

3-20-2014

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Boston College Law School

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BC Law Partners on Innovative "Apprenticeship" Pilot Program with LegalOnRamp

2014 NEWS ARCHIVE

03/20/14

Newton, MA—One of the biggest innovations in the legal profession in recent years has been the change in the litigation discovery process. Lawyers now use predictive coding technology to run effective and efficient document review processes, which allows clients to manage large and costly matters in a more effective and efficient way. Now, a company called LegalOnRamp is looking to bring innovations to big business legal transactional and compliance work—and fresh Boston College Law School graduates are getting in on the action.

OnRamp, founded by former Silicon Valley General Counsel Paul Lippe, creates legal department collaboration systems for large corporate legal departments and manages projects where recent grads help companies comply with complex regulations and jumpstart process improvements. BC Law was one of a handful of schools involved in their pilot program, which launched last year. The school sent five junior alumni to the program. The pilot is already so successful OnRamp is expanding, and BC Law plans to add to its numbers this year.

"It's an exciting program in an expanding area of the law, and our students have had incredible experiences with it," says BC Law Assistant Dean of Career Services Heather Hayes. "While the professional development opportunity is great, our grads are also getting interviews based on their work with LegalOnRamp."

LegalOnRamp's goal is to use technology to increase effectiveness and come up with best practices to address the growing need for this large-scale work across the globe. In the current model, recent graduates take a part-time position as a contractor with the company and work closely with a particular business (in the pilot, for example, a global bank) to improve their handling of contracts and compliance with international regulations. "Rampers" receive vital training and experience, and then move on to a full-time position, either with another employer or potentially with OnRamp itself.

"There's a huge gap between best practice and common practice in law," says Paul Lippe, "Clients need help in closing the gap, young lawyers (like medical residents) can both deliver value and accelerate learning, and law schools can deepen their engagement with the profession. We feel that we're able to offer the best of both worlds—solve complex problems for customers while advancing methodology and providing the kind of on-the-job training new lawyers need to be successful."

After leaving his General Counsel post, Lippe spent three years running a similar company for Stanford Medical School, and so is trying to import some of the "best practices" from medicine into law. Hayes points out that the legal profession is just beginning to understand how valuable that kind of initial supervised experience can be. "It's like a short-term apprenticeship or residency, hopefully with multiple rotations and real 'full cycle' experience," she says. "Everybody wins."

The company has even borrowed the medical "rounds" model, where the Rampers meet through a Webex call several times each week with their supervisors and client representatives, make presentations, talk to inhouse lawyers for their customer and even hear from outside experts. "We learn a great deal during the rounds," says Colin Levy '10, who was

a part of the initial pilot and has taken a leadership role for the BC group. "It's a chance to bounce ideas off others, learn how to do our work better, and get valuable advice from all sides."

Elizabeth Olien '13 worked with LegalOnRamp for about four months before taking a job with the Attorney General's Office, while Shannon Sullivan '13 found the substantive work to be helpful with her search in the securities regulation field. "My experience with OnRamp gave me lots to talk about in interviews," Sullivan says. "They are really interested in hearing about what I am doing, and when I explain how it is much more than simple contract review, we start talking about Dodd Frank and the regulatory compliance world. It's fascinating and confirmed that is the practice area for me."

Sullivan just accepted an offer at FINRA.

More from National Law Journal: [They're Learning the Law Through Apprenticeships](#)