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How Ogletree Deakins Overcame Legal AI Burnout

The labor and employment shop has become the first law firm to publicly license document-drafting technology from LegalMation, which earlier this month signed up Walmart Inc. as its first legal department client.

By [Roy Strom](#)

The [hype cycle](#) surrounding legal artificial intelligence is real.

Just ask Patrick DiDomenico, chief knowledge officer at [Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart](#), a labor and employment-focused Am Law 100 firm.

“There are a lot of companies that promise a lot of stuff,” DiDomenico said. “There is a lot of hype out there around many of these AI products.”

That’s the reaction DiDomenico remembers having when he read an article about a product called LegalMation that drafts responses to employment suits by simply dragging a PDF of a complaint into the program. After he read about the product, he said, “It went off my radar.”

There’s a lot to read, said DiDomenico, who spoke last year with sibling publication Legaltech News about [Ogletree Deakins’ adoption of Casetext](#), another legal AI platform. Ogletree Deakins’ relationship with LegalMation began when the firm’s chief information officer forwarded DiDomenico a pitch from the company, which makes the response-drafting tool.

DiDomenico set up a meeting. Even then, he said he was skeptical. But after a demo, DiDomenico came around. This week Ogletree Deakins became the first law firm to publicly announce a license with LegalMation. The company was co-founded in California by Thomas Suh and Big Law ex-pat James Lee, [who also co-founded](#) the litigation boutique LTL Attorneys.

Earlier this month, [LegalMation announced its first public law department client](#): retail giant Walmart Inc., the world’s largest company by revenue.

What else turned DiDomenico’s doubts into belief?

“For the end user, the lawyer or paralegal doing it on behalf of the lawyer, it’s dead simple,” he said. “It couldn’t be easier. You drag and drop the complaint and two minutes later you have the result. And the results are very good.”

That is good news for Lee and Suh.

The high-powered attorney duo has made a big bet on LegalMation’s success. They recently stepped away from management roles at their firm, which launched in 2003 as a spinoff from Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan. The pair are pursuing LegalMation full time, Suh said in an interview. Suh had been LTL Attorneys’ managing partner until last fall.

LegalMation’s tool currently drafts responses and initial discovery requests for employment and slip-and-fall suits filed in California. They said the tool can reduce the time that takes by 80 percent. By this fall, the product should cover those cases in all 50 states.

Many legal tech companies focus sales on in-house departments, figuring what might be called billable hour protectionism will make law firms wary when it comes to adopting efficiency-focused tools.

Lee said the “immediate reaction” he gets from some partners is a realization that associates will be losing billable hours if they use his company’s product. But DiDomenico’s reaction was much different. He said lawyers have a responsibility to complete legal work in an efficient manner, and that means adopting tools such as LegalMation.

“Our duty is not to bill our clients. It’s to provide value and quality work product,” said DiDomenico, [a vocal advocate](#) for embracing legal tech. “If there are ways and tools to improve those things—the quality, consistency and efficiency of how we deliver those services to our clients—it is our responsibility to do that.”

Lee said that LegalMation is currently working with 10 Am Law 100 firms that are testing or piloting the product. He said his vision is to create products that automate drafting documents at every stage in litigation.

“Make no mistake about it,” Lee said, “at every stage of litigation there is volume process work that could be automated.”

