive your businesses forward and kind of keep that momentum going within this really exciting profession that I've been very lucky enough to grow up with over the last 10-15 years, so. So, that's my excitement for CLOC as we prep to head out to Vegas.

Gina Jurva: Well, that is exciting, and I am it'll be great to have everybody in person. I agree with you, and I like the uh, the champion of the legal department. I think legal operations folks are certainly that, and we have one with us here, so we're going to chat with champion, Lindsay, here and see what you have to say, but Kelsey, that's all really great and I'm excited to see you moderate, so very, very good things ahead.

Kelsey Nicol: Great, thanks Gina.

Gina Jurva: Thank you. So, Lindsey, let's turn to you. Tell me a little more about Securian Financial and for those in the audience that don't know, where are your customers geographically located?

Lindsay Wurst: Sure yeah, great question and Kelsey, great job, you did very good. Securian Financial is actually based in St. Paul, Minnesota and we have quite the footprint across the United States and Canada and we have a vast product ranging from, you know, your company might have a life insurance policy with us or individuals or 401K management and that actually doesn't include any of our amazing subsidiaries across the United States and up in Canada. But we're more well known as Minnesota Life if any of our listeners recognize that name, I'll just put that out there as well to make a connection.

Gina Jurva: OK, well how big is the corporate law department, is your corporate law department?

Lindsay Wurst: Yeah, and that's a great question because we have grown significantly in the only like the last two and a half years that I've been with Securian. And when I started 2 1/2 years ago we were at about 62 and we are sitting at 80 today and that's- I don't know how everybody else runs the department and I think it rightfully so it's different, depending on the need of the company, right? And so, we have a pretty wide department that covers our corporate law and M&A's, litigation, securities, corporate compliance, you know, privacy, cybersecurity and SIU. So it's a really fun group which makes my job a little bit more interesting because it is dealing with such a different team or person or project

every day, and that's kind of what I love about legal operations is the different things we get to touch every day.

Gina Jurva: Yeah, and you are the legal operations manager. How many dedicated legal operations staff do you have?

Lindsay Wurst: Oh, I am lucky to have one amazing legal operations analyst. She, you know, she keeps me in line. I don't know where I would be without her, and she focuses on the day-to-day budget of our annual budget for the department. Our outside counsel spend management, our legal tracker. She's our trainer. She keeps our attorneys in line when it comes to reviewing bills and her role just within the last year has just expanded immensely. And so, I'm looking at bringing somebody else on because we do have such a large department on continuing that role of the operations analyst, but adding someone almost as a mini project manager, but not a paralegal, and so I'm kind of exploring a new operations role as we speak.

Gina Jurva: Well that I mean, all of that is just very exciting and I think you it just this - you're a really good example of how to have legal operations staff, how to, you know, realize how important it is, and then also to try to grow that and continue to grow that. So, I think this is a really great success story thus far. What about how you see, how do you see your role in legal operations as a driving force behind that we talk about reimagining the business of law, like how do you see your role in all of that?

Lindsay Wurst: Great question, and I think there's two parts to that, but as far as the business of law and the legal operations perspective. I would say one would be internally and for me personally my role was new when I came on board, and so there was a lot of soft change management, right? It was introducing the role to our senior leaders and our attorneys and having them understand that they could go to our team for resources they didn't have to take that on themselves. And that's the hard thing to grasp. After many years of self-sufficiency or proficiency by themselves, if you will, and so I think internally my main goal here and driving force is defining the operations rules so that our attorneys are comfortable coming inside to our staff keeping spend low and it just kind of waterfalls from there and then the kind of gray area overlapping would be the external, part 2 answer to this would be we where do our operations team fit with our attorneys and our external counsel or outside counsel, right? And so, again, trying to define that process and workflow and having the attorneys understand and be comfortable with someone other than themselves, right? Speaking to that relationship partner that they've had at that firm for a year, a decade, and making sure that that everyone is OK with that. And so, I don't mean to sound condescending 'cause that's my not my intention here, but I think legal operations also has a responsibility of being a slight disruptor as well. And asking those hard questions of the why's and the how's and can we compromise? Can we do that here? And so, I think the definition of the internal and the external will constantly be evolving until, you know, I don't know when. I don't know when because I think it just keeps growing.

