

University of Denver Sturm College of Law

Case Study: Strategic Plan

BACKGROUND

How do we adapt to changes in legal education and prepare graduates for the future of legal practice?

The transformations underway in legal education and the practice of law signify a period of lasting change. These changes have been amplified by economic realities, technological advancements and the realization that we are all part of a seemingly shrinking planet.

The University of Denver Sturm College of Law (Denver Law) was not immune to these new developments. While legal education had been largely unchanged for many years, Denver Law began recognizing these macro trends and knew they must adapt to stay competitive.

Corona Insights was retained by the law school to create a three-year strategic plan for the law school to guide an incoming Dean and set the institution on a new direction for the future.

CORONA'S SOLUTION

Corona led a custom, data-driven strategic planning process. Timing was critical, so it was completed in only six months.

First, Corona executed a robust research plan, which included in-depth interviews, focus groups, a literature review, and 2 nationwide surveys with alumni and non-alumni attorneys.

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Corona Insights assisted Denver Law in focusing energy and resources toward issues of paramount importance... Thanks in part to their efforts, no law school is better positioned than Denver Law for success in remaking legal education as a fully integrated curriculum. Accurate data was critical to the formation of our Strategic Plan, and we have returned to that data numerous times over the course of our implementation efforts.

— Marty Katz, Dean, University of Denver Sturm College of Law

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The research revealed current perceptions about the law school and opportunities to better prepare graduates for today's legal profession.

These findings were incorporated into a full strategic planning process led by a faculty leadership committee. Guided by Corona, the process produced strategic imperatives—What must we do to create practice-ready graduates? Denver law shaped a new vision, refreshed organizational values and launched two innovative initiatives to fully transform their education model.



THE OUTCOME

Corona's research and planning focused on strategic issues and original insights that could be easily translated into actionable steps.

The Denver Law faculty approved the strategic plan with an overwhelming majority. Immediately, there was a commitment to strategy implementation at all levels. By aligning the leadership with the new plan and sweeping support, strategy execution moved quickly, and results followed just as quickly.

By the end of the first year, the law school was already celebrating results and key successes. Specifically, Denver Law improved in a key measure – school rankings. Overall school rankings moved up three positions. In core programs, where the goal was a top 20 ranking, two programs were ranked 17th in the nation.

Now, the law school is charging ahead. Legal clinics are pioneering new approaches with high enrollment, faculty are empowered to lead initiatives and several new certificate programs have been introduced.

Denver Law has seen a substantial return from their strategic plan as evidenced by the institution-wide commitment to change and swift outcomes.

In spring 2011, Corona received a Gold Peak award from the Colorado Chapter of the American Marketing Association for their market research work to support the Denver Law strategic plan.



“ In an already highly competitive environment, law school is probably the most changing market in higher ed. Corona understood where we were and what our community needed us to be. The faculty, staff and Board of Trustees trusted Corona to get us there with our strategic plan... Corona not only identifies key problems but offers solutions...Working with Corona is not like dealing with any other research or consulting firm. You are dealing with a partner.

— Gregg Kvistad, Provost, University of Denver



FOLLOW-UP

Corona assisted the Sturm College of Law in the creation of a formal marketing brochure for their strategic plan, which the law school then paired with an interactive web document. The online version links to blogs that provide a forum for continual updates and feedback. To read the plan and check out to interactive components, you can visit:



<http://denverlawplan.com>