



Client Success Story

Aisin Holdings of America



Legal Drives Change in Global Automotive Manufacturer

Aisin Holdings of America is an integral part of a globally diversified automotive research and manufacturing company headquartered in Japan with locations on six continents. The company expanded operations into the USA in 1970 and today has more than 15,000 team members operating in 36 facilities across the country responsible for designing, testing, and supplying automobile parts to every major automobile manufacturer. As a business, Aisin is committed to cutting costs while improving profitability and manufacturing capacity. To enable these goals, Aisin needed a world-class legal team to enable its growth while also improving efficiency and reducing legal spend.

The transformation journey began two years ago when Aisin Holdings of America brought in a new General Counsel, Dante Benedetinni, to deliver comprehensive legal services to the 12 companies that comprise Aisin Holdings. “North America contributes significantly to Aisin’s worldwide revenue so we had our work cut out for us,” observed Benedetinni.

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Executive Summary

To transform a small legal department into a world-class legal team, Aisin’s new GC brought together the right staff and technology to meet their goals. The company selected doeLEGAL’s ASCENT enterprise legal management software and realized:

- Reduced turnaround times on contract and NDA reviews from 6 weeks to 10 days
- Improved collaboration between global network of legal departments and Japanese headquarters
- A common legal platform to enable sustained growth

“It’s like building an airplane as you’re flying it. My team is now able to make changes throughout the implementation as our business changes, which happens pretty frequently.”

Dante Benedetinni, GC
Aisin Holdings of America



Laying the Groundwork

The first step in Aisin's legal transformation was to implement a compliance program that would assist in minimizing legal risk and exposure for their 12 companies.

The second phase of the transformation came with the people. Benedetinni began staffing up his department with a new team focused on being legal generalists that could improve the service they delivered as well as handle the day-to-day work. Once the right practice skills were in place, the team was capable of tackling other initiatives such as contract review procedures and improved litigation management.

The third stage in Aisin's transformation was selecting and implementing technology. Benedetinni recognized that to establish a solid foundation for further growth, he needed the right legal technology platform.

Matter Management was foundational to Benedetinni's transformation strategy. The team required very specific functionality that would fit within Aisin's existing processes rather than require process change to fit the systems. The team also wanted personalized dashboards to inform actions and provide flexibility in how information was presented.

"In the morning, we open ASCENT when we get in, and it's opened all day long. We also use the system at home, because anyone with security privileges can access the system from anywhere – including their mobile phones."

Dante Benedetinni, GC
Aisin Holdings of America

Identifying the Challenges

When Benedetinni joined Aisin, the legal department was very lean: there was just one lawyer on staff making it difficult to serve all constituents. However, that wasn't the only challenge Benedetinni needed to address:

- No legal technology was in place to deliver comprehensive legal services to the 12 companies that comprise Aisin Holdings. This was especially challenging because all companies were run as separate entities with their own legal departments which lead to inconsistent legal operations.
- No policies and procedures existed to measure, forecast, or budget matters. Without benchmarks, there was no way to improve, much less prove what's improving. This lack of procedures also led to unusually long lead times to turn around fairly simple things like contract and NDA reviews.
- No analytics, record retention, or document management systems were installed – without data it was impossible to inform management what a busy month looked like.

Aisin also needed to eliminate *muda* (waste) in every part of the company, but without analytics to measure anything, it was an impossible task to initiate.



Making the Transformation

Aisin selected doeLEGAL's ASCENT enterprise legal management system after a comprehensive evaluation. Working closely with doeLEGAL's implementation experts, Benedetinni's team had the system configured to work within Aisin's process, not the other way around. The addition of ASCENT's matter management solution allows them to:

- Quickly open a matter and drag-and-drop items.
- Dovetail into MS Outlook using SmartLink™.
- Call on ASCENT support experts to guide their team through the transformation and beyond.
- Stay focused on making strategic decisions, not managing the technology.

There's no lack of agility within ASCENT; the system offers capabilities that allow for their continued transformation and growth.

Benedetinni adds, "I've had experience with other matter management systems, but wish I chose ASCENT™ from the very beginning. ASCENT supports our team. In the morning, we open ASCENT™ when we get in, and it's opened all day long."

Aisin further supported the transformation by moving all their files to the cloud. IT departments often have concerns moving everything to the cloud, but Aisin's conversations between doeLEGAL and IT helped inspire them to think differently about keeping everything in the cloud. Security is very important to Aisin – it found doeLEGAL servers are prepared for anything regarding security. IT realized it's much more secure than their previous approach. doeLEGAL's policies, procedures, and standards all overcame their initial concerns.

While still in the beginning stages of its transformation, Aisin's legal team is becoming a world-class in-house legal department with the ability to communicate value throughout the company thanks to ASCENT™. Their results show how Legal is making a difference at Aisin:

- Client service and internal communication have meaningfully improved.
- Internal efficiencies are being tracked and already show significant improvements.
- Lead times of all types are being tracked, measured, and most importantly reduced. Contract review and NDA lead times were ranging from 2 days to 6 weeks. They've reduced this time across the board to about 7 – 10 days, fast approaching their achievable goal of 2 days.
- Collaboration between Aisin companies' legal departments and company headquarters in Japan is better than ever.