

The case of PGGM: The transformational legal department

Max Hübner
PGGM NV

1. Introduction

The Financial Times regularly makes awards to those who have made a particular contribution to the legal community by introducing sweeping, innovative change. In 2013 PGGM was ranked most innovative in operational change in-house for “encouraging high performance from the team through smart management, cutting costs and making the legal department one of the most respected in the company”. In this chapter I describe how this occurred at PGGM and give some pointers to how transformational change in providing legal services can be achieved.

2. A few preliminary remarks

There is no need to address the changes and forces of discontinuity that occur in the field of legal services. There are many things that have created or will potentially create a discontinuity; we are all familiar with them and aware of their impact on law firms and legal departments. Let me take you on a journey about transformational change and how I have proactively managed my legal teams over the last two decades. During the past 20 years I have often failed, never given up and finally succeeded in changing the play in the middle of the game. Thus, let me challenge you. Let me – I am known for this – irritate you. Let me indulge you. Please allow yourself the opportunity to understand how to turn those stumbling blocks into stepping stones to transform your legal department. That is, if you want to make a future difference in delivering in-house legal services starting today. I will address the importance of integrated quality when I made that difference. I will reflect on how to achieve better results with lower headcounts and at the same time reduce costs. I will start with a few preliminary remarks. First, on how we can wish for change and at the same time cannot neglect the craftsmanship of the legal professional. Secondly, on challenges that general counsel face, but do not need to fear. Finally, I share an observation on how to overcome conventional wisdom.

2.1 Change is more than wishful thinking

When it comes to change, I am the first to confess that there really is nothing new under the sun. Change has always been, is and will always be a product of wishful thinking. We, as an executive, want to change. We want to improve the way we deliver legal services to our companies. That is why we think wishfully about change – the wish being ‘executive’ and the thinking being ‘professional’. This is not

an easy exercise, as you will discover throughout this chapter. We have to bear in mind that in the field of professional services (whether legal or not), it is possible to distinguish between a professional world and an executive (or managerial) world. Professionals are to be found in a world of legal excellence, where they strive to reach the highest legal standard. Meanwhile executives wander around in their world where earnings before interest, taxes and amortisation is king.

At the same time we can recognise a double interplay between the wish and the thinking. This double interplay was introduced by Willem Riphagen as a pattern of a scientific model of the techniques to be applied in international law.¹ I redesigned the Riphagen model and applied it as a legislator for the Dutch government when negotiating and drafting treaties.² The model clarifies the interaction between parties when dealing with complex matters that need to be addressed and written down. It also applies to the interaction between professionals and executives. The professional is not willing to give up on legal excellence when the need for change occurs. The executive will sell his soul for the company's profitability, so why not legal excellence? They interact with each other in their own play, so there are two games played at the same time. That is the double interplay.

Today I use the model to stipulate the importance of an understanding to be able to establish transformational change. In the world of legal services, the double interplay is that between 'ought' and 'be' and between 'executive' and 'professional'. In this interplay the 'ought' corresponds to the 'managerial wish' part and the 'be' corresponds to the 'professional thinking' part of the wishful thinking of change in professional services organisations. The interplay is one of the more important elements in transformation. When you are able to recognise this interplay, you are likely to be successful. That is, if you do not want to reach the perfect balance. In my humble opinion, managers in search of change too often strive to make the wish and thinking compatible. They try to separate 'ought' and 'be' and at the same time 'executive' and 'professional'. I made that mistake for the first time 15 years ago. One of my friendly professionals asked me if I really believed that the gap between the executive and professional could be fully bridged – in other words, that a perfect balance could be attained between wish and thinking. The answer was, is and always will be: no. When on the quest for delivering outstanding legal services, one can only approach such a balance as is the case with the 'more for less' challenge.

2.2 The 'less for better' experience

Many might still believe that general counsel and law firms are facing a never-ending 'more for less' challenge. I believe they are wrong. Professor Richard Susskind described this particular challenge for the first time in 2008.³ In his bestselling and much quoted book, Susskind questioned the future of law firms. It is a fact that they are still around. Recently he offered lawyers an introduction to their future.⁴ The

1 Willem Riphagen, 'Techniques of international law (Volume 246)', *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law*, Brill/Nijhoff, Leiden/Boston, 1994.

