

THE RECORDER

NOT FOR REPRINT

 [Click to print](#) or Select '**Print**' in your browser menu to print this document.

Page printed from: <https://www.law.com/therecorder/2021/10/25/why-legal-operations-is-top-of-mind-for-midsize-firm-tyson-mendes/>

Why Legal Operations Is Top of Mind for Midsize Firm Tyson & Mendes

Legal ops leadership is common in-house, but not as much on the law firm side. This firm's legal operations head, a litigator, says that should change.

By Jessie Yount | October 25, 2021



Jake Felderman of Tyson & Mendes. Courtesy photo

Tyson & Mendes, a San Diego-based midsize insurance defense firm, has named longtime partner Jake Felderman its inaugural head of legal operations.

Felderman joined Tyson & Mendes in 2011 in San Diego, and became the founding partner of the firm's Colorado office in 2018. In the newly created role, Felderman will devote 90% of his time to legal operations.

Felderman sat down with Law.com to discuss his new role, the growing importance of legal operations, and why improving business processes strengthens client relationships and increases attorney satisfaction.

The following has been lightly edited for style.

Jessie Yount: I'd imagine you didn't set out to work in legal operations. What piqued your interest in the field?

Jake Felderman: You're right, I didn't expect this when I went to law school. I'd never heard of a "head of legal operations" position. I wanted to be a litigator, and that is what I did for over 18 years. But as time went on, I learned more about the business of law. It includes the practice of law, but it also entails managing a team including associates and staff.

And as a litigator, you're always thinking about whether you'll win or lose a case, but coming up with a team atmosphere to get things done ... I found that was just as much of a challenge, if not more. I enjoyed the interpersonal aspect of that work, and as the firm grew, the need for legal operations evolved on its own.

JY: Much of your focus will be on forming teams, assigning cases and providing guidance to those teams. Can you walk us through that process, and some of the issues you'll help attorneys navigate?

JF: Sure. I work closely with our Quality Department, which tracks a ton of metrics on every case. We track who is on it, who the client is, the parties involved, the general content and subject matter, the stage of litigation, the length the file has been open, the key tasks performed, the resolution circumstances, etc. So for example, I can look this data and find all of our Southern California lawyers with experience in general liability or construction defect or medical malpractice. We'll look for experience, skillset, and an attorney's preferred area of practice to match the right team for each assignment.

I also roundtable with folks to work through the legal issues of their particular case. We already have a lot of internal trainings and instructional courses, and attorneys pull from those resources, but I can offer guidance on a team or individualized basis. I spend a lot of time working with attorneys identifying resolution "pinch points" and overall trial strategy. For instance, in litigation, you're always prepared to go to trial, but most cases do settle. So, I will work with our attorneys to make sure we are seeing the big picture in each file and looking for the most efficient resolution.

JY: Legal operations isn't something you hear about at law firms that often. Why is that? And why should more firms be paying attention to it?

JF: Legal operations doesn't exist at many law firms, and part of that is because firms are used to doing things the way they have before. Sometimes the legal community can be slow to adjust.

I think we'll see more firms devoting someone to operations tasks because it helps protect the client. It also helps retain the attorneys who are part of the firm, because we can train our attorneys to be even better at what they do. Those receivables are not billable, so they aren't as easy to quantify. But when you start looking at metrics of how things improve, like attorney satisfaction and client satisfaction, the benefit is clear.

Copyright 2021. ALM Media Properties, LLC. All rights reserved.