

# Briefing

September 2025

SMARTER LEGAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

15<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
EDITION

## AI DEEP DIVE

Highlights from leader and GC panels at Briefing's inaugural AI Forum

## DATA DOWNLOAD

Has legal tech been meeting leaders' high expectations?

## BEST BEHAVIOURS

Kingsley Napley takes a novel approach to knowledge management



## Once upon a time

*It started with a whisper of change — and turned into a full-blown saga. We review the twists, turns and triumphs that took legal business management from back-office to boardroom*



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WHO WE ARE...



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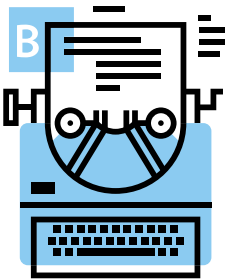
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# EDITOR'S LETTER

I don't know about you, but I love a birthday bash. So you can imagine my excitement when I learned **Briefing** is turning 15 this year — and what better way to celebrate this than with a glorious return to print?

While I have not been part of **Briefing's** journey from the start (at the time of its launch, I was preparing for my first year of high school if memory serves me right), throughout my first year of working as an editor here I have heard about a good chunk of change in this sector — multiple legal tech vendors being acquired, the first AI-based law firm approved by the Solicitors Regulation Authority, major mergers reshaping the competitive landscape: I could keep going.

Given that this issue marks **Briefing's** 15-year anniversary, it seemed only fitting for us to explore just how much legal business management has changed over that period. And, of course, who better to speak to than the people who have been leading the charge and powered transformation of legal into a more innovative and engaged profession?

We're also looking at the current legal landscape — and which new players are continuing to reshape large law firm operations, and how. From an inside look at how AI can be a force for good in knowledge management, to an exploration of why cloud technology is the emerging foundation for law firms, and a masterclass on how to harness lawyers' commercial skills, we've brought it all together for you.


We've covered the past and the present — but what about the future? Several industry experts take a look at which areas still need to change, and where law firm leaders should focus their efforts next to drive further growth and future-proof their businesses. Our special issue partner, **LexisNexis UK**, also weighs in on what the next chapter of AI change might look like. Plus, we've challenged four industry leaders to place their bets on what the future might hold for legal business management in the next five years.

**Briefing** couldn't have reached this milestone without one key person: you, the reader. The constant support, advice and challenge from our audience over the years has kept us going and encouraged us to continue delivering high-quality content that can help you do what you know best. As well as celebrating all we've seen and done, this special edition is our sign of gratitude — and we hope you enjoy reading it as much as we loved creating it.

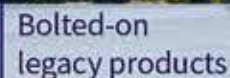
ANDREEA DULGHERU **EDITOR**



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## THE BIG IDEA

"Law firms need functional experts to advise them on client pricing, knowledge, technology, branding."

*Abby Ewen, COO,  
Browne Jacobson*



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## SPECIAL THANKS

It takes a village to put together a magazine, and ours has some very special people!

In addition to our great contributors, we'd like to give a round of applause to the incredible people who have supported us for over a decade and who have made true magic to bring this issue to life:

- Simon Brandon (photographer)
- Heather Thomas (graphic designer)
- Annette Doutney (proofreader)



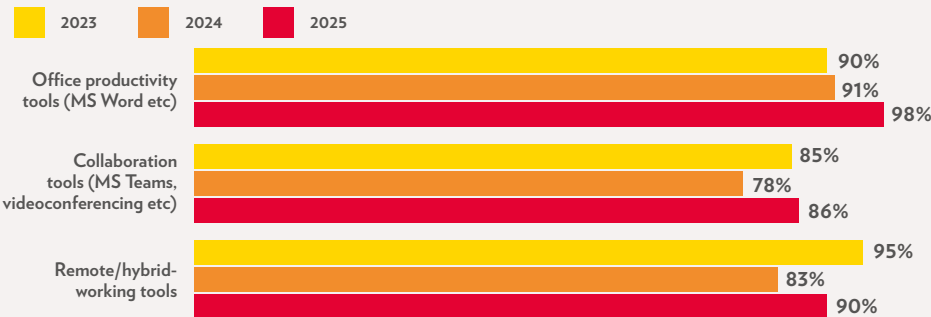


# DATABASE

How have law firm leaders' levels of satisfaction with certain tech types changed over the past three years? Let's take a look — using the annual **Briefing Frontiers** data

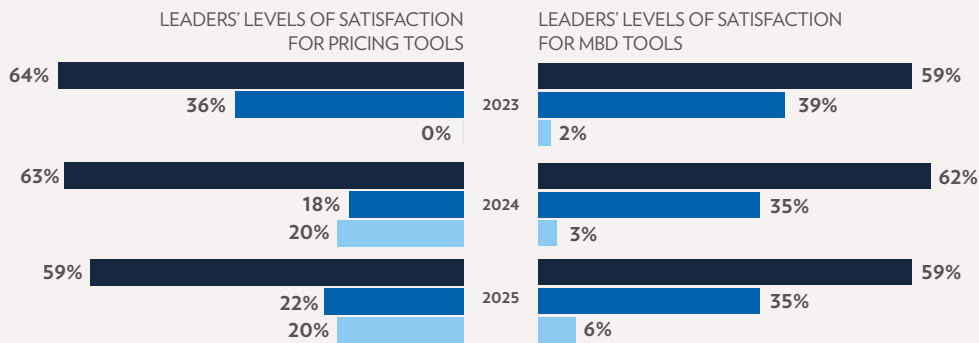
## Remote/hybrid working, collaboration and office productivity tools score highest for satisfaction among law firm leaders over the past three years

PERCENTAGE OF LAW FIRM LEADERS THAT RATE THEIR TECH AS GOOD OR OKAY



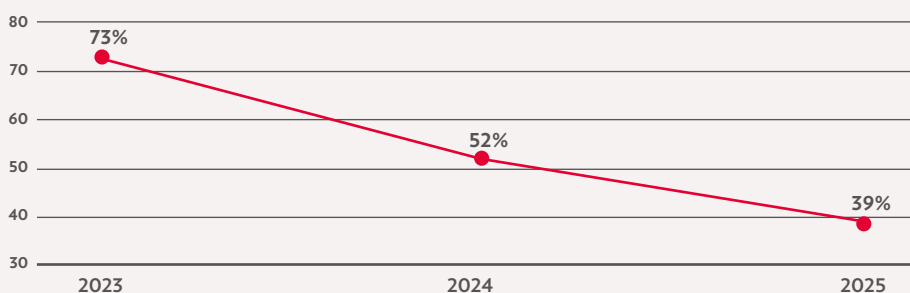
## Marketing and BD and pricing are the groups of solutions that leaders have consistently cited as needing improvement or replacing

Need improvement or replacement | Are good/OK | Don't know



## Leaders' satisfaction with client-facing tools (such as portals and chatbots) has decreased over the past three years — from 73% in 2023 to 39% in 2025

PERCENTAGE OF LAW FIRM LEADERS THAT SCORE THEIR TECH AS GOOD OR OKAY



## Briefing's perspective

Given the prevalence of remote and hybrid working practices in the legal sector, and law firms' continued interest in international growth, it is great to see that tech tools that can support these ambitions, changes in work models and increased collaboration seem to meet firms' needs. Nevertheless, the data shows there's still plenty of room for improvement in other areas of legal tech, particularly tools for pricing — especially as debate about the use of alternative fee arrangements versus the billable hour remains in the spotlight.