2 Max Hübner, 'The United Nations and International Law Enforcement, applied techniques of International Law', Open University Utrecht, 1996.

3 Richard Susskind, *The End of Lawyers? Rethinking the Nature of Legal Services*, Oxford, 2008.

lesson learned? One can rethink the nature of legal services, question the end of lawyers and predict their future, but those who deliver legal services are the only ones able to reinvent those services. I started to reinvent legal services in 1998, although at the time I did not know that this was the case. Ten years later Susskind more or less helped me to put things in place. I learned that for a number of years more innovative trailblazers had already been making their way out there in the so-called future of legal services. And there are more to come.

General counsel naturally face pressure on costs. This is not unique. Every executive has to deal with budget constraints. But it does not necessarily mean that they will be looking for more services or (worse) value for less money. Since the early 1980s I have witnessed an ongoing increase in legislation and regulation, but I have never felt the pressure to reduce the headcount in my legal department or legal spend. Why? I chose to shape the future of my legal departments. As a result they proved to deliver better legal services and at the same spent less time and thus money on delivering them. Legal counsel on my past and present teams share the very important ‘less for better’ value. Not a stumbling block or burden, but a personal value that appeals to high-quality standards from a professional point of view and at the same time takes into account the need to be penny-wise not legal-foolish. What about the legal fools likely to be left behind in this decade? Here is a mirror.

2.3 Conventional wisdom

The concept of ‘conventional wisdom’ was first presented by John Kenneth Galbraith in 1958,⁴ although some argue that it originated in the 19th century. Over and over, despite the fact that the opposite is all around us today, it is stated that the majority of legal services can only be delivered in person. From a historical point of view it does not surprise me. Conventional lawyers and thus legal counsel have their roots in the 7th century, when the practice of law became a real profession due to the knowledge, skills and expertise needed. We can agree that law firms and legal departments once were – and most still are – professional services organisations. David Maister compares them to a medieval artisan’s shop – a shop in which we can find lawyers who are apprentices (trainees), journeymen (more experienced associates) and master craftsmen (senior partners).⁶ As in those early days, there is still a leveraging system in place to maximise revenues. Classical law firms do not want to sell products; they provide high-quality legal services by giving bespoke advice (trustworthy relations need ‘face time’). The same applies for too many legal departments. They want the same prestige as their law firms – except that these legal departments do not maximise revenues but, acting as ancient artisans, increase costs.

Since 2000, when the ‘more for less’ challenge started to become apparent, some general counsel introduced new concepts to reach an innovative level of executing the legal profession. For example, I unbundled the legal activities at a governmental legal department. I subsequently standardised and outsourced parts of the legal tasks.

4 Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers, An Introduction to Your Future*, Oxford, 2013.

5 John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Boston, 1958.

6 David Maister, *Managing the Professional Service Firm*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1993.

It was not difficult, only awkward – that is, from a legal professional’s point of view. Today, many law firms are still unwilling to unbundle, standardise or ‘mass produce’ their services because their revenues come from billing hours with – so they state – clients who have different needs and demands. More important is the fact that many general counsel too are still stuck to their conventional wisdom and therefore accept the ancient business model of delivering legal services.

I believe that, despite some brave attempts, the medieval organisational structure and its impossibility to alter is one of the most persistent conventional wisdoms in the field of legal services. Many general counsel hang on to this wisdom when they should know better. Too few general counsel have an appetite for unbundling their legal services. In my experience standardised contracting (commoditisation) can be easily embedded in the business, with no legal counsel involved. I admit that the legal professionals had to overcome their fears when ‘giving away’ those well-caressed contracts to the sales barbarians. At first, the barbarians were reluctant to use those wicked things called contracts without any legal aid, but with a little help they finally succeeded. So it surprises me that many legal departments still hang on to the artisan’s shop and thus the conventional wisdom for delivering legal services.