Gina Jurva: Yeah, and what you're saying is so true. It's just I think as attorney is, I mean, I am one myself and I think I understand when you learn to do something a certain way 'til we come out of law school we're not really taught like all the project management stuff and all of that. We're just taught like, hey, like, here's the law. Here's how you litigate if you're a litigator or not, or deal with contracts and so we don't get those skills necessarily out of law school. You can now, I think, go and get those and try to you know have your legal education focus on some of that. There are law schools doing that, but I think

have, you know, relying on somebody other than yourself to maintain relationships with outside counsel I think can be challenging and so it's like just kind of retraining your brain like here's why this will help me in my work, right? If I have a legal operations person to help me manage workflow, manage the communication so it's a change I imagine, but it's a good one, right? It's one that's needed.

Lindsay Wurst: It's a fantastic change and I have a, I think everybody can agree that we have some overachievers in the legal industry and those that we work with and those are my, those are my partners. We recognize the benefit and so I cling to them. They cling to me and it's almost like a lead by example. You know, they'll say, well, you know, Lindsay and Tiffany are helping me out with this you should just ask them to do this for you.

Gina Jurva: Sure,

Lindsay Wurst: And it's kind of like that word by mouth that you - who is your construction contractor? I want to use them like, which paralegal did you use for that project?

Gina Jurva: That's funny, it's like who's your mechanic, who was a good mechanic? My car broke down. No, it's important. You're absolutely right.

Lindsay Wurst: And especially in a new role with coming into a law department, that has been very established it's important to get some of those stakeholders that have maybe more connections or consistent connections with other attorneys you may not see every day, especially in our hybrid environment that we're all in and so take advantage of it. It's OK if you don't have it yet. You can build on that later. Use what you have.

Gina Jurva: Well, how about just when we think about the pandemic and how it really changed the way teams conducted business. I know you said you were new into this role, but how have you seen over the past couple years how the pandemic changed the way your team was conducting business and an add on to that, what tech tools are top of mind for you right now?

Lindsay Wurst: Yeah, I was, I say this, you know, with hindsight I was lucky enough to be in this role for about six months before the pandemic hit, so I did get to make some good relationships with some of our leaders and senior attorneys, and so I can confidently say after two years in, a little bit over, our law department and how we supported our business units that never changed. What changed was the priority of how we needed to let our business unit know that we're available. How to contact us. Some of us were saying we're aware of different personal things that we're all going through so if you need to call me at 7:00 PM that's OK too, and so we took a priority of understanding. We're all professionals. We continue to be professionals regardless if we're not sitting 20 feet away from each other. Let's focus to make sure everyone else is OK with what we're doing. One thing is somewhat like Kelsey, and, Gina, mentioned before was companies or firms that have an operations department was that our attorneys and support staff realized that they could contact me and not an attorney, not HR, not learning and development for their needs to be efficient out of the office. And honestly, I can tell you the most difficult thing I had to deal with in the operations function after the pandemic hit was not even legal related. It was our staff realizing that they needed dual monitors, and a desk chair that didn't cause like back issues. And so, some of the funniest stories were the phone calls that I've received from our security guards asking me like, "There's an attorney stealing a chair, is that OK?" You know, yes, let them, please take it and so that was kind of a start of an enterprise initiative where our CEO recognized

that we were - our associates were not equipped at home to work and so we actually developed a stipend for every one of our employees at Securian at a certain amount to go and buy a desk chair, a desk, another monitor. If you could get your hands on one, you know, and so I think we had a lot of small wins, and by "we" I mean our operations team. When our staff overwhelmingly understood that we actually had an operations department, and they could use us as a resource for this stuff.

Gina Jurva: Oh, that's good. That's good, I mean, that really - if you were trying to sort of make a name for legal operations, the pandemic sounds like it helped you do that.

Lindsay Wurst: Yeah, I mean if you, especially if you're new in the role, like I was, and some really quick small wins not even like project related, just started a windfall of requests.