What is surprising though is to see a drop in satisfaction with client-facing tools. In 2023, 73% of law firm leaders said these tools were good or okay. Now, that number sits at 39% — quite a hefty change over a relatively short timeframe. Paired with the low levels of satisfaction with marketing and BD tools, this paints a slightly worrying picture. With clients' higher expectations (particularly around tech) and law firms' increasing focus on delivering better client experiences, it will be interesting to watch whether this translates into future change — will we see firms revamp these systems soon, and will tech vendors deliver the innovation leaders are clearly craving? ▲



## 65 SECONDS WITH STEPHEN ALLEN

Stephen Allen, Clyde & Co's director of legal AI and technology, weighs in on the pieces still missing from the service delivery and innovation puzzles



**Q** If you could change one thing in legal business management today, what would that be?

**A** It would probably be to change the culture from being generally hyper-reactive to a more balanced approach where there is also purposeful proactivity. Hyper-reactivity is a crowd pleaser and brings kudos — and, at times, it is essential to deal with urgent needs. However, constant reactivity steals from future innovation, improvement and transformation. As such, a better balance is needed.

**Q** What piece is still missing to unlock the perfect legal service delivery — for both clients and law firms?

**A** Too often requests for alternative delivery models and pricing, or the use of tech, are simply levers to force law firms to reduce fees. When lowering costs comes with a heavy upfront investment, that makes it incredibly difficult for firms. If clients were truly committed to a different outcome, they'd look to engage in different relationships with their legal services providers where there was longer-term reward for short-term pain.

**Q** Are law firms still being swept up by the hype around digital innovation and technology?

**A** Yes, and not just law firms, the business world generally! There are too many people who understand too little about technology and legal making noise and feeding the hype — particularly clickbait influencers who drown out the valuable insight shared by knowledgeable people. If you're listening to the wrong 'experts', you're putting yourself, your business, your clients and the industry at risk. The biggest dangers in being swept up in the hype are making an investment in something that's not right for your firm, and being paralysed by indecision as new things are launched. The best thing to do is to invest in people who have done transformation before it was digital and have educated themselves about what digital can and can't do.

**Q** Is there an area of innovation that is severely overlooked?

**A** Scoping legal work. It is the single area that any law firm and client can do together to eradicate much waste and misalignment. The basis of most complaints by clients is that the bill is too much, that the cost was over their budget or that they didn't want the 'Rolls Royce' version. The best thing to do is document the ask, the anticipated effort and the

assumptions these were based on. If those change, then call them out and decide what to do together. This exercise will also help to highlight where the opportunities are to use alternative resources or technology.

**Q** Where do you think firms are most challenged when it comes to innovation?

**A** Enabling true innovation professionals who have track records of delivery. Innovation without delivery is just 'having ideas' — but sadly, many fall to this trap. To deliver is hard, and in many ways is seen as boring when compared to the ideation of what could be. The key is to find people who understand what it takes to bring an idea to life and work with them. A good idea brought to fruition is more powerful than a brilliant one still on the drawing board.

**Q** What sort of investments do you see giving firms a competitive edge over the next 12-24 months?

**A** Three things will be key: mapping your processes, investing in getting your data in a good place, and focusing on incremental changes rather than 'big bang' approaches. ▴

**"A good idea brought to fruition is more powerful than a brilliant one still on the drawing board."**

## SPEAK UP



# The battle against discrimination still rages on

DANA DENIS-SMITH OBE

Founder of the Next 100 Years and CEO at Obelisk Support

**F**ifty years ago, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 came into force, protecting men and women from discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status, covering employment, training, education and harassment. Since then, we have seen significant progress for women working in the legal sector, who now make up more than half of the profession.

Despite this progress, the majority still consider sex discrimination to be prevalent in the profession. The latest research from Next 100 Years found that 63% of women surveyed had personally experienced discriminatory behaviour in the workplace in the last five years — albeit not as overtly as in the past — and 84% know of colleagues who had experienced discriminatory behaviour during this time. After all these years, the battle is still ongoing.

These findings come at a time when US President Donald Trump's war on DEI is having a chilling effect. While only big international law firms are suffering the direct consequences, this agenda is having a wider impact, with references to DEI removed from websites and publicity around partner promotions remaining silent on diversity.

It would be easy to put the problem down to a few rogue individuals or 'dinosaurs' in the profession, but our research found that 47% of respondents thought discrimination came from people across the board — with only a third believing it was limited to a few

individuals who were outliers.

Worryingly, leadership was considered a source by a third of respondents.

On a more positive note, just 14% thought this behaviour was prevalent in younger male colleagues, suggesting we might see a decline as the next generation climbs up the ranks.

While 51% of respondents said their organisation took alleged incidents of sex discrimination seriously, in many cases women still don't feel they can speak up — 70% said that they, or one of their colleagues, had not complained about discrimination for fear it would affect their careers.

As well as tackling poor behaviour through training and actioning complaints robustly, firm leaders need to make it okay for women to report discrimination. It's about fostering a culture where there's no fear of repercussions for victims, regardless of the seniority of the staff implicated.

Looking at the future of the profession, we are a long way from seeing the level of change we need. Only 16% of survey respondents expect women in law to get true equality in their careers, with 47% saying it'd take another half a century.

Tackling ongoing sex discrimination requires a focused effort from individual organisations and the profession as a whole. I hope that initiatives such as the Harman review — an independent review of bullying and harassment at the Bar, which includes sexual harassment — will go some way to addressing these issues. The gains of recent decades have been hard won, and the legal profession must redouble its commitment to equality in the workplace. ▴

**"The gains of recent decades have been hard won, and the legal profession must redouble its commitment to equality in the workplace."**



## SPEAK UP

# Breaking down barriers for the next generation

MARTIN GLOVER

Chief people officer at Morton Fraser MacRoberts



**A**s students received their exam results this August, the legal profession has an opportunity and responsibility to support the next generations in a new way.

Too often, students are asked to consider careers in law with little context and limited access to information, let alone connections. The profession still carries an aura of exclusivity — particularly for those without family in the industry, private schooling or exposure to professional role models. And while the sector has made significant strides in widening access through outreach and scholarship schemes, the quiet truth is that many students still don't know where to start.

Opportunity isn't the only barrier — there is also proximity. We underestimate how powerful it is for a young person to speak to someone in the job they aspire to. What's it really like to study law? How do you choose a university? What if your results weren't what you hoped for? These are real questions with no easy answers, and they're often left unspoken.

This is where firms can step in — not with a marketing campaign, but with genuine access. We don't need to wait for recruitment time or develop organised outreach. Sometimes, the most impactful thing we can offer is our time, candour and willingness to meet people where they are.

This is why my firm has launched a simple initiative: a live telephone helpline offering career advice to students and parents during exam

results week. It connects callers directly with our trainees and people team, providing a human, honest voice to guide young people curious about a future in law.

On the surface, it's straightforward. But the reason behind it reflects something much deeper: the need to fundamentally rethink how we make our profession accessible. Our helpline isn't a polished PR product. It's a phone number and a promise: we're here to listen, and we're here to help.

Of course, widening access is not a one-week activity. It's part of a broader strategy to rethink how talent flows into the legal profession and who gets to see themselves as part of it. But it starts with moments like this — times when the profession can either remain silent or reach out with practical empathy.

As chief people officer, I see the long-term value of diverse, grounded and motivated entrants to the legal sector. But more than that, I see the human need for reassurance, information and encouragement.

If law firms want to be relevant, inclusive and sustainable in the years ahead, we need to stop guarding the gates and start opening the door, especially when students are standing outside, unsure whether they belong. Because they do — and it's on us to show them. ▲

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**“If law firms want to be relevant, inclusive and sustainable in the years ahead, we need to stop guarding the gates and start opening the door.”**

The background of the entire page is a scenic landscape featuring a range of dark, jagged mountains under a sky transitioning from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. Several hot air balloons are floating in the sky; one on the left is large and multi-colored, while others further back are smaller and have different color schemes. Overlaid on the landscape are several thin, white, concentric curved lines that sweep across the frame from the left towards the right, creating a sense of motion and connectivity.