But the thing with conventional wisdom is that it is not necessarily true. In the case of transforming legal services, the conventional wisdom on how to deliver services operates as an obstacle that must be overcome. By now it has reached the point of absurd denial of the new world. We all know full well that it is convenient to stick to a service model that has not been proven to be outdated – despite being out-priced or costly. Maybe it is because it seems to be the everlasting winning model. This is also the general counsel’s mistake. To speak for myself, I cannot hang on to only a gatekeeping role. One cannot face the ‘more for less’ burden and complain about how not to achieve business requirements. Meanwhile, a number of general counsel are reluctant (it is a buyer’s market, remember) to take on board entrepreneurial legal service providers or to implement new service models for delivering in-house legal services. So law firms repeat the ‘happily by the hour’ wisdom, while most general counsel still pay by the hour.⁷ What did I do to overturn this conventional wisdom? I bridged the implementation gap, played double and transformed legal departments.

3. The transformational legal department

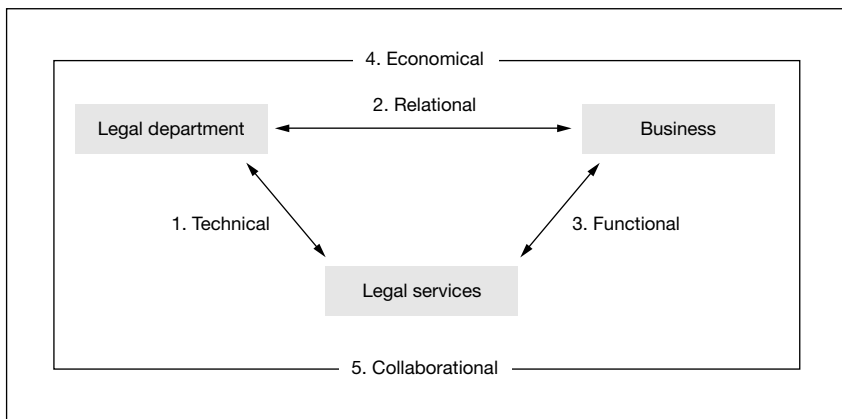
The concept of the transformational legal department – as I named this kind of change – is based on my previous experiences as a legal professional, an executive director and a general counsel. On the side I read books and picked up some ideas and figured out how to apply them. Not at random, but with a clear focus: one needs quality to establish an outperforming legal department.

⁷ *Unbundling a market: the appetite for new legal services models*, Allen & Overy, 2014.

3.1 Quality

Like any other professional, legal counsel understand the importance of quality. When delivering legal services, they strive to reach the highest level of legal quality. However, this single level of quality is not nearly enough. A legal counsel needs to deliver more than just brilliant legal advice on a state-of-the-art level. The legal department can no longer present itself as the company's legal gatekeeping cost centre. Today every professional is constantly challenged to contribute to the company's profitability. Therefore, when solely driven by professional excellence the conventional legal professional neglects this business requirement. Tomorrow's legal counsel not only feels noticeably responsible for the company's success, but delivers the outperforming legal services and therefore adds value. So what comes next? My tutor, Louis Bunt, explained that modern legal counsel must take into account five key indicators to address professional quality.⁸ He uses the model shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Five key indicators of quality in the legal profession



The model helps to show that besides the legal (ie, technical) quality, a legal counsel must synchronously meet the expected standard on how to relate with internal and external clients. They expect client-centred and connecting behaviour, including communication in a clear, non-veiled manner so that non-legal persons can understand the solutions provided. Besides these technical and relational qualities, the legal department must take into account the usability of the legal services (the functional quality). Does the result and outcome of the state-of-the-art legal work meet the (underlying) expectations of the client? The thing is that superb technical quality does not automatically imply high functional quality, although legal professionals often expect this to be the case. We must deliver state-of-the-art legal services that meet the required technical, relational and functional qualities. But not at any price. From the business's perspective, the legal counsel must deliver value for money and from a general counsel's point of view, the legal department's services must meet the

8 Louis Bunt, *Seven Qualities for Professional Services*, Breda, 2014.

economical standards. Last but not least there must be a level of collaboration (a trustworthy partnership) that adds on from the company's cultural perspective. I am convinced that by using this model any legal department can make the leap and reach a level of outperforming services. This is how my legal departments succeeded.