Gina Jurva: Well, how about, just again, like again talking about technology transformation, like how are you driving technological transformation? Like, what tech tools are top of mind for you? What did you use during the pandemic? Are continuing to use? Kind of the that type thing.

Lindsay Wurst: Yeah, if we are in an enterprise maturation phase right now. So, pre-pandemic we are already identifying archaic processes and tools enterprise wide. And so, when the pandemic hit that was accelerated on an enterprise level, and so then our departments were asked to prioritize tools and it was a little easier to do when you were forced to do it and recognize that there were already some automation and tools in place that you could beef up. People were able to use them without question from March 18th to March 21st. There was no issue, so why not highlight those tools? And how else can we utilize them? And so that expanded into we really do like this tool, it beefed up the vendor. Thomson Reuters really stepped up for us. How can we now connect our tools to other enterprise tool which is an enterprise initiative so we could possibly and we did get a lot of priority at an enterprise level. So, more specifically Legal Tracker helped us in more than one way when we weren't in DocuSign, we are now, but before that it was helping with sharing documents. Our contract repository that we had set up called Contract Works helped with procurement and many other groups and business units across the enterprise that had already latched on to the automation within that tool and so those were things that we were easily identified as a "no touch". It's already implemented, it's maintained. We do not need to do anything to continue, so then we were able to prioritize the archaic stuff and then get on board with some budget requests that we had to get going immediately, which were a full contract automation and full document matter. Document Matter management system, and again to start plugging into all these other things that the enterprise was doing and I'm not sure how everyone else functions, but if you can buddy up with some business units and then identify their technology needs and either get a combined request or we'll split that budget 80/20, you know we'll take 20. You take 80 the more business units you have requesting a similar tool or the same tool the more priority you are given, so I think that might even go back to your second question, Gina, legal operations framework make friends outside of the law department immediately.

Gina Jurva: That's a that's a very good piece of advice

Lindsay Wurst: 'Cause I didn't make that tech realization until about a year ago when I started proactively meeting other operations managers across the enterprise on Teams. It's just something I didn't have any awareness of before that 'cause I was new. And so, there's three projects that I've teamed up on with multiple business units, and it's again a new thing I didn't think was going to come down on this operations career. And it gives me that chance to do something different every day.

Gina Jurva: And do you feel like you have now, you know, working with technology and technology tools, do you feel like you have a technology road map, so to speak? Like kind of know where you're going in the future?

Lindsay Wurst: Absolutely, we actually have two. You know, we're overachievers here in law department, so we have an internal one which focuses on yes technology, but potential process improvements sure, and that are based on metrics that we've been working together over the last few years and then externally that is more conducive with our IT department of these are our priorities over the next 1, 2, 3, 5 years and that is more of an organic one because of our enterprise maturation maturation efforts that may change as we evolve, but it's very important, I think, especially as an operations role, to give some transparency to the attorneys and senior leadership on where we would like to go and so you're not the one prioritizing that. You need input from your senior leaders on how to prioritize the tech needs because I don't know about everyone else, but I'm confident in saying that the law department and every company doesn't get \$5 million every year to spend on technology. So, there's always a budget, always a budget.

Gina Jurva: Always a budget. Well, any final thoughts on the future of legal operations before you head to Vegas and get on the panel and chat with Kelsey?

Lindsay Wurst: Oh my gosh. Probably too many, but I am so excited to meet a lot of my legal ops peers. I haven't been to a CLOC before, and so I'm excited to meet some of those that have, you know, been around for a while and learn from them. Like I said before, I don't think that the legal operations industry is in anyway slowing down and so the future is ours, you know, I think it's what we make it and what is best for our individual companies or firms.

Gina Jurva: Very, very well said. Well, Kelsey Nicol, Go-to-Market Strategy and Planning Director here at Thomson Reuters. Lindsay Wurst, Legal Operations Manager at Seurian Financial. And if those listening are in the Vegas area, Las Vegas area, don't miss your chance to meet Kelsey and Lindsay in person at the upcoming CLOC Global Institute, May 9th through the 12th. Lindsay, Kelsey, thank you so much for joining us.

Lindsay Wurst: Thanks, Gina.

Kelsey Nicol: Thanks, Gina.

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