HARB( )R

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## INDUSTRY VIEW



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# Still room for improvement in legal finance

PAUL SUFFIELD

Managing director at Attest Group

**W**hen I first met **Briefing** nearly a decade ago during my tenure at Oracle, I was working on introducing a Solicitors Accounting Regulator-compliant, standardised configuration of a cloud enterprise resource planning system into the global legal PMS market. Fittingly, this column brings my own market journey full circle, as the business I founded in 2023, Attest Group, is now also bringing Oracle's PMS to market (on top of Board's planning and reporting capabilities).

When reflecting on the past decade in legal services, it's clear that macroeconomic and geopolitical forces, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, have had profound effects.

The demand for legal services has continued to increase in fast-paced client markets. And with global legal services forecast to surpass US\$700bn CAGR by 2035, we are, in turn, witnessing more interest from technology vendors and private equity.

We've seen technology evolve at a pace unimaginable a decade ago. Yet the core finance operations tech has not

kept up — if anything, it could be argued it has regressed owing to a loss of functionality when vendors have released cloud solutions of their on-prem technology.

For firms to truly harness the value of emerging tech and take advantage of a growing market, they must first strengthen their core systems of record and people. This has never been more critical, given the

considerable pressures they're under, coming from US firms, other professional services giants, alternative legal service providers (ALSPs), and genAI tools digitising and looking to automate low-value, high-volume work.

Firms need their record and people-centric systems to deliver a clearer view of cash position and working capital. The key is ensuring that, regardless of complexity, real accuracy is driven from the actuals, with a consolidated view available daily to support financial and operational modelling.

Firms' reluctance to move away from traditional legal tech has seen multiple overruns and limited value from finance transformations. However, the change in pressures — the increased competition and higher client expectations, especially regarding data security — will push more firms to use systems for their core purposes and assess readiness from a change perspective.

The next generation of legal talent must also be front of mind. They must be able to access and comprehend the profitability of matters easily to better understand the client financially and meet their hourly targets. Billing efficiency still requires drastic improvements in many firms. Enabling lawyers to clearly see what cash they can collect, and the impact of pricing and write-offs, is more critical than ever.

By successfully linking investment and data strategy, managing cashflow, and modelling operational and commercial decisions in near real-time, firms will ensure they are best positioned to take advantage of the growth forecast for the legal market over the next decade. ▴

**"We've seen technology evolve at a pace unimaginable a decade ago. Yet the core finance operations tech has not kept up."**





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### EVENT REPORT

Andreea Dulgheru offers a taste of the top insights uncovered during **Briefing's** inaugural AI Forum

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### THE BIG IDEA

How has legal business management evolved over the past 15 years? Six industry change-makers take a trip down memory lane

## EVENT REPORT

# AI IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Briefing's inaugural AI Forum explored the opportunities, challenges and reality of AI use in the legal sector. Andreea Dulgheru highlights the big ideas discussed throughout a day of debate, idea-sharing and collaboration

**A**mid the recent challenges and rapid technological advancements (particularly AI) of the past few years, law firms have noted a shift in clients' expectations around service delivery — with a growing emphasis on personalisation, enhanced value and elevated standards.

Given the wide accessibility of AI, it was no surprise to hear that general counsel are already using this technology in their work — from asking questions and doing legal research to extracting information from files and drafting documents. The ability to handle several legal tasks in-house, and the subsequent expectations of CEOs and CFOs to be faster, more efficient and to deliver cost savings, is thus resulting in GCs sending less work to external law firms, said Elisabeth Sullivan, GC at Efficio Consulting, and Zeno Capucci, chief legal officer at Docplanner.

As such, the relationship between GCs and law firms is now changing again — with in-house teams preferring to rely on external lawyers for more complex legal matters, or to verify their own work done internally. Alongside that, GCs say they are expecting higher quality and greater efficiency from their legal partners — in line with what they are seeing first-hand from their own use of AI. "Our expectations around speed of delivery are also shifting. The CEO or CFO of the company will not tolerate a law firm taking one or two weeks to produce a first draft of a contract when we know that AI can produce this in a fraction of that time," added Capucci.

With higher expectations around efficiency, value-add and lower costs, the panel confirmed they are now expecting to see law firms use AI, genAI and other tech solutions to deliver work for



them — although they're not overly concerned which tools they use. Henry Gardener, chief risk officer and GC at Markel Insurance, said he would be concerned if a law firm wasn't doing anything to innovate its service delivery — if a firm isn't up-to-date on AI developments, what else isn't it up-to-date on?

GCs also expect a law firm's use of AI to be reflected in the pricing of the service. "Sooner or







**“At some point, agentic AI will become a lot more skilled and knowledgeable — and if you’re reluctant to embrace AI now, you will be left behind soon.”**

they can add, and how they can justify bills when we may be able to get equally good advice for a fraction of the price from an AI model,” Capucci elaborated.

The impact of AI use on law firms’ pricing models is a conundrum they have been trying to solve for a few years now. Firms recognise the need to move away from the billable hour in favour of value-based pricing, confirmed Emma Dowden, chief operating officer at Burges Salmon, and Natasha Owoh, chief financial officer at Bird & Bird — although leaders are still searching for the winning formula.

AI implementation is a hefty, long-term investment, which often goes against firms’ short-term thinking, noted Owoh. This, together with tech’s rapid evolution and the uncertainty of

later, we’ll all get to a point where AI will be able to automate a lot of heavy-lifting tasks. As such, law firms will have to change mindsets and think about what value

its impact on legal work, is driving some fear among law leaders. As such, a change in mentality is essential to turn that fear into seizing opportunity and reap the benefits of AI. As is investment in data strategy and optimisation, and people — including upskilling existing teams and recruiting for new roles, emphasised Greg Baker, Linklaters’ senior lawyer, AI and innovation.

However, Chris Tart-Roberts, Macfarlanes’ former chief knowledge and innovation officer, points out that it’s not all doom and gloom. AI brings with it lots of positives — namely more consistency and certainty around pricing, and the chance for firms to extend the range of services they offer to clients and deliver more value.

All in all, there is still a long way to go before reaching the zenith of AI use in legal work. Nevertheless, Dowden emphasised that any step taken in this direction is better than none. “At some point, agentic AI will become a lot more skilled and knowledgeable — and if you’re reluctant to embrace AI now, you will be left behind soon. Even if you do something with AI that doesn’t quite work the way you’d like it to, it’s better than not doing anything. Ultimately, we’ve all got to be on this journey.” ▲





THE BIG IDEA

# THE NEW LAW FIRM FORMULA





From left to right: Mark Ford, former global law knowledge leader at EY; Chris Stanton, chief financial officer at Shoosmiths; Cathy Mattis, digital change lead at DLA Piper; Karen Jacks, chief technology officer at Bird & Bird; Abby Ewen, chief operating officer at Browne Jacobson

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON BRANDON

The aftermath of the global financial crisis and Legal Services Act 2007, a pandemic, the AI boom — they've seen and experienced it all. Five legal business veterans take a trip down memory lane to assess how law firms have successfully embraced change over the past 15 years, and where progress still lags behind

**A** decade and a half ago, when **Briefing** first made an appearance in all its printed glory, the legal sector was preparing for the final changes of the Legal Services Act 2007 to come in effect. At the time, many questions were up in the air around what the future might hold for the legal sector — and legal business services in particular.

Of the myriad of developments the legal world has seen over this period, there is one that a set of **Briefing** industry veterans has deemed to be one of the biggest (in a good way): law firms being less partner led.

“My journey in legal IT began in a basement office, where early in my career I had the exciting challenge of introducing computers to lawyers for the very first time. I’m now a board member at a firm that truly embraces the strategic importance of technology for our future success — it’s been incredible to see how the industry has evolved,” says Abby Ewen, chief operating officer at Browne Jacobson. This comes as no surprise, given the explosion of legal tech the sector has seen over the years — particularly since 2022, when artificial intelligence (AI) really started to take the world by storm again with the release of ChatGPT.

Karen Jacks, chief technology officer at Bird & Bird, agrees: “IT people have done more sitting in front of clients in the last 12 months than we’ve done in over 20 years. We’re not just seen as the people to give out laptops. Lawyers now realise they need us to explain to clients what we’re doing with technology.”