3.2 Perceptions of quality

I aimed to prioritise the value of the legal department services. I knew that the quick wins and first benefits were to be found in-house. Strategic (not just legal) advice is considered the highest-value output of the legal department. It reflects the core services that the legal department provides for any company. It is this kind of advice that directly adds value to the company's projects and overall strategic goals. For this kind of highly valued work, understanding the business is a critical success factor. Therefore, the legal department – as any support service – had to respond effectively to wishes and needs, while in the meantime reflecting organisational and business goals, and guarding the legal boundaries.

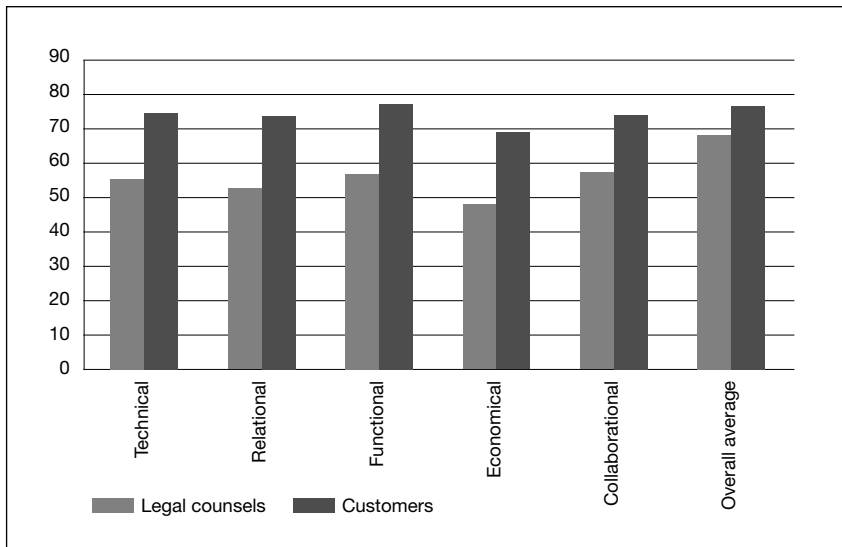
With Stephan van Gelder, chief executive at Integron, I co-created specifically for the legal department an internal customer satisfaction research survey.⁹ At present, Integron is one of the leading research and consulting firms on customer satisfaction surveys. This internal customer satisfaction research enabled me to make my legal department more aware and more effective. It equipped my team with the knowledge it needed to work on the further development of our services. My legal department became more aware of their responsibilities towards their internal customers. We furthermore strengthened our relationship with them and increased our added value. What exactly did Stephan and I do?

First of all we needed to know what questions to ask the legal department's internal customers. The questionnaire could not cover only the technical (legal) quality. Most (internal) clients are non-legal and therefore unable to assess the technical/legal quality; they simply rely on that quality as a given. As a legal counsel, one is considered to be able to deliver good legal services. It is not surprising that clients give high rates for technical quality. As a matter of fact, if we look closer at their rating, they intuitively assess not just this technical quality but – based on perceptions – also relational, functional and commercial quality. Therefore, the survey also had to take into account the functional, relational, economical and collaborative qualities. Could we do that? Yes: in early 2011 we developed and conducted an internal customer satisfaction research survey that took into account the legal quality and the process, but also the issue of human contact. In addition to the overall level, the survey drew a distinction between specific customer groups in order to ensure focus on specific improvements. The survey was conducted with the legal department's objectives and image in mind.

The legal counsel themselves answered the online questionnaire. They were asked to rate themselves – but through their customers' eyes. They had to write down how their customers would rate them on the five quality indicators (see Figure 2). They were modest and thought that an overall score for customer satisfaction would be 68 (on a scale of 0 to 100).

9 This survey can be made available on request.

Figure 2: Perceptions of quality



At the same time the research revealed internal customers' expectations and how satisfied and loyal they were to the legal department. We were pleasantly surprised: our internal customers rated us higher than we expected on every quality. Their overall average rating was a well-received 77%. We learned a few things: first, there was no reason to feel sorry for being a legal professional; secondly, we had happy customers; and thirdly, we could still improve customer satisfaction by 23%. Furthermore, we realised that legal professionals tend to prefer to be better safe than sorry: a client who rates at '70' is not disappointed but satisfied. Finally the results made us aware of how to manage expectations and increase customer satisfaction on certain qualities. We therefore needed to change. We had to believe in our added value, our personalities and our values. We also had to go further beyond traditional legal counselling. For me, to change a legal department and increase added value one has to make the individual legal counsel aware of his possibilities – to change the play in the middle of the game.

