

Why Polsinelli Bet on UnitedLex to Outpace In-House Litigation Support

"This was a firm that competes on the leading edge on technology more than we can," CEO Chase Simmons told his board at Polsinelli.

By Dan Packel
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Not long ago, Chase Simmons, chairman and CEO of Am Law 100 firm Polsinelli, recognized that the firm needed to bolster the way it uses technology to support its litigation work.

The firm had made internal investments in its litigation capabilities. And it had worked with outside vendors for support in areas including ediscovery and collections. One of these vendors was UnitedLex, whose CEO Dan Reed has pitched the company as a force intent on revolutionizing the legal industry.

Based on that previous collaboration as well as the company's reputation in the marketplace, Simmons said he launched a conversation about a closer relationship, which culminated in Monday's announcement of a new litigation solutions center named PolsinelliPLUS.

"What I took back to the board in my pitch was, 'This was a firm that competes on the leading edge on technology more than we can,'" Simmons said Tuesday.

According to Polsinelli shareholder Jay Heidrick, the firm analyzed its current use of technology in litigation and where it had been using outside support in the past to land at an arrangement that folds in capabilities addressing document review, contracts and cyber breach responses and other matters.

"We can go to our clients and say, 'Now we have a beginning-to-end offering for anything you might need in a litigation services atmosphere,'" he said.

As part of the arrangement, which is to last for at least five years, Polsinelli has rebadged a "handful" of its own litigation support employees to UnitedLex, while the company will be able to leverage "many times" that number of people towards the account.

Reed emphasized that the appropriate comparison for the deal was not UnitedLex's joint venture involving now-defunct

firm LeClairRyan, ULX Partners, which focused on outsourcing back office staff for that firm and other potential partners, but rather a more recent arrangement with London-based Ashurst in Germany. In

that tie-up, the company is supporting the firm's investigations practice with a suite of technological enhancements.

"Those are the avenues on which UnitedLex is supporting the best firms out there," Reed said. "We did go outside of usual sweet spot of the higher end of larger firms with ULX and LeClairRyan."

Reed added that UnitedLex would continue to be selective about the law firms it chooses to partner with and how it does so.

Simmons, meanwhile, acknowledged that Polsinelli is not alone when it comes to recognizing the opportunities that come from technology, and more specifically artificial intelligence.

"All firms are having discussions about what do to in house and what to purchase from outside," he said.

With regard to AI, he added: "The idea that the best of that is going to be created within a law firm is a bet I'm not willing to make."

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