All present at our roundtable note there was no big-bang moment that led to this awakening



**“One thing that hasn’t changed over the last 15 years is the depth of the false impression that many lawyers have about how unique their work is. They are often very resistant to the idea that technology can do any part of their work, but AI is slowly – and irrefutably – proving that it can.”**

*Mark Ford, former global law knowledge leader at EY*

(although the LSA was certainly no small contributor), but rather we saw a gradual realisation of all the advantages legal business services can bring to the table: to drive long-term growth, as well as identifying and fixing any chinks in the firm’s business armour as it keeps on transforming to compete harder.

While legal business management leaders have made great strides to win a seat at the table, there are still some that can be slightly behind the empowered curve: one of which is knowledge management.

Mark Ford, former global law knowledge leader at EY, says: “It ebbs and flows; there are times when people realise knowledge management is crucial for the business and needs to be front and centre, and times when it takes more of a backseat. In the end, knowledge is a longer-term investment. It takes time and effort to create good templates and other knowledge resources, which makes it harder to deliver that quick gratification compared to other business support functions.”

### **From famine to feast**

When talking about the big changes in the legal sector, technology inevitably rears its head at the top of the list, and with good reason. Sure, the sector was no stranger to legal tech 15 years ago — even AI was a thing back then, with the big unveiling of ROSS, IBM’s AI ‘lawyer’ in 2014 — but its adoption among large law firms was nowhere near as prolific as today.

What was once a relative novelty in 2010 has now evolved into a behemoth. One quick Google search of ‘legal technology solutions’ yields dozens of different solutions available for firms to choose from. This rapid proliferation of technology in the legal space is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it has certainly brought more efficiency into law

firms. On the other, leaders are now faced with a new challenge: choosing the *right* one from a surging sea of options.

“It used to be very obvious which vendor and tool you used for each specific thing — although this did lead us to buy many tools. Nowadays, everyone’s diversifying and ends up offering similar or identical things. To me, it’s never been harder to make purchasing decisions than it is now,” says Ewen.

This challenge is compounded by the higher costs associated with tech investment, both upfront — which includes the price of the software, as well as any costs associated with training, infrastructure and data strategy — and yearly subscription fees for licences, plus monthly usage costs. And if a firm regularly replaces older solutions with shiny new products, this can result in quite a sum spent on legal tech alone.

Since 2014, when **Briefing** began its annual sector benchmarking research, law firms’ IT spend has averaged around 5% of firm-wide revenue. The figure remained relatively stable up until the 2020s. But in 2024, we saw firms’ average technology budget increase to 6.1%. While there’s





no denying that this is driven by firms' thirst for digital innovation to support slicker client service, one can't help but wonder how much of this is also down to rising tech prices.

Jacks notes: "Some vendors are now backed by venture capital or private equity, so their focus is to sell you as much as they possibly can, because they think law firms have bottomless budgets. And each year, they up their prices under the guise that they're offering you additional features, which may not even be something you want or need. Loyalty and account management also now seems to be less important."

The combination of market saturation and hefty prices has led to a shift in how leaders approach tech investment. The days of firms buying boxes of software and letting them metaphorically gather dust in the cupboard are long gone, says Ewen. Now, firm leaders are looking closer at the functionality, integration and strategic fit and even longevity and quality of the team behind the product — and, of course, the benefits the firm will get from using the product.

However, there's also still room to finetune how the return on investment is measured specifically,



**"There's so much change that firms can bring on board, but you have to pace yourself and do it sensibly in a way that doesn't overwhelm people."**

*Cathy Mattis, digital change lead at DLA Piper*





notes Chris Stanton, chief financial officer at Shoosmiths. “You may have found a tool that promises to save your firm thousands of hours of work, but that’s not the ROI — it’s what you do with those hours, and how you monetise this that actually matters.”

Ewen agrees, adding that more can be done to accurately measure the value of technology in client work to maximise profitability. “Tech tools are fiendishly expensive. If you’re buying and using specific ones for certain types of work or clients only, it can have a real impact on your profit margin that sometimes remains overlooked. We need to pay more attention to exactly how that impacts the bottom line.”

The proliferation of tech has also brought the value of change management into the spotlight. Stanton emphasises that, with business services functions becoming more interlinked over the years, implementing a new tech solution no longer needs to fit in one box alone, but rather with a whole ecosystem — to maximise its use, but also to prevent any domino effects in other parts of the business. As such, implementing change requires a much more calculated approach — one that also

considers just *how much* novelty people can digest. “There’s so much change that firms can bring on board, but you have to pace yourself and do it sensibly in a way that doesn’t overwhelm people and gives them time to get used to it,” adds Cathy Mattis, digital change lead at DLA Piper.

### **A needle in a haystack?**

Jacks suspects it’s not just law firms that struggle with choosing the right product from a sea of vendors. She believes clients also find it more difficult to differentiate between their law firms, as they tend to offer very similar experiences and added-value offers — including the same types of tech tools. With the prevalence of legal tech constantly growing, what used to be a USP 10-15 years ago is now simply another box to tick to ensure you’re not left behind the pack.

“We’re all going to put technology on paper as a selling point, and how well you brand it and jazz it up is how far that’ll get you with the client. But I’d be surprised if a client will select a law firm purely on the general tech submission,” she elaborates.

If anything, this proves Stanton’s point: that brandishing technology as a core differentiator to



**“IT people have done more sitting in front of clients in the last 12 months than we’ve done in over 20 years. Lawyers now realise they need us to explain to clients what we’re doing with technology.”**

*Karen Jacks, chief technology officer at Bird & Bird*



stand out only works temporarily, and only if you’re the first to invest in the latest exciting iteration (a bold move for typically risk-adverse law firms). Once everyone jumps on the same bandwagon, that USP is gone.

It is why Mattis believes there is (and will continue to be) a greater emphasis on the human touch in legal service delivery — particularly as clients seem to demand more personalisation and a true partnership from their law firms — and technology will be the supporting toolset to allow lawyers to polish their relationship skills.

“Generative AI may help us to free up time that can be spent talking to clients. For that, lawyers will need to be more empathetic, creative and communicative. They must be able to think on their feet and use their insight to explain to clients how the firm can help them. This will allow us to differentiate ourselves.”

Ewen agrees, emphasising that this is the reason why Browne Jacobson has signed up for the O-Shaped framework — an organisation focused on equipping lawyers with a broader range of skills and perspectives beyond legal expertise — in an effort to nurture these soft skills.

“It’s been really fascinating to see lawyers realise the value of certain actions — like calling a client after their matter is handled to ask for feedback — which people in business services have known and done for years. Ultimately, this is not always something that comes naturally to lawyers, but it’s absolutely crucial to equip them with these qualities and enable them to spot opportunities and be more open-minded, as all these skills cannot be replicated by non-emotionally intelligent AI,” she says.

**“You may have found a tool that promises to save your firm thousands of hours of work, but that’s not the ROI — it’s what you do with those hours, and how you monetise this that actually matters.”**

*Chris Stanton, chief financial officer at Shoosmiths*

## Is pricing due a makeover?

So, there's certainly been significant changes to forces working on the legal sector over the past 15 years, but one monster of the depths has prevailed (to the vexation of some): the billable hour.

Despite prophecies of its impending doom, the billable hour remains a popular pricing option in the legal sector — although data shows its dominance has somewhat diminished. According to the latest **Briefing**/HSBC UK Law Firm Strategy and Investment research, three quarters of leaders said more clients were looking for fixed fees in 2024, and more than half estimate 20-60% of their work is priced with an alternative fee arrangement (AFA). Citi's Law Firm Leaders survey paints a similar picture, with 72% of firms expecting revenue from AFAs to rise this year.

