Tasha Hailey Hutchins had her sights on working on mergers and acquisitions since she attended Howard University’s School of Law. Following law school, she moved to New York City and joined Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom’s M&A group. After spending several years at Skadden, Hutchins decided that she wanted to join a smaller international firm and moved to Dorsey and Whitney’s New York office. She soon specialized in pharmaceuticals, biotech, and medical device manufacturing M&A since Dorsey had a robust pharma practice.

After about four years at Dorsey & Whitney, she knew that she wanted more connection to a transaction once the deal closed. “I really wanted to see what happens after the deal, to be a part of the company’s future after the ink on the closing documents dried.” This led her to Pfizer, where she was Senior Corporate Counsel and specialized in M&A transactions for the business transactions group. It was a busy time, as Pfizer was “very acquisitive, particularly with a lot of cross-border deals.”

Ten years ago, however, she took the biggest gamble in her career to date. She left Pfizer to join Practical Law, which had yet to launch in the U.S., as part of its first group of senior editors. The appeal of Practical Law was in part that it offered a job “that allowed me to use my M&A expertise, remain challenged by the practice, but not be on that constant, often-frenetic M&A cycle.” Practical Law also would let her help fellow lawyers practice more efficiently. After all, one reason lawyers had to pull all-nighters to work on a deal was that finding information could be onerous and time-consuming.

Hutchins developed the core collection of Practice Law’s public M&A resources. She drew on her experience as a law firm attorney as well as in-house counsel, knowing what types of resources and knowledge would most benefit lawyers in a time-crunch.

“I would think back to working on my deals and remember when I had to call outside counsel for a nuanced cross-border transitional services agreement or an escrow agreement or guarantee, as maybe I hadn’t have the best precedent or significant experience with that particular type of agreement,” she says. “The standard forms are really priceless, because any transactional lawyer can take them and do a deal. These forms give you everything; they let you understand both sides of a negotiation, any alternative language, precedents that help you understand was ‘is market’ for a particular provision. You name it, it’s there.”

Having access to these forms would have been a blessing during her years as a practicing lawyer. “Turnaround would have been a lot quicker, my level of efficiency would have been higher,” she says. “I would have had a better sense of what other practitioners were doing in their deals. That would have been enormously helpful to have at my fingertips.”

Three years ago, Hutchins moved away from writing content at Practical Law to a managerial role where she leads a team of other senior editors. As director of the Corporate and M&A service, she is instrumental in “developing strategy and formulating content plans to deepen the areas that we focus on.”

For example, Practical Law is now expanding into more jurisdictional content. The initial aim for Practical Law was to have a more general and national approach to documents “so that all practitioners could use those resources and modify them to meet their jurisdictional needs,” Hutchins says. But over the years, there have been growing subscriber requests for more state-specific forms.

“If you’re a California or a Texas lawyer, and you want an asset purchase agreement that uses your state’s governing laws and practices, we do the work for you,” she says. Practical Law addresses the laws and market practices of specific states, and folds this information into the resources. It’s hired experienced practitioners licensed by various states’ bars to ensure that documents reflect the state’s current statutory framework.

In addition, given Hutchins’ experience in pharmaceutical M&A, she is looking to build out M&A materials with a greater focus on that sector. “It’s something we’d like to develop more in the future, and have a more robust offering.”

She keeps aware of M&A deal trends by attending conferences and CLEs, through regular conversations with Practical Law board members, and through her work with the ABA’s M&A committee. “I do a lot of speaking, helping practitioners learn what’s happening with M&A today. Letting them know that these are the deals, these are the provisions and the trends we’re seeing, and we have a lot of analytics to support our findings.”

After 10 years with Practical Law, which she’s seen grow from a promising idea to an essential resource, Hutchins says she’s happy to have been part of its transformation. “We don’t get many requests about things that are missing, because I think we’ve nailed it to a large degree—we cover corporate issues from the cradle to the grave, from a company’s inception until you sell that company or it goes out of business.”

“I wanted to continue to be still challenged by the law,” she adds. “Given Practical Law’s penetration and how so many lawyers rely on it now, I know I made the right decision.”