



# Client Success Story

## Chemicals Manufacturer



## Sustainable Innovation

With more than 20,000 employees in North America and almost \$20B in sales, this company is an affiliate of a multi-line global organization and one of the largest producers and marketers of chemicals and related products in North America. Since entering the U.S. market nearly 150 years ago, the company has driven success by combining environmental protection and social responsibility with science and innovation to help its customers create a sustainable future. Information and transparency are at the heart of every decision.

## Challenges

In taking on a new role shortly after joining the company in 2008, the Deputy General Counsel, Litigation realized there was little transparency into their litigation spend. It was difficult to provide reporting on whom they were spending money with and what matters they were spending on. Some information existed but wasn't readily accessible. Other information wasn't available at all because they weren't capturing details such as individual invoice line items. Compiling useful reports was time consuming and labor intensive, requiring hours of manual work by attorneys and administrators who often had to manually enter data into spreadsheets. This approach led to inadvertent data entry errors and reports that weren't always 100% accurate.

There were also inefficiencies in how the litigation department was working with outside counsel, particularly around approving timekeepers and rate increases. If attorneys weren't in the office, they couldn't review or approve invoices as efficiently or responsively as they would have liked.

## Executive Summary

To improve transparency of its litigation spend, this global manufacturing company replaced its manual billing processes with ASCENT™ enterprise legal management solutions, making it easier to:

- Manage vendor rates and approve invoices
- Improve reporting for better transparency
- Innovate new processes such as fully integrated legal hold



## Improving Transparency

It was around this time that e-billing was becoming more accepted as a tool that both in-house and outside counsel were using, so the Deputy General Counsel approached the General Counsel with an idea. “If you want real-time reporting and full transparency on what we’re spending, along with controls over approving rate increases and timekeepers, then we need this type of a system,” recounted the Deputy General Counsel. “He said, ‘Sure, fine look into it, but I’m not going to spend a lot of money.’”

That prescient quip guided the team as they began their search for an e-billing solution. Recalled the Deputy General Counsel, “The solutions in the space were expensive. But when we met doeLEGAL at Legaltech and heard them talk about e-billing, we realized that they had the type of solution we were looking for.” When the selection team reached out after the show, they also learned that the doeLEGAL ASCENT™ solution was much more reasonably priced than the others.

After conducting in-depth evaluations of three solutions, the company selected ASCENT™ because it provided the most adaptable solution that fit their needs. “Other solutions were more out of the box, requiring you to conform your process to the system,” said the Deputy General Counsel. “ASCENT™ had a more flexible platform and seemed more adaptable and better able to incorporate existing processes.” In addition to the system itself, the company was also impressed with the substantive knowledge and practical insights of doeLEGAL’s implementation team, along with the superior level of customer service. The fact that the price was the most attractive of the three also allowed the Deputy General Counsel to deliver on her boss’ cost mandate.

## Lessons Along the Way

The system went live in January 2012. “We pushed hard to meet our aggressive implementation schedule,” recalled the Deputy General Counsel. “Our doeLEGAL implementation lead was on call 24x7, was very responsive, and willing to help us anytime. “We moved fast, though in retrospect we would have been better served had we slowed down and first evaluated our processes to ensure alignment with the new system.” During implementation, there were some changes the company wanted which doeLEGAL advised against. While ASCENT™ could have accommodated those requests with changes to the system, doeLEGAL’s implementation team recommended instead utilizing the industry best practices already built into the system. The Deputy General Counsel appreciated and adopted this guidance. “When we did have issues or concerns, we got attention from high levels and I felt like we were well-served. That continues to this day.”

The move from a largely manual billing processes to an e-billing system has not been without its challenges. To keep the system and associated processes running smoothly, the legal department created a new, full-time database administrator role to handle some of the issues which come with having a system, including managing

templates, onboarding vendors, adding new timekeepers, and providing support when vendors need assistance with things such as uploading invoices. “For example, we once received an invoice file in yen, and the comma was off so we ended up paying an invoice that was 100 times greater than what it should have been,” shared the Deputy General Counsel. “The administrator was able to readily identify and correct the problem.”

## Positive Results

The benefits of the system have outweighed the growing pains. ASCENT™ makes it easier for the legal department to manage vendor rates because no vendor is allowed to raise their rates without putting it through the system for approval. “Before we had a system, we would find that firms would raise their rates at the beginning of the year, submit an invoice, and it was up to us to realize that this rate is now higher than it was a month ago. The system now prevents that from happening.”

ASCENT™ also allows for improved transparency and better reporting on all aspects of a matter. The company can now see exactly what they’re spending at any point in time. Attorneys appreciate the ability to approve invoices from their phones, which is very

helpful especially at year-end. And the Deputy General Counsel values doeLEGAL’s continued focus on innovation. “They are always working to improve the system. In talking to other in-house lawyers over the years, it does seem like the more established players have stopped innovating.”

## Continued Innovation

Even after ten years, the company is still finding ways to innovate with ASCENT™. They recently added ASCENT’s legal hold capabilities to replace a system from a vendor which had been acquired by a much larger company. That system had originally replaced a homegrown Lotus Notes system, and there had always been inherent challenges with its implementation, including processing lag times and aging technology. The Deputy General Counsel was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the compliance risk that the lag time introduced, and when the team began having difficulty receiving timely support from the new company, they decided the time was right to evolve their legal hold capabilities once again. They began a search for legal hold alternatives and ultimately selected ASCENT™ which, among other benefits, has mitigated the compliance risk. “The great thing now is that there’s no lag and the matter and legal hold are seamlessly integrated. You open a matter and you can immediately do the legal hold with no waiting.”

The Deputy General Counsel says she’s looking forward to a couple of other new things: looking at the new AFA module is definitely in her future, as is looking at some of the new tools related to budget tracking which they don’t fully utilize right now. She thinks their controller may also be interested in this capability to continue their drive toward better budget and spending transparency.

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*“One of the great benefits of having a system in place is that nothing gets paid outside of that system, which improves our control of the invoicing process.”*

**Deputy General Counsel**