It doesn't take much analysis to see why the billable hour is slowly crumbling under the weight of modern business reality. The equation is simple: the more hours you save by using technology and AI, the less you can bill under this traditional model. Thomson Reuters' Future of Professionals report predicts AI could shave 240 hours per year from a lawyers' workload. Whether AI has already delivered this time saving already remains to be seen — but clients certainly expect to see this reflected in their bills already.

"The trajectory is definitely towards the death of the billable hour — what remains to be seen is how quickly this will happen," says Stanton. "That will partly depend on how quickly technology is implemented, and how pervasive it is across different service lines. It won't happen overnight, but it will change — it *has to*."

Using tech for legal or business support work isn't a novelty anymore though — generative AI alone has been around for three years, and has surely delivered some sort of time savings. So why hasn't this change happened already? Ford thinks part of the problem is lawyers' outdated perception of the impact legal tech has, and will continue to have on their profession. "One thing that hasn't changed over the last 15 years is the depth of the false impression that many lawyers have about how unique their work is. They tend to see themselves as rocket scientists, and they are often very resistant to the idea that technology can do

any part of their work, but AI is slowly — and irrefutably — proving that it *can*." Given the rapid advancements of legal tech and AI in particular, the hour of reckoning might finally be here.

The internal ways of measuring lawyers' performance have also been a relative barrier to progress, Ford adds. The hourly targets may have been a perfect fit when the billable hour was reigning supreme, but now that firms are on a journey to embracing AFAs, they are arguably pulling firms away from the needed focus on achieving outcomes rather than racking up hours.

Ewen agrees: "I remember a while ago hearing about a trainee at a different law firm who would come in on a Saturday to photocopy files to clock up the necessary hours to meet his billable hours target and secure his bonus. In the current tech-enabled environment, lawyers' billable hour requirements can incentivise the wrong behaviour."

As some firms choose to erode their own revenue models by introducing software that could allow people to deliver work at a faster pace, they must now rethink how they sell their expertise to avoid leaking and losing too much. The big question is how. Some experts seem to think that value-based pricing may be the new cornerstone







— although firms are still working on cracking that pricing formula, particularly as different clients value different things.

Mattis also highlights a new focus on targeted value creation: “There are two ways to do this: firms can create new revenue generating pathways that are not their core business, or can innovate their core proposition — so looking at how they can make themselves more efficient, and deliver new things to clients. Before you do that, you must understand your client and their needs.”

This also requires fundamental change in how lawyers are assessed. “The current incentives are not lined up with this direction of travel. When lawyers are assessed on how many hours they record, they won’t necessarily see the value in using technology to become faster and more efficient. In the technology-driven environment we’re moving into, that could be catastrophic,” Ford emphasises.

We’ve seen how the sector has evolved over the past decade and a half, but what about the next 15 years? Fatalists foresee the extinction of the lawyer should genAI reach its peak, although this is quite a

**“My journey in legal IT began in a basement office. I’m now a board member at a firm that truly embraces the strategic importance of technology for our future success.”**

*Abby Ewen, chief operating officer  
at Browne Jacobson*



small minority. For the most part, experts predict a new wave of metamorphosis for law firms, triggered by the rise of AI, which will be truly transformational of certain traditional aspects of operations long resistant to change. “I’ve been working in this sector for a while and seen a lot of hype around various technologies, but to me, this does feel like an inflection point — the toothpaste is out of the tube. AI is a game-changer,” says Ford.

As for legal business leaders, the hope and expectation are that their role in a law firm’s business management will only grow — especially as firms embrace a more corporate operating model. “Law firms need those function experts to advise them on client pricing, knowledge, technology, branding. Of course, there are some firms that still think that any non-lawyers should be in the basement — and those are the firms that I don’t expect (or hope) to survive in the next 12 months,” concludes Ewen. ▴



# AND NOW, FOR SOME R & R ...

Briefing's content stalwarts — CEO Rupert Collins-White and head of content Richard Brent — share how the legal market evolution looks through a journalist's eyes

**RUPERT** When we launched **Briefing** in 2010, almost no one in media had asked business services leaders what they thought about their world. Giving airtime to 'non-lawyers' was almost unheard of. This was only different for IT people, who had some small media outlets dedicated to them. Finance or knowledge leaders? They were invisible.

**Briefing** changed that, and over the intervening years we've worked to raise the profile of professional managers in legal business, and tell success stories about every role. Over that time, management has risen in power and presence, and in the range of roles in the game — if I'd written about innovation or legal operations back then, it would have been science fiction. Even pricing wasn't really a thing.

The way we work in legal, and the systems we use, have also changed enormously. Before, many people in law firms still worked on desktops, used dictation and even tapes. The only clouds in their world were the ones obscuring the ivory towers of the partners.

In the first issue of **Briefing**, we quoted a lawyer in a 'virtual firm' (Halebury) talking about using cloud software: "I can do it from anywhere, so if I'm taking leave and an urgent matter comes up, I can just go to an internet cafe. It fits



around my lifestyle perfectly, and I can do a lot of work on my BlackBerry." This was heady stuff — almost no one in legal worked this way, back then. Now it's normal, except no one has a BlackBerry.

**Briefing** has also changed, and always for the better. It's been edited by better people than me, for a start, and has established itself as the voice of legal management. Across our content, communities and events we're constantly connecting people with solutions to their challenges, and there's still so much exciting stuff left to do.

**RICHARD** The belief that gave birth to **Briefing** was that business services leaders at top UK law firms deserved a publication that put their needs first — providing insight that would help them do better jobs, build stronger teams, navigate the nuances of pursuing change in a partnership, and demonstrate real business impact.

Very early issues looked at the gradual elevation of top people in finance, marketing, HR or technology — as firms dragged themselves into more modern ways of working. Paper-light was a serious strategic aspiration! As was the art

of persuading partners to articulate their value and ask for reasonably prompt payment — so not everything changes. The offer of flexible working, meanwhile, was rather a hot potato for a profession steeped in presenteeism. It would need investments in both secure technology and workforce trust to take hold — but perhaps there'd be a tipping-point. In the event, it was a burning platform. Earlier, firms had even started to take ideas from other business sectors seriously — continuous process improvement, building brand loyalty, customer analytics, resourcing work with the most appropriate skill levels and project-management discipline to keep it profitable.

What we could never have imagined, though, is that covering the changing landscape of legal business services for 15 years would lead us straight to the biggest question of the times for these firms. After transformation agendas, SaaS models, disaggregated delivery, innovation forums and competitions, a string of complementary solutions, and non-linear, tech-savvier career paths to suit ambitious, talented and multi-skilled people, this would be to ask how firms find their right future fit for a world of work with AI. ▲



