

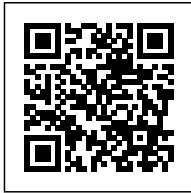
MANAGING CHANGE

Posted on 03/07/2019



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Gloria Sánchez Soriano, head of legal department transformation at Banco Santander, says that when using technology to automate legal department processes, it is vital to consider the impact on the people affected



Change can be painful. However, the continual emergence of new technologies means that change is inevitable. Lawyers, like professionals in all sectors, are having to adapt to technological innovations that are completely changing the way they work. Banco Santander recognises that this can be an extremely disorientating experience and, as a result, it has assigned responsibility for helping its lawyers adapt to change to Gloria Sánchez Soriano. She is the head of legal department transformation at Banco Santander and her task is ensuring that the

bank's legal department does not get left behind as the organisation evolves. Sánchez Soriano says it is crucial that organisations have someone who is dedicated to managing change in their legal departments. Her role is focused on helping facilitate change by promoting projects involving the implementation of new technology that helps to provide better services. She also helps the team with cultural change, in addition to helping to define the future of the legal department. Sánchez Soriano says that legal departments are commonly perceived as merely providing a support service and therefore the transformation of legal teams is not always high on the agenda of some organisations. "In addition, there are all the 'entry barriers' surrounding the legal profession – we have our own jargon and codes, for example – and all this can scare third parties at first, and make it more complex for such third parties to modify the way we work," she says. However, Sánchez Soriano insists: "We believe that you cannot transform your business and how you serve your customers if you do not innovate in relation to the way that your internal teams work and interact with each other." She adds that this applies to all support functions. "Otherwise, we would end up with scenarios in which a support function that works very much like it did 50 years ago, would be providing services to businesses that are totally digital, which work according to different rhythms, and which require more collaborative working – as well as knowledge of new technologies and how these are changing the market."

CULTURAL CHANGE

Santander has more than 1,700 lawyers in 22 countries – Sanchez Soriano works in the legal department in the bank's Madrid headquarters, which has around 100 lawyers advising the corporate banking, private banking, wealth management, retail banking and new digital business teams. "We have areas of practice including corporate and M&A, litigation, cybersecurity and legal risk and industrial property, for example," she says.

Sanchez Soriano, who has been in the role for just over a year-and-a-half, says that one of the biggest challenges she faces is cultural change. She says that any process involving the introduction of new ways of working, or new technologies needs to take into consideration all of the people affected. "This includes both the team members, who will have different reactions to the change, as well as the internal clients who receive our legal services," Sánchez Soriano says. She adds it would be pointless to make a change to the way the legal department provides its services without considering the opinion of those to whom the service is provided. In addition, this process also involved introducing concepts like "user experience". Sanchez Soriano says that, in order for it to be possible to undertake a process of transformation, it is essential to carry out training sessions and involve the teams in the change process and decision-making.

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