CASE STUDY

HOW KITOPI STRENGTHENED LEGAL OPERATIONS THROUGH HIGHQ

1.

The challenge:
Aligning file management approaches with business growth plans

Kitopi is a tech-powered multi-brand restaurant operator founded in the United Arab Emirates. It has operations across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait. It also has a software team in Poland and a robotics division in Denmark.

The business launched in January 2018 as an international startup. At that time, stakeholders decided to use Google Drive to store and access files. But, as Kitopi expanded internationally, the legal department realised that they needed a more powerful solution. They needed a cloud-based file management system that was designed for corporate use and could adapt to evolving business requirements.

"Our old file management system was very difficult to work with from a legal department standpoint and was that of a smaller organisation," reflects Mahmoud Awad, Kitopi's Chief Legal and Compliance Officer.

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> *Mahmoud Awad, Chief Legal and Compliance Officer, Kitopi*

2.

The solution:
An easy-to-use legal operations platform with powerful capabilities

Awad tasked Senior Legal Director Luke Aylett with scoping out different file management systems in the legal tech market. The legal team viewed demos of various products and trialled them. They then determined that HighQ would best suit their current and future needs. Aylett had used the software in a previous role and could attest to its long-term reliability.

"It became very clear early on in the process that HighQ was the right solution for us," reflects Aylett. He found that HighQ was "far and away the most straightforward and easy-to-use system" among the different solutions they tested, while also having scope for "additional complexities" for future use.

For Aylett, HighQ was the easy choice. "The HighQ platform is the simplest, cleanest and most user-friendly in the market, while also having plenty of scope for more detailed functionality," he says. "It provides a really good base to build on and to leverage additional features in future."

The software from Thomson Reuters has the added advantage of strong brand recognition and widespread adoption. Aylett found this makes it "easy" to collaborate with law firms through the system. "If you say to someone 'let's use the HighQ platform for this project', they already know what HighQ is and how to use it," he says.

Awad, who had the final say in the product selection process, ultimately decided that HighQ would be the best system for Kitopi. They had tested some other products that had enticing tools, but Awad felt the legal team was unlikely to use them. "I think having a system that has all the bells and whistles but crashes, is not reliable, and requires you to have constant phone calls on how certain things work actually becomes counterproductive," he says. "When we compared HighQ to all the other options, we realised very early on that it was definitely something we needed to acquire."

> HighQ has been a huge help and well above what we initially thought it was — just a file management system
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> Mahmoud Awad, Chief Legal and Compliance Officer, Kitopi

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The implementation journey:
A seamless transition to a secure cloud-based system

The legal team were delighted by the smooth implementation journey for HighQ. All of their 13,000+ documents were successfully migrated to the new file management system. Having trialled software from other providers and tested their implementation processes, the team were very pleased by how "intuitive" HighQ is to use and how "straightforward" it was to start using HighQ right away.

"HighQ did what it was supposed to do and was easy to implement," comments Awad.

For Aylett, a key reason for the smooth implementation journey was the expert support delivered by Thomson Reuters' HighQ onboarding team, which provided a clear plan for seamless integration. This enabled the legal department to rapidly start using HighQ's core file management functionality, including admin setting, access controls, document uploads, setting up file rooms and organising new files.

The onboarding team then showed Kitopi's legal department how to utilise additional features such as iSheets, which enable collaboration on dynamic data held in spreadsheet-like databases. "HighQ's onboarding team went above and beyond for us," comments Aylett. "They helped us set up iSheets for managing our legal spend and Kitopi's trademarks, which we still use today and are extremely helpful."

Thomson Reuters' software implementation team also worked closely with Kitopi's IT team to ensure HighQ was fully compliant with the organisation's security framework from the outset and contained all its preferred security features. For Awad, this security customisation provides peace of mind that all files are fully safeguarded. "HighQ gives us a huge amount of assurance that, as we grow, we are dealing with a platform that is secure," he says.

Overall, the legal team are extremely satisfied with the implementation of HighQ. "The implementation was very helpful and I certainly feel that we got our money's worth out of that phase of the project," says Aylett.

The results:
A system that enables the legal team to focus on higher-value work

HighQ has fully met the legal department's main objective of creating an efficient and effective file management system. The software's advanced document search features have also delivered substantial benefits.

"Before we had HighQ, it was a struggle to find documents unless we knew their exact name, but it's now much easier to locate them," says Corporate Paralegal Ahmed Doudin. "The usage history and user activity tools are also invaluable in helping us to track all changes to documents or folders, including deletions."

For Awad, HighQ's ease of use and ability to flex to business needs has been a game changer. "The main challenge of having a strong file management system has been solved," he says. "But HighQ does a lot more than that and it has helped us solve other issues."

For example, he found that HighQ has substantially simplified legal budgeting and reduced time-consuming administrative work. Kitopi's finance department can now easily access all engagement letters with law firms, which are now stored in one location. Awad has also strengthened legal spend management through HighQ's in-built tools to manage fee caps and special arrangements.

"HighQ has been a huge help to me," says Awad. "I would highly recommend that people look at iSheets and some of the other functions that HighQ has and understand how they can be a huge benefit."

The legal team have also strengthened internal collaboration through HighQ. "Besides helping us to be more organised, HighQ also helps us to streamline our relationships with Kitopi's other business units," says Benedita Furtado Duarte, Corporate Counsel. "We can now share information more smoothly with other teams, such as finance or property, while ensuring they only have access to authorised folders. It's a huge help to us."

Another major efficiency driver of HighQ is the secure cloud-based centralisation of legal files. "Among the most important features of HighQ are having all our documents in one place through centralised storage and having efficient tools for collaborating with other departments," says Doudin. "HighQ has made our lives easier."

The greatest return on investment from HighQ is that it enables Kitopi's legal team to focus on more value-added legal work. "HighQ saves me so much time that was previously spent on administrative work, like sharing information within or outside our team. It gives me time to do what I am supposed to be doing, which is legal drafting or negotiating. So for me, that is the biggest advantage — saving us time," says Furtado Duarte.

And that's just the beginning. Kitopi is currently only using about 10% of HighQ's powerful capabilities. The legal team will gain even more efficiencies as they roll out the software's additional features in the coming months. HighQ's wide range of automation-enabled tools to boost the efficiency and effectiveness of legal workflows include matter management, vendor management and knowledge management resources.

"My biggest advice for other in-house counsel would be to start with something simple, because if it's not simple, you're not going to use it at all," suggests Aylett. "We have tried more complex solutions, but the investment time needed to make them viable does not work for an in-house legal team — particularly a relatively small in-house legal team, which is typical for this region. So start simple, have a really simple objective, and try to get the simplest solution for that, which you can then build on later."

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> Luke Alyett, Senior Director, Kitopi

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ABOUT KITOPI

Kitopi was founded in Dubai, UAE, in January 2018, as a managed cloud kitchen platform.

Kitopi leverages its proprietary in-house tech to cook multiple brands in one single kitchen, taking care of the end-to-end operations, and delivering directly to consumers.

As part of its long term growth strategy, and because of the challenges faced by F&B businesses due to the pandemic, Kitopi began investing in these outlets.

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