# BRAIN TRAINING

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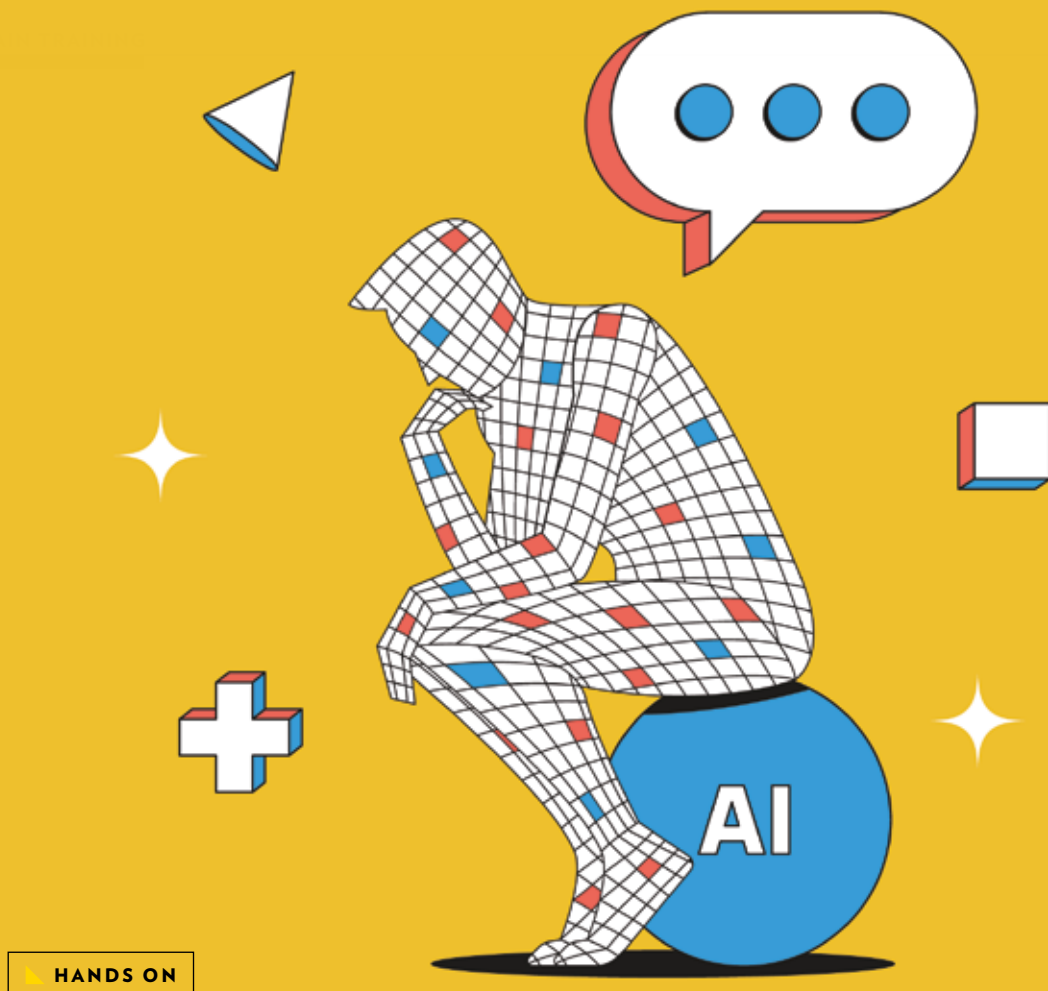
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**Authentically Speaking**  
corporate trainer Hannah Boko outlines how firms can try to prevent the 'wellbeing burnout' phenomenon



# NOVEL SOLUTIONS TO AGE-OLD PROBLEMS

Kingsley Napley's director of innovation and knowledge Sarah Harris outlines how a new approach to AI is helping the firm supercharge its knowledge-sharing, and learning and development

**I** confess: when I was a busy practising lawyer, creating knowledge documents or precedents was just not a top priority. The demob happy feeling of getting advice or a document out to a client drowned out the conscientious little voice telling me I should share it with others in my firm. So, when the inevitable question about a particular issue came around, I'd find myself searching through the DMS and cursing my lackadaisical former self.

In my experience, most lawyers don't want to hoard their knowledge.

They often just don't recognise their own expertise, don't have the time to marshal their thoughts before moving onto the next urgent task, or don't believe knowledge-sharing to be a priority over billable work.

AI has cast a fresh spotlight on knowledge, nudging it from the shadows into centre stage. On an operational level, AI-powered search has improved the discoverability and retrieval of knowledge, auto-categorisation has allowed easier sharing, and automatic redaction and summarisation make it substantially easier to share.

On a more profound level, AI has forced lawyers to, perhaps existentially, reflect on what value they provide — they can more easily see the link between gathering and sharing knowledge and the frontline provision of client services. More than ever, they can see what's in it for them.

However, some of the age-old challenges remain. Lawyers often don't know what is useful to others, or if their knowledge is valuable or unique. They don't know how to share easily and in a 'just-in-time' way, and there's an enduring impression that shared knowledge



goes into a black hole, never to be seen or used again.

It was armed with these problems that I began exploring (together with Wendy Jephson, founder and CEO of Let's Think, a behavioural science-led tech company) how emerging technology could help to solve not just these practical challenges, but the thornier and more strategic challenges facing law firms too. Much of the narrative around the use of AI within the legal sector is about what people can get the technology to do, and how closely it can replicate more routine legal tasks. While that is, of course, an important part of any AI strategy, we wanted to look beyond that to see what it means existentially for our people — and how we can use this technology to supercharge them to better serve our clients.

### The knowledge-sharing conundrum

The most valuable intellectual capital — knowledge about how to navigate high-stakes negotiations, weigh complex risks and make sound decisions under pressure — sits in the heads of our most experienced lawyers. It's tacit, experience-based, and hard to articulate — and often not the paragraphs you find in static exemplars or precedents. It's also the knowledge our clients pay for and that our juniors want to learn from. It was for this reason that we worked together with Jephson's team to build a behavioural science-based AI knowledge-amplification tool.

The pilot began with in-person behavioural science-based interviews with six of our senior litigators. The aim wasn't just to document what happened in a case, but to capture how exactly they

approached case matters, the strategic decisions they made, and the frameworks they used to resolve challenges.

The insights were then analysed, and visualisation methods were designed, to provide structure to the reflections shared. When the partners saw the results, they instantly recognised their own rationale and appreciated the clarity of thinking the tool provided. This alone is highly valuable — as it's a reflection tool for lawyers, helping them to crystallise learning points from their work and ways of applying it for the sake of self-improvement. If our busiest lawyers found the time spent using the tool valuable, clearly we were on to something.

This behavioural science-based AI tool enables us to elicit, capture and codify that tacit knowledge. The next step was to turn senior experts' thinking into knowledge assets that can be shared with others — with fellow partners to align on strategy, within teams to keep everyone informed, and with the new generations of practitioners for learning and supervision.

Junior lawyers in the pilot already recognise the value of capturing insights from their seniors on previous cases to inform decision making about live matters — as it helps them understand the rationale behind key strategic actions. At first, one of our associates in the clinical negligence team was worried the tool would reduce conversations with senior lawyers, because their insights were already captured. However, upon reflection, she realised conversations will be more productive and enriching, as the tool is a springboard for more sophisticated strategy discussions.

We also envision this tool enabling

us to transform expert insights into documents that can be added to the client file and to support billing narratives. Plus, we see huge promise in the ability to merge reflections across a team, allowing users to create shared views that reveal diverse perspectives and build richer case histories.

### Building the future of learning

What began as a pilot to improve training and knowledge sharing is now part of a larger ambition: to build a dynamic, lasting dataset of Kingsley Napley's unique legal expertise. We aim to actively capture and retain our intellectual capital, democratising knowledge across the firm to help our people to grow and better serve our clients.

This work reflects the importance we place on a team-based culture,

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**“AI has cast a fresh spotlight on knowledge, nudging it from the shadows into centre stage.”**

on continuous learning and on using tech to enable, not displace, human judgement. We believe that when expertise becomes more visible and usable, it empowers lawyers at every stage of their careers.

We want to use AI to supercharge our people, amplifying the aspects of our job that AI doesn't do — like applying experiential expertise, emotional intelligence and judgement to a complex set of facts and circumstances.

Businesses that continue to put people first will have a huge advantage over those who don't — and it's exactly why this is front of mind for us. ▲

## HANDS ON

# THE HIDDEN THREAT OF WELLBEING BURNOUT

Wellness initiatives can easily turn from stress-relievers to a source of anguish. Firms must foster an environment that encourages genuine wellbeing over performative wellness, writes Hannah Beko, coach at Authentically Speaking

**N**owadays, many legal professionals find themselves caught in a paradox: striving to maintain their high performance while following the commonly prescribed wellness routines. This relentless pursuit often transforms self-care into another item on an already overwhelming to-do list, leading to a phenomenon I am calling ‘wellbeing burnout’.

Legal professionals, well known for their perfectionism, dedication and high standards, may approach self-care with the same intensity they apply to their work. Activities meant to rejuvenate — like exercise, mindfulness or healthy eating — can feel like an obligation.

When the pursuit of wellness becomes something else on the to-do list, it becomes counterproductive and damaging. Instead of providing the intended

inadvertently contribute towards the likelihood of burning out.