I did not further analyse the internal customer satisfaction research survey, make benchmarks or write a masterplan for the future of the legal department. Instead I held in-depth conversations taking into account the survey results with every legal counsel, the internal customers, the stakeholders and some of the company law firms. I tried to understand their mindsets, beliefs, principles and values. I wanted to identify their fears, threads, dreams and goals. And while having those conversations I enlarged the purpose of the company's vision for the (near) future from a mutual point of view. I jotted down the key elements for delivering services, scribbled some notes on behaviour and drew a picture on the organisation of work. By then, everyone involved knew that a change was going to take place. More importantly, every member of the legal team knew that they were the ones changing.

But the challenge is not simply to identify change, or even fundamental change. One needs to identify the point at which the change becomes so profound that it rewrites the rules. That is where transformation takes place – if you want it to. This has nothing to do with saying yes to change, but all about individuals doing things. Therefore, I sat down with my legal counsel and agreed with every one of them what their contribution should be to that change; how they would change. We linked personal planning, performance and personal rewards to the achievement of our company's strategy. They all had a personal plan in place. That is how the transformation started.

4. My blueprint

So here is my blueprint. I used it to make a difference; you can use it to make the leap. I must admit that to have a blueprint is not enough; the applied transformation is by interpretation and will have its own applied experience – or not – depending on how brave you are on your journey. Bearing in mind that the past does not remain a reliable guide to the future, my legal department had to reach out and relate. This is a matter of personality and how added value can be created.

I invited the legal counsel to share their thoughts on tomorrow's legal practice and how they would contribute and – as a team – outperform their peers. How they would surprise their (internal) customers by over-delivering without under-promising. Within two years they became a high-performing team, by getting out of the box of self-deception.

To reach a higher level of integrated quality I asked the senior legal counsel in person what they needed to be able to reach a new level of practising the business of law. In early 2011 they told me that they were wasting time on repetitive tasks that should be done by less-experienced legal professionals. They needed to take care of the more complex legal issues. I invited them on an adventure. I started a specific traineeship for young legal professionals. This PGGM traineeship has been specially developed for top talent with an academic background. The selected trainees set out on their own journey and I simply watched them leave. We created a safe environment for learning and making mistakes to make them feel comfortable. Bar one, they all succeeded. The youngsters were guided by the experienced legal counsel. At first the legal counsel thought it would merely be time consuming, but it turned out not to be the case. The youngsters were clever, eager, devoted, motivated and persistent. They simply went every extra mile. They picked up on the tasks that were not to be done by the senior legal counsel, thereby creating what the senior legal counsel needed: time. This enabled the senior legal counsel to take up the complex and strategic legal issues.

The next step was to change the common perception of legal counsel as cost centres. I started to brand the legal department, the legal counsel and myself. We shifted the internal customers' focus from law firms to the legal department – by building relations based on quality. The legal department no longer needed to assign law firms on every major deal. The senior legal counsel were in a new position; they could – and they dared to – do it themselves. And that is where another personal change took place. They left their comfort zones, picked up other skills and joined

the business deal teams. By acting proactively and swiftly and offering business solutions, they became collaborators in running the business. There was not much left for the law firms to do other than offer some expert legal opinions. We successfully changed the nature of the game. And we saved some considerable money too – since 2011 external legal spend has dropped by over 40%.

I furthermore differentiated between legal activities. I used Michael Porter's value chain model for inspiration.¹⁰ I took a closer look at PGGM's primary activities and how the legal support could best add value. The legal department did not wait for things to go wrong; we prevented things from going wrong. Standardised legal content became available for business purposes. Legal counsel were embedded in the business units to deliver direct legal assistance and guidance at the right time. The legal counsel – especially the senior counsel – also helped to avoid legal risks and trouble by creating more awareness among their internal customers. Thus, more legal activities were carried out at a lower cost. I made the legal department and law firms deliver legal services with a business perspective in mind. After a two-year period of investing in human capital (the traineeship), the headcount could be reduced.

