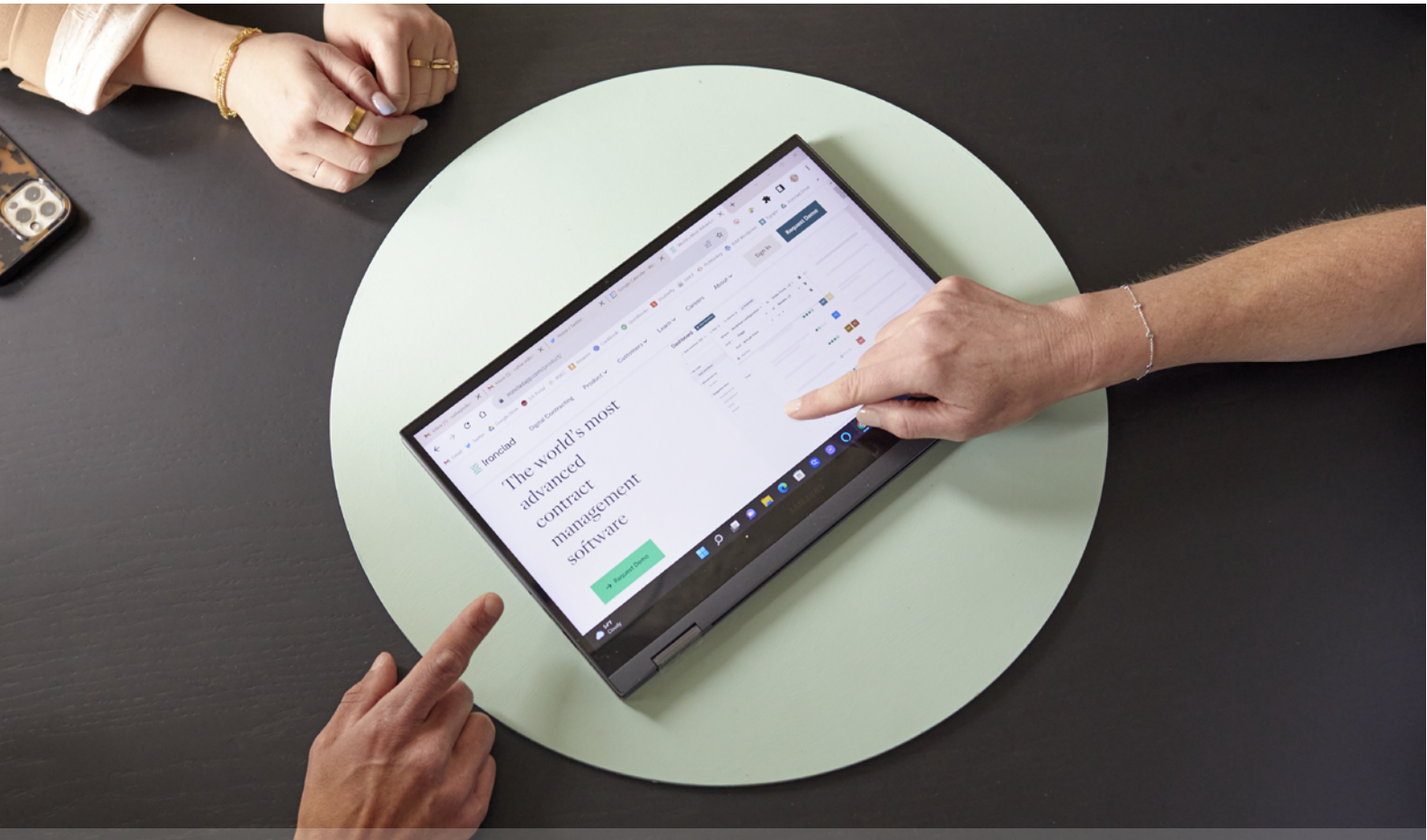


# Right From the Start: Inside Ironclad's Early Legal Ops Strategy



With résumé highlights ranging from grassroots political fundraising to startup business development, Chris Young understood the importance of generating outsized returns from limited resources long before he joined Ironclad as the company's first in-house lawyer. So when the solo general counsel had the chance to make his first legal department hire, the natural choice for him was to recruit an excellent operations specialist.

