



DENTONS

A guide to strategic planning for the law department

In-House Solutions

Strategic planning for the law department

As business leaders around the world navigate through our new dynamic, there is an enhanced focus on revenue growth, cost efficiencies, risk mitigation, and the increasing importance of environmental, social and governance expectations. The law department plays a critical role in enabling these priorities and aligning the function with the business strategy has become an imperative, demonstrating value to the business amidst a growing competition for scarce resources.

The strategic planning process provides the law department with a roadmap and vision for greater alignment with the business and to underscore where legal fits into the bigger picture. It enables you to

understand, at a deeper level, what barriers or gaps exist between where you are today and where you want to be as a function and it becomes a thoughtful and methodical approach to getting key initiatives done across the department.

It may seem overwhelming, with the challenges and demands of the day-to-day, to take a pause and reflect on your path forward, but the benefits of creating a plan, regardless of what shape or form that takes, are well-known. You'll discover that the process is just as, if not more important, than the actual document you create.



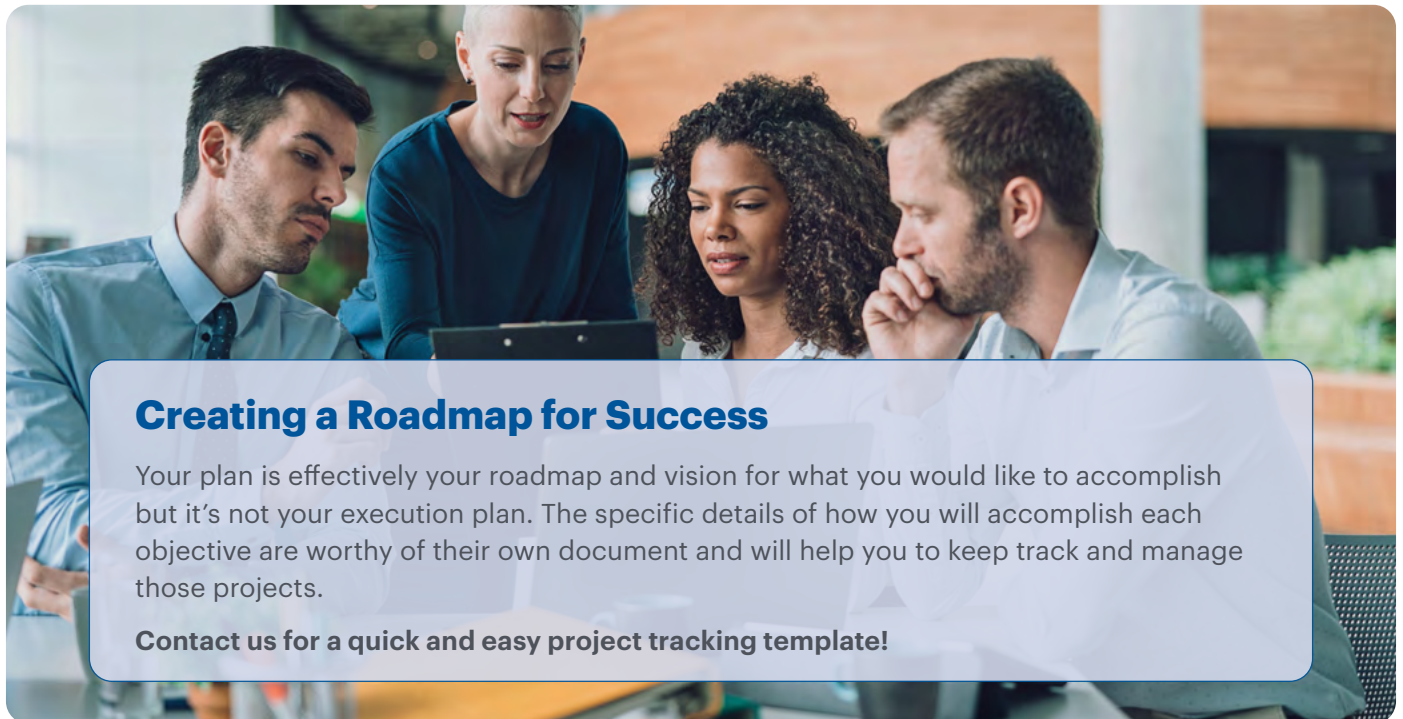
Other benefits to creating a strategic plan for the department

- Provides an important opportunity for you to engage with other business units about their priorities and how the legal team can be better positioned to support
- Allows you to be more proactive, and coordinated with limited resources
- Equips you with the background and justification for budget requests
- Fosters team engagement by establishing a sense of purpose and also through accountability and project ownership
- Allows you to track and report on progress demonstrating your momentum and the value and contributions of the legal function
- Helps to maintain focus and fight off the urge to chase down new projects

What's in a plan?

The idea of putting together a strategic planning document can feel just as overwhelming as those priorities you are hoping to tackle. But a plan doesn't have to be a lengthy tome, in fact, it should be simple, straight forward, easily and often referenced, and sitting on top of your desk, not lost in a drawer. At its most basic, a plan should include:

- Goals which demonstrate alignment to the business strategy. A "goal" is a broad yet realistic outcome which will guide the specific actions you intend to take. It doesn't describe the action that will be taken, it sets the vision for what needs to be done. For example, if your company has a goal to "increase the representation of women and people from other under-represented groups in senior leadership positions", an appropriate goal for the legal department might be to "Develop and deliver a departmental DE&I strategy".
- Objectives which describe the actions that will be taken to achieve your goals. You may be familiar with "S.M.A.R.T" goals which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound. Apply this thinking when considering your objectives. For example, using the above goal, an appropriate supporting objective might be to "Develop outside counsel program to increase representation of women and people from under-represented groups working on our matters by 25% by 2023."
- Accountabilities describe who will be responsible in your department (or in another business unit) for taking each objective forward.
- Financial or other resource requirements will help guide you during the budgeting process. Ideally your planning cycle would take place in advance of your budget cycle so you can be equipped with the resources and tools you need to accomplish your priorities.
- Timeframes which describe realistic deadlines for the project.



