

Beyond the tipping point: evolving legal services for in-house lawyers



“The moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point.” When Malcolm Gladwell launched a thousand PowerPoints with *The Tipping Point* back in 2000, he probably wasn’t thinking about the legal services industry for in-house lawyers. But for GCs and legal departments, that boiling point has often seemed more like a slow-burn: pressure on budgets and expectations have inched up bit by bit.

The major influences that cranked up the heat are obvious – the global financial crisis bringing economic scrutiny and the need for transparency; the leaps forward in technology, from broadband and processor speeds right through to AI; the growth of in-house teams, with 35% of UK solicitors now working in-house compared to 25% two years ago; and the regulatory big bang of the 2007 Legal Services Act letting non-lawyers own and operate law firms. Behind them all, the mantra of ‘more for less’ that’s driven so much change in the last ten years.

But the heat is rising, and that tipping point feels upon us. Gladwell highlighted the ‘connectors’, the ‘mavens’ and the ‘persuaders’ who create the right conditions for change, and anyone attending events centred around legal innovation and operations will recognize the prominence of these people in our industry today. Social media and the busy events calendar help to amplify their message and propel it to the masses. The tipping point is around the corner, and it’s a wonderful opportunity for changes that will help all of us in the legal industry.

The power-brokers of today’s industry are undeniably the GCs and the senior legal figures in-house; those powers can be used for good, to make the industry more efficient, client-focused and future-proof. But the deregulation and innovation we’ve seen over the last ten years has exploded the number of options that buyers of legal services have available to them. Providers straddling legal advices, process work, consultancy and technology bring an array of choices that can seem bewildering, particularly in the shadow of looming regulatory challenges like GDPR.

We find that GCs and senior in-house lawyers are ready to shape this choice: to be the architects of change, rather than chasing it nervously. Nobody knows a company’s needs and pain points better than its in-house counsel; that’s why we work with in-house teams to curate and deliver the right services for their needs, rather than forcing a generic offering on them. In-house lawyers know the key relationships and stakeholders, and at the tipping point it’s crucial to build and strengthen those relationships, to make sense of the right solutions in an environment that’s changing constantly.

When done right, this is exciting! That’s why we’re passionate about working with people at [Halebury](#); we’re sponsoring the [Corporate Counsel Exchange](#) in April, where you can strengthen existing relationships, and hopefully forge some new ones. Choosing the right partner, and investing in that relationship, will make for an even better journey – past the tipping point, and into the future.

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