"From my time in private practice supporting Silicon Valley clients to my in-house experiences at GoFundMe and OpenGov, I knew just how quickly legal work can intensify when startups find success," Young explained. "At Ironclad, I wanted to get ahead of the growth I knew was coming and really solidify Legal's reputation as an efficient, transparent partner to the business."

 Ironclad

Leading Digital Contract Management Provider

550 employees

\$333M in funding

Founded in 2014

Young ultimately found his deputy in Crystal Wu, a veteran trial paralegal who shared his ambition of designing a work environment and building a team culture that challenged long-held assumptions of how lawyers should work.

“Chris and I had both seen the many drawbacks of busyness being celebrated as a badge of honor among attorneys and were eager to set a different example,” said Wu. “In addition to how exciting that challenge was for me personally, I also recognized that Ironclad’s product was uniquely positioned to become a force for good across the entire legal community.”

With contract management needs addressed by Ironclad’s own software, Wu quickly focused her attention on what she saw as the other cornerstone of legal operations: **outside counsel management**. The current process of manually reviewing law firm invoices, compiling summary spreadsheets, and exchanging emails with accounts payable was already starting to feel unsustainable. Plus, Young would soon be making a board-level commitment to advance the department’s financial reporting capabilities.

## Technology To Power Strategy

The search for a specialized solution began with a detailed assessment of business requirements. First and foremost, Wu knew any software she procured had to be a technical and cultural fit for the team.

“Our legal tech stack, including our own product, is modern, cloud-based and easy to use,” said Wu. “It was important to me that our outside counsel, in-house attorneys, and finance team colleagues felt comfortable interacting with any new software, otherwise I’d risk losing momentum for my broader strategic initiatives.”

Brightflag matched that criteria and made it to the top of Wu’s shortlist. And as she learned more about the platform, she saw an elegant answer to her team’s efficiency goals and reporting aspirations. The only remaining question was the feasibility of implementing Brightflag within Ironclad’s desired time frame.

“Live software training sessions, templates for law firm communications, maps of recommended accounting workflows — Brightflag really thought of everything,” said Wu. “That level of support was incredibly valuable to me as a legal ops team of one.”

This proactive alignment and focused effort ultimately resulted in an **implementation period of just 22 days**. For February 1, all new law firm invoices could be submitted via Brightflag. For March 1, all historical matters were accessible in the platform. And for April 1, Young had a clear portrait of Ironclad’s legal spend to present to company executives.

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**Crystal Wu**  
Legal Operations, Ironclad

## A Futureproof Foundation

Two years after implementing Brightflag, Ironclad has since secured \$250 million in venture funding, been named a Leader in the Forrester Wave for Contract Lifecycle Management, and is on track to process 1 billion contracts in 2022 alone. The legal operations pillars installed by Young and Wu, however, are still as sturdy and sustainable as ever.

“The initial transformation sparked by Brightflag has streamlined operations to such an extent that our in-house attorneys and outside counsel rarely, if ever, have to delay strategic work to consider administrative items,” said Wu. “But we also appreciate that Brightflag stays engaged as a proactive partner, always highlighting new ways we can advance as a team and generate additional value for our business.”





One frontier for continuous innovation and optimization is financial reporting. Ironclad has already established an accurate and efficient system for presenting outcomes and trends to the rest of the business. And with several years worth of actionable data now available for analysis in Brightflag, the team is in a strong position to start making more predictive statements about how much corporate legal services should and will cost the company.

“We want to maintain, if not exceed, the same standards as any other department when it comes to generating and sharing valuable data insights,” Young explained. “Because ultimately that’s the way to move beyond the stubborn perceptions around in-house legal and build a reputation as a genuine business enabler.”

**80% Less**  
time spent  
reviewing invoices

## By the Numbers

Estimated Time Savings for Ironclad’s Legal Ops Team

Task	Before Brightflag	With Brightflag
 Invoice review	45 min per invoice	10 min per invoice
 AP Routing	20 min per invoice	10 min per invoice
 Matter opening	30 min per matter	5 min per matter
 Active matter management	30 min per matter per month	Automated