At the start of the traineeship I introduced a mentoring scheme aimed at guiding the younger legal counsel in their work. I asked the experienced legal counsel to give guidance to help the young legal counsel reach a higher level of performance – to show them the dos and don'ts in the practice of legal business. I added something important: I introduced reverse mentoring. The young legal counsel were invited to share their insights and experiences (after all, they are the millennial generation) regarding the legal services provided by the senior legal counsel. Thereby another double interplay was introduced.

The legal counsel changed – simply by genuinely wanting to do more than just deliver outstanding legal quality. They help our company and their colleagues to achieve results and be successful. They focus on the business requirements with a strong legal touch. Today they deliver practical solutions instead of legal memos. They work with the internal customers in close collaboration on strategic issues. They are to be found where business takes place. They are business partners at an early stage in the decision-making process. They also maintain the highest standard in legal quality, because it is an essential condition for a trustworthy relationship with internal customers. Those internal customers – as their colleagues – also strive for the best services to be delivered, by involving the legal professional as soon as is necessary.

At the end of 2012, PGGM's legal department's average score for internal customer satisfaction increased on three key performance indicators: on relational quality – how we provided services (7.9 to 8.2); on the usability of our advice and products (7.7 to 8.1); and on our interaction with clients and our business orientation – collaborational quality (7.5 to 7.7).

5. It is about delivering service!

When thinking about the future of legal services, there is a temptation simply to think about introducing unique structures or outsourcing or innovative ways of

10 Michael Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, New York, 1985.

billing. However, for me it is more or less a matter of how law firms and legal departments deliver their services.

Since the first predictions on the future (or end) of lawyers and whether they would be replaced by robots, many have recognised the importance of taking a much broader view and considering why it is that general counsel have moved their work from traditional firms to other law firms and legal service providers in the first place. From a business point of view, legal services need to be adaptive, highly responsive and business savvy. The legal department must be able to meet the expectations on all the five required qualities. It therefore has to keep up with new concepts for delivering legal services. Besides the personal touch of the legal counsel and their change in attitude, the transformation of a legal department is about how to deliver legal services. In order continuously to outperform, a legal department must be able to adapt to new (maybe even innovative) technological concepts for delivering services.

Frey and Osborne wrote an interesting paper on the future of employment.¹¹ It shows that the pace of technological innovation is still increasing. I believe that it is this pace that is disrupting legal services. Frey and Osborne argue that legal writing, among other tasks, will soon be automated, echoing what Susskind wrote in 2008. Today, Chrissie Lightfoot promises lawyers a future if they are willing to embrace techniques without neglecting the importance of being genuine.¹² This makes sense because Frey and Osborne also predict that 'the art of persuading' will not be replaced by robots. Bespoke advice and highly complicated deal-making is still an art worth paying for. The flipside of this coin is that legal activities can be (and, more importantly, should be) automated. When general counsel look closely at their legal activities, they can recognise the possibilities for increasing their added value and reducing costs through technological innovation.

Companies and their legal departments are looking for more accessible, efficient and client-friendly legal services. If that means replacing (parts of) the bespoke traditional services with e-legal solutions, then that is fine by me. At PGGM, contracts and supportive legal services are embedded in the automated procurement chain. Occasionally, bespoke legal advice is given on demand. Now we are exploring possibilities in more complex supply chains. The aim is to standardise services that do not need to be done by a legal counsel in person.

Many traditional law firms believe that what they decide to offer is what matters, but it is not enough to offer state-of-the-art legal advice in order to establish a long-term relationship. What worries me is that these law firms hardly ever ask how their client wants them to deliver their legal services. For a number of years I discussed an idea for document assembly with added legal advice to be delivered by a law firm. This idea meant that the law firm had to provide services in a different way. The idea did not come to fruition. However, a group of general counsel picked up on the idea and within a few months they had executed it. This example shows that the

11 Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A Osborne, 'The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation?', Oxford, September 17 2013.

12 Chrissie Lightfoot, 'Tomorrow's naked lawyer: NewTech, NewHuman, NewLaw – How to be successful, 2015 to 2045', *Entrepreneurlawyer*, London, 2015.

challenge for law firms revolves around their ability and willingness to change to their customers' needs. We all know that robots cannot take over the legal profession, but the evolution of lawyers and the growth of e-legal solutions prove that legal departments have to adapt and adopt new ways of providing legal services for their companies.