We need to consider whether our wellness initiatives empower our lawyers to find balance, or whether they are inadvertently adding to their mental and emotional burden.

After a great deal of field-testing over the last 10 years, and research into perfectionism and the imbalance between the professional versus personal identity, I’ve identified some important features that cultivate a holistic approach to address both organisational culture and individual support mechanisms.

## Encouraging self-reflection and personal development

This is the key aspect that has been missing from many wellbeing activities and initiatives. Facilitating workshops and training sessions that help lawyers to explore their values, motivations and personal goals is the gateway to disintegrating internal conflict and allowing harmony between their work and home personas. Healthy self-care strategies can become effective at preventing burnout, as opposed to the potentially exhausting efforts led by the hardworking overachiever.

## Encouraging access to support services

Many firms now offer excellent resources such as counselling, coaching and mindfulness programmes, ideally ones that

address the unique challenges faced by legal professionals. The issue is rarely with a lack of these services, but with the uptake. Long-held stigma and fears of a lack of confidentiality prevent many from using these valuable resources. Encouraging people using these services to speak honestly about the ones they found beneficial can start to change this position so other individuals feel safe to use them.

## A culture of psychological safety

Encouraging open and honest discussions about mental health and wellbeing really needs a top-down approach. Leaders modelling vulnerability by sharing their own challenges and coping strategies give the safety and permission for others to do the same with less fear of being rejected, ostracised or judged. The Solicitors Regulation Authority and professional indemnity insurers quite correctly cite psychologically safe teams and workplaces as key to the reduction of mistakes, claims and near misses.

## Redefine success metrics

By moving beyond traditional performance indicators, such as billable hours, to recognise and reward the behaviours which promote balance, the setting of important boundaries, mentoring, and playing a part in the creation and protection of a positive work environment, we can enable the new skills and mindsets developed through the above recommendations to be effective and sustainable. ▴

**“We need to consider whether our wellness initiatives empower our lawyers to find balance, or whether they are inadvertently adding to their mental and emotional burden.”**

balance, it exacerbates stress levels, leading to feelings of inadequacy or failure when wellness goals aren’t met. The result is a cycle where efforts to prevent burnout



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# THE AI BUSINESS CASE MORE TIME FOR BETTER WORK

LexisNexis UK managing director Gerry Duffy takes stock of whether the next chapter of AI change will be a shock to the law firm system — and how transformation approaches may still need a very human touch to see optimum and profitable use

**R**ecent advances in generative artificial intelligence (genAI) are widely seen as a potential watershed moment for law firm management and decision-making that makes the best possible use of a lawyer's day. However, human management, behaviours and investment decisions may still need to evolve in line to maximise any advantage.

Gerry Duffy, managing director at LexisNexis UK, says: "Recognition doesn't always translate into action. Many still approach AI through a tactical lens, implementing tools to solve immediate problems without aligning them to a broader transformation agenda. The most successful firms treat AI not just as a productivity tool, but as a catalyst for broader transformation — a core component of their strategy for sustainable growth, operational excellence and stronger client relationships."

Key to achieving deeper integration and faster returns, he says, is for senior leadership to sponsor work proactively to drive change. Those seeing most impact so far have also raised the vision above the most obvious starting line of increasing efficiency. "They use AI not only to save time, but to enhance the quality of work, deepen client relationships, and deliver greater transparency, accuracy and strategic insight," he explains.

Optimum AI adoption is also a necessary cultural shift. LexisNexis supports firms with adoption frameworks, best-practice guidelines and tailored training to embed these products effectively — not treat them as point solutions, he stresses. Without managed integration and

cultural change, benefits can only be incremental.

As with innovation experiments and automation maturity before AI, however, it's thought firms will indeed be pushed to streamline what they do in a more strategic manner. Duffy explains: "Automation, once used to speed up discrete tasks like document review or time recording, is now being applied to streamline entire workflows, reduce rework and improve consistency."

"Likewise, AI is prompting firms to think even more strategically, challenging how legal work is structured, priced and delivered. Investment decisions are becoming more sophisticated, focused not just on efficiency but on long-term competitive positioning, client retention and future-proofing the business."

In addition to committing leadership time and effective training, aligned incentives, meaningful role modelling and updated performance metrics can all work to move the adoption dial. But pockets of fragmented investment — without aligning to a strategic framework — should be avoided. "This can lead to overlapping tools, underused functionality, or integration gaps that undermine firm-wide value," he says.

## Growing gains from a mindset change

Tools such as new LexisNexis AI assistant Protégé aim to support firms on their journeys of integration — into both the LexisNexis ecosystem and a firm's own workflows. Duffy says: "We can enhance collaboration across teams and deliver measurable outcomes aligned with strategic priorities. We actively partner with firms to help

them clearly understand market developments, empowering a transformation pace aligning with strategic ambitions and organisational culture.”

Of course, the impact on individual productivity each day is still hugely significant. “Lawyers will spend significant time on routine tasks such as legal research, drafting and document review. By applying advanced AI tools, firms can not only streamline repetitive tasks but also free lawyers to focus on higher-value work.” Lexis+ AI further enhances this, he says, by proactively delivering contextually relevant information, suggested next steps and guidance directly within workflows.

On the client side then come calls for faster, more transparent and really outcome-focused services. “By embedding AI tools in client-facing workflows, firms can deliver clearer insights, improved accuracy and responsiveness. Lexis+ AI enables lawyers to rapidly answer complex client queries with precision and clarity, building transparency and trust: crucial factors for strengthening long-term client relationships.”

However, while firm-wide change can be supported by policies and push from top-down, individuals are likely to need a mindset shift as well. “It demands curiosity about new workflows, comfort with experimentation and a willingness to let go of long-established habits,” says Duffy. So Protégé and Lexis Create+, for example, adapt to how lawyers already work, think and write to support the change. “Lawyers need to allow AI to enhance, not replace, their expertise. They’ll need to be willing to change entrenched workflows, trust AI-generated insights and shift focus towards higher-value strategic tasks.”

At the same time, leadership must make the business case for investing personal energy in the change crystal clear. “Firms also showcase early wins by aligning tools like Lexis+ AI directly with everyday tasks, clearly highlighting productivity gains and the value created, risk reduction and improved client outcomes.” Duffy says he advocates for internal champions to drive this change both within LexisNexis and for customers. “Consistently sharing stories of success helps to reinforce and normalise new behaviours.



**“The potential gains are real and growing. While early use cases often focus on time savings such as faster research, drafting, or reduced write-offs, the bigger opportunity lies in what that time enables.”**

Ultimately, engagement thrives when lawyers see that tools are simplifying or improving their work and that they are adding more value to clients.

“The potential gains are real and growing. While early use cases often focus on time savings such as faster research, drafting, or reduced write-offs, the bigger opportunity lies in what that time enables.”

In the US, LexisNexis recently partnered with Forrester to conduct a Total Economic Impact study of Lexis+ AI across several global law firms. This focused on early-stage efficiency gains and found measurable improvements in both time and profitability. Senior lawyers saved up to 2.5 hours a week through faster research and drafting, while junior ones reduced previously written-off hours



by up to 35%, significantly improving profitability. Again, however, he stresses the real value lies in what that time means for more strategic contributions — “deeper thinking, faster insight, more confident advice and stronger outcomes”.

Duffy believes the anticipated coming wave of agentic AI will change not only the pace of such work, but the very nature of legal work itself. He expands on how agents will operate: “Lexis+ AI uses multiple agents to complete tasks — carefully trained and finely-tuned to be expert at doing one very specific task really well. For instance, when generating a draft, one checks for legal accuracy, another validates citations, while others assess tone, structure or completeness.

“Tasks most suited to agentic AI are often routine, repetitive or prone to human oversight — proofreading, citation checking, or clause-comparison. But equally, they support tasks that require scale. Agents can process vast volumes of information, rapidly analyse complex datasets, and surface insights or inconsistencies that would be impractical or impossible for a human to spot.”

