

Crowell & Moring Taps Legal Tech Expert To Spur Innovation

By **Steven Lerner**

Law360 (June 29, 2021, 4:36 PM EDT) -- With an eye toward creating next-generation solutions, Crowell & Moring LLP has hired a legal technology trailblazer as senior director of practice innovation and client value, the BigLaw firm said Monday.

Alma Asay has spent the past nine years working in legal tech, most recently as a so-called evangelist for legal workflow and workspace technology company Litera Technology LLC.

Asay told Law360 Pulse on Tuesday that during the past nine years, the most important evolution for firms has been changing their way of thinking about technology and how it is no longer relegated to a just a few functions.

"Law firms today recognize that there is an almost endless selection of technologies available to solve an array of challenges for both legal practice and the business of law," Asay said. "Even if the actual implementation and adoption of technology has a ways to go, it's obvious that firms are thinking about technology and innovation differently."

She added that there is greater awareness now about the importance of adoption and change management as it relates to rolling out new technology.

"Firms and technology providers have realized that innovation isn't about rolling out a new technology and making it available," Asay said. "True innovation requires a strategy to get lawyers to actually use that technology in order to achieve its benefits on behalf of firms' clients — and to be able to demonstrate that value."

In 2012, Asay founded cloud-based litigation management platform Allegory Law Inc. and served as CEO. The company secured a funding round of more than \$500,000.

In 2017, alternative legal services provider Integreon Managed Solutions Inc. acquired Allegory and changed Allegory's evidence management dashboard the following year to help large corporations manage complex litigation. Asay also served as Integreon's chief innovation officer after the acquisition.

"When I started Allegory, we most often sold to individual case teams because there was rarely a



Alma Asay

centralized firm department focused on evaluating practice technologies," Asay said. "By the time Allegory was acquired, we were getting formal RFPs from firms that clearly had given thought to their case teams' needs and wanted to evaluate our technology in a methodical way."

Before going into legal tech, Alma worked as an attorney for Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP for more than six years starting in 2005.

Asay said in terms of technology itself, the biggest evolution over the years in law firms has been the move to the cloud, which she said was in the nascent stage when she left Gibson Dunn.

"During that time, the cloud has lowered the barrier to entry for technology companies such that we have the wide variety of technologies available today, often headed up by former practicing lawyers," Asay said.

"Alma brings a holistic approach to our client-facing efforts, drawing on her unique breadth of experience and valuable perspective recognizing the different legal and corporate roles she has held," Ellen Dwyer, chair of Crowell & Moring's executive committee, said in a statement. "She has a keen understanding of what clients need and some of the challenges they face, having been on the business side as a founder and CEO of her own company."

In her new role, Asay will work with Crowell & Moring's attorneys and staff to develop solutions for clients involving the realms of matter management, process improvement, knowledge, management and technology applications. She will also guide clients' legal departments and legal operations teams to deliver cost-effective solutions, according to the firm.

Asay said that her experience as a lawyer and her work in legal innovation will help her in her new role because she has worked with hundreds of law firms of all sizes, knows what it is like to be on the technology provider side, and has owned and operated a business.

"This gives me unique insight into clients' perspectives, on everything from what it's like to be billed for inefficient, or inexplicable, time to the importance of taking business considerations into account when representing a client to the value that innovation can bring to any business's operations," Asay said.

--Additional Reporting by Aebra Coe. Editing by Jill Coffey.