6. **The evolution of legal counsel**

Legal experts have existed since the days of ancient Greece and Rome, and today we find them everywhere – conventional legal counsel (not many), today's legal counsel and even tomorrow's legal counsel. There are already game changers in (in-house) legal services. They are driven by the proliferation of technology in our everyday lives. I believe that what started as a slow process is turning into an ever-faster-moving transformation.

Companies such as Axiom are streamlining basic legal processes for corporate clients. Others, such as LawyerLinQ in the Netherlands, are creating new legal marketplaces for businesses, threatening the traditional corporate law firm and legal department structure. In 2005, with USG Legal Professionals, I introduced an outsourced legal department for corporate clients, leaving the conventional law firms puzzled. It was not legal knowledge, but how to use and apply that knowledge using technology that made a difference. These early adopters of legal services based on the use of technology are moving on, keeping themselves ahead of the pack. This is where some legal departments – such as mine – can be found. I am willing to explore and to try (and often fail) new methods.

Cloud-based solutions in legal systems are on the rise. These kinds of solution are more efficient and less expensive than hosting in-house. General counsel from Dutch multinationals and an IT service provider are exploring the possibilities for a contract management solution in the Cloud. It is also important to share this knowledge with other general counsel.

Slowly but surely court appearances will be conducted virtually. In the Netherlands, it is already possible to access legal advice with the tap of a button. More and more legal services will be packaged up and delivered instantly to consumers and businesses with minimal bespoke legal work.

Our society is always online and more connected by technology than ever. This hyper-connected world affects the conventional structures for delivering legal services. More and more legal services will be delivered online, facilitated by the use of technology and mobile devices. This is exactly what I will try to introduce further in the near future.

The rate of innovation is increasing, with hundreds of new legal startup companies emerging every year. This will continue to affect the way legal departments operate in the future. That is why I take the future seriously. I want to be adaptive and able to anticipate things to come. The question is no longer 'more for less', but rather how fast can you alter and deliver efficient, affordable legal services to meet business requirements.

The years to come will present an interesting landscape for today's general counsel. Will you step up to the challenge and evolve to the needs of your company?

7. My approach to change

I adopted a mixture of two strategies to make my legal department meet business requirements. I introduced methods for conducting legal work in a more efficient and effective way. Furthermore, I collaborated with other general counsel and law firms on the development of instruments, such as document management and compliance.

I introduced strict document management policies, looked at workflow processes and took a more proactive approach to legal spend management. Our legal department moved to an almost paperless environment. Legal counsel now use iPads, intranets and SharePoint technologies. We have better document management and contract life-cycle management, and product-based solutions in place. I pick up on alternative sourcing methods to become more efficient. Through the use of IT tools combined with professional discipline, the legal workflow was altered to meet the required integral quality standards.

I am on the brink of introducing more self-service for non-legal users to create legal documents using standard-clause libraries at my company. Why is this important? It saves the business and the legal department time. It makes our company more responsive. The time saved can be used to deliver more value-added services in the field of ever-increasing regulatory matters. It also means that a law firm is often not necessary to provide me with these services. Basically, technology (or robots) is in place at the bottom of the pyramid and this reduces the overall legal spend.

Furthermore, I am exploring opportunities to integrate legal activities within operational systems for the core business of our company. This supply chain management approach is enabling the legal department to become more efficient and effective. If you know where the weakest link is to be found, you can handle legal risk before it occurs.

8. Outlook

The roles that (in-house) lawyers play today have changed, and in the near future the changes in the field of legal services will accelerate. Robots will not take over the law firm or legal department, as legal professionals will be keen enough constantly: to adapt and reinvent themselves; to embrace opportunities presented by technology and the new legal landscape; and to leave the vertical tradition of the artisan law firm behind and expand horizontally by unbundling legal activities. Soon lawyers and legal counsel will no longer perform all the legal work because much of it will be conducted by sophisticated computer software. General counsel must be ready, willing and able to adapt to ever-changing business requirements. I embarked on a process of change, which might not be the same as you have chosen but which ended up focusing on the main tasks of in-house counsel – that is, to contribute to the success of the company. No matter what the future holds, ultimately the human element is irreplaceable.