Creating a Roadmap for Success

Your plan is effectively your roadmap and vision for what you would like to accomplish but it's not your execution plan. The specific details of how you will accomplish each objective are worthy of their own document and will help you to keep track and manage those projects.

Contact us for a quick and easy project tracking template!

Where do you begin?

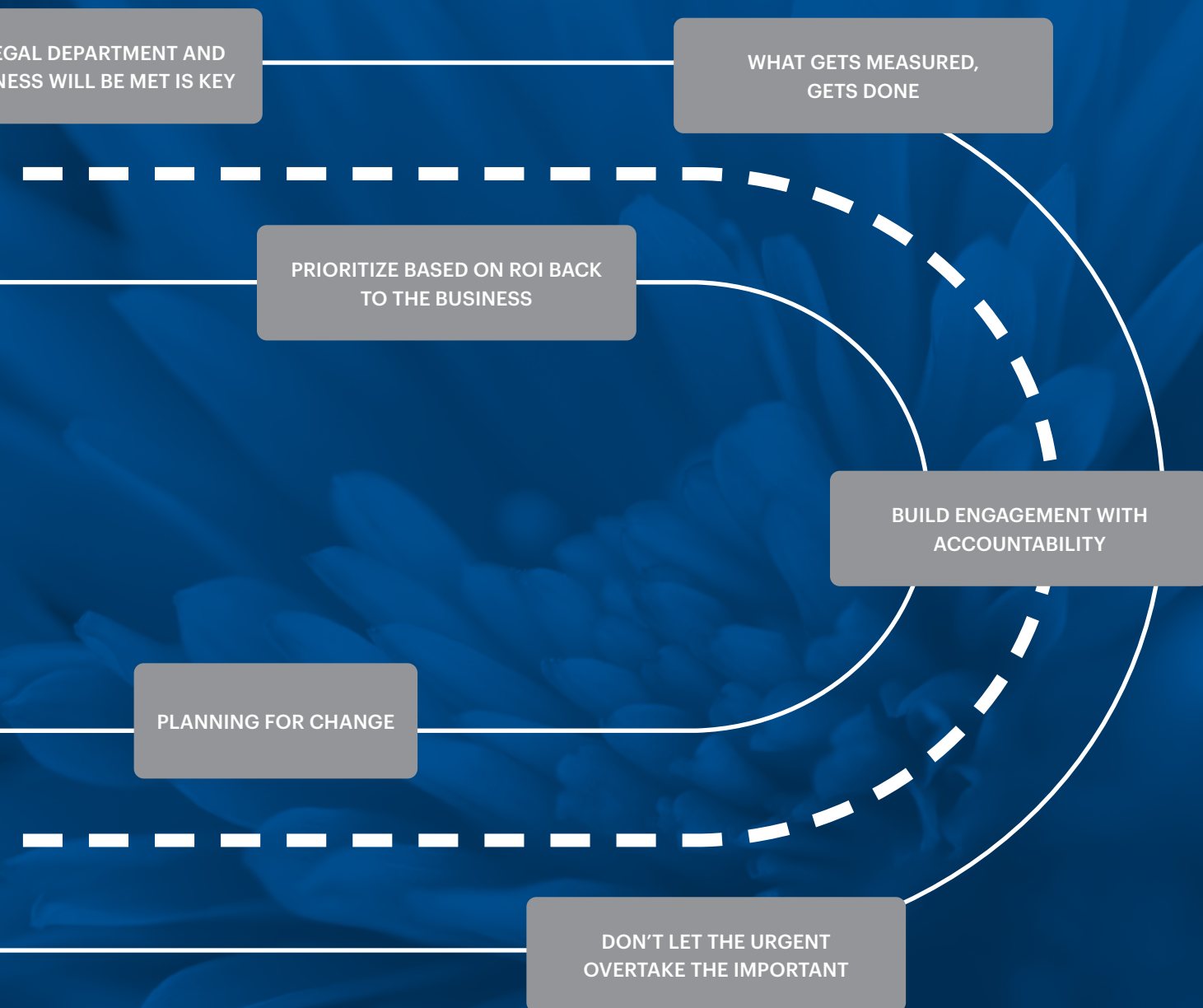
UNDERSTAND YOUR
CURRENT POSITION

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE LE
HOW THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE BUSIN

ENSURE ALIGNMENT WITH THE BUSINESS BY
UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

DON'T LET PERFECTION BE
THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE



About Dentons' In-House Solutions

Dentons In-House Solutions supports legal teams across all dimensions of the management of a law department – from developing a strategy and plan for the function, to introducing efficiencies and managing change to ultimately demonstrating the value of the legal function. We also help teams with their most important asset – their people – by ensuring smart resourcing as well as providing the right training and development opportunities.

Key Contact



JoAnne Wakeford
Chief Client Officer
Dentons' In-House Solutions
D +403 268 6813
joanne.wakeford@dentons.com



ABOUT DENTONS

Across over 80 countries, Dentons helps you grow, protect, operate and finance your organization by providing uniquely global and deeply local legal solutions. Polycentric, purpose-driven and committed to inclusion, diversity, equity and sustainability, we focus on what matters most to you.

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