In practice, this means lawyers won’t start from a blank page — but with a structured, high-quality

review into every stage. Lawyers and knowledge teams must routinely assess AI-generated outputs for relevance, reliability and alignment with firm and client standards. At LexisNexis we hold ourselves to the same standard. Lawyers, technologists and data scientists continuously test and refine AI outputs to ensure quality, safety and alignment with legal expectations.

“Clients and lawyers must trust the security of data. Rigorous, regularly reviewed information security measures, robust document management system integration, encryption and compliance, are essential to maintaining client confidentiality and internal trust. Clearly documented frameworks outlining how data and AI are managed are important too — as are clearly defined responsibilities at executive or partner level, such as appointing a dedicated AI or data governance lead.”

Firms may also need to work on fundamentals of their data management. They typically hold vast amounts of valuable but unstructured knowledge in different locations — the DMS, inboxes or individual drives. Knowledge management, like other aspects of the ecosystem, must be well integrated for AI to thrive on it. Even as firms invest in these fundamentals, Duffy highlights that solutions such as Lexis Create+ can bring structure to previously unstructured data by automatically surfacing relevant clauses, precedents and insights precisely when needed.

Respect for data management still needs to be ingrained in the culture and decision-making processes. “But lawyers engage when they see direct benefits,” he suggests. “They rarely engage with data for data’s sake. Data initiatives should explicitly demonstrate outcomes such as improved case results, faster drafting, reduced risk or enhanced client relationships.”

Lexis Create+ integrates directly into Microsoft 365 and leading DMS platforms, he adds. “This makes data-driven insights part of routine legal work, without friction or additional effort — driving engagement.” This is not to say firms shouldn’t also actively cultivate data literacy as well as they can. “They need to help lawyers understand what data they hold, why it’s valuable and how it can support better decision-making.”

Training is a particularly important part of transformation seen through the risk lens. “Lawyers need support to understand AI’s capabilities, limitations and ethical implications.

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**“Tasks most suited to agentic AI are often routine, repetitive or prone to human oversight — proofreading, citation checking, or clause comparison. But equally, they support tasks that require scale.”**

draft already in place, supported by contextual research and source validation. “It’s about changing what they’re capable of doing, multiplying their impact and fundamentally elevating the role.”

### **Responsible for risk — data and deliverables**

In addition to motivating and supporting people on the journey, firms must also build trust and manage what are undeniable risks effectively. At LexisNexis, Duffy says, the approach is guided by the ‘RELX Responsible AI Principles’, which prioritise transparency, governance and accountability in every decision.

“Human oversight is non-negotiable. To manage risk and earn trust, firms must embed human

Effective training should equip them to confidently oversee AI use, spot risks or biases and know what to do when they have concerns.

He believes the shift is less about becoming technologists than “confident, informed users of intelligent systems”. Lawyers need to understand what AI can and cannot do — and while LexisNexis solutions are designed to be simple to use, “even a modest understanding of how AI interprets and structures information will help them to get used more effectively”. Prompting is an especially valuable new skill. “While our AI tools are built to extract meaning with minimal effort, the more precise and detailed the prompt, the more useful and reliable the result.”

As routine tasks grow more efficient, lawyers may also need to focus harder on other parts of the overall skillset — such as communication of “complex legal insights in accessible ways and using storytelling techniques to help clients and stakeholders to make informed decisions”, he says. “They’ll spend more time anticipating risks, advising on complex scenarios and helping clients to predict challenges before they arise.”

In addition to increasing capacity for billable work, quality of advice and business development, firms can also use new efficiencies to invest in their people — the space to develop more specialism or simply greater work satisfaction, with opportunity for a healthier work-life balance.

### The return on investment is a human one

While one could try to assess ROI in AI for firms purely in terms of cold, hard cost-benefit, Duffy recommends a more holistic appraisal — effects on wellbeing, risk management and potentially competitive positioning, as well as increased value generated. These gains also underpin a stronger talent proposition, linking productivity and wellbeing benefits directly to ability to attract and retain lawyers.

This is not to mention pressure from firms’ own people to invest in technology that helps them to work smarter. “I’ve never seen a product adopted by our clients faster than Lexis+ AI,” he says. “So while there is undoubtedly pressure from lawyers to embrace AI, it’s really encouraging to see firms are responding to that demand.”

Nevertheless, research from LexisNexis earlier in 2025 found over half (53%) of people believed their organisation was either slow or very slow at implementing new technology. It also found a fifth

of lawyers in the largest firms would be up for moving on if they didn’t get the AI tools they thought were needed to do their jobs. Over a third noted a belief that not having the right AI technology would negatively impact their careers. From this perspective, “embracing change appears essential for talent attraction, retention and long-term competitiveness”, says Duffy.

“Junior lawyers increasingly expect modern,

**“Junior lawyers increasingly expect modern, tech-enabled workplaces: intuitive technology that reduces the effort needed on lower-value work. Many enter already familiar with legal tech from university, and they will be increasingly comfortable using legal AI tools for drafting and research.”**

tech-enabled workplaces: intuitive technology that reduces the effort needed on lower-value work. Many enter practice already familiar with legal tech from university, and they will be increasingly comfortable using legal AI tools for drafting and research.

“At the same time, mid-career lawyers want to focus on that higher-level, strategic work rather than repetitive tasks. Traditionally, employee value propositions have focused heavily on salary, career progression, reputation and, perhaps, culture. But as technology, particularly AI, reshapes the landscape, experience with advanced, intuitive and productivity-enhancing tech is going to become a key differentiator in talent attraction and retention.

“I suspect many still underestimate how much day-to-day technology experience affects job satisfaction, not to mention productivity.” He says several now explicitly highlight that they have invested in Lexis+ AI and the wider LexisNexis ecosystem when engaging potential talent. “They recognise having the best technology is a vital demonstration of commitment to their teams. Ultimately, firms that proactively showcase technology will attract digital-savvy lawyers, and I think they will be more likely to retain their top performers and be able to build more productive teams.”

For more information,  
visit: [lexisnexis.co.uk](https://lexisnexis.co.uk)



# THE POWER OF PEOPLE

As clients demand more than just legal expertise, firms must embrace innovation to enhance their service offerings — and to achieve long-lasting and meaningful change, a people-centric approach is essential, writes Dylan Brown, content marketing manager at LexisNexis UK

**W**hen incorporating AI into a firm's workflow, it's tempting to view transformation as a technological exercise. But for the UK's leading law firms, the real challenge isn't the tools themselves, it's how people adopt, adapt and apply them.

For every breakthrough in generative AI (genAI) or digital workflows, there's a parallel truth playing out inside firms: change moves at the speed of people. And that's exactly where many large law firms are struggling.

According to LexisNexis' recent survey of legal professionals at large firms conducted in January 2025, lawyers are ready for change, but many believe their firms are lagging behind. The data reveals a powerful insight: transformation doesn't succeed without a parallel investment in leadership, training, communication and cultural readiness.

## Lawyers are ready but firms are not moving fast enough

Our data shows that half (50%) of lawyers at large UK firms now use AI, and another 38% say they plan to adopt it soon. Yet only 28% say their firm is fast or very fast at implementing new technology.

Moreover, 35% of lawyers working in larger firms believe lack of AI adoption could hurt their career, and 18% said they would consider leaving a firm that fails to embrace AI.

Lawyers want to move faster — not for the sake of novelty, but because they know what's coming. When firms hesitate to adopt AI, it not only impacts their operations, but also their reputation and talent recruitment and retention.

"There needs to be a mindset shift to recognise that law firms have more to offer than lawyers' knowledge," says Laura Hodgson, genAI lead at

Linklaters. "Institutional data and new workflows can transform the value provided to clients."

## Innovation: a leadership challenge, not just a technical one

Despite the growing AI footprint across the sector, most firms still face a fundamental hurdle: people don't change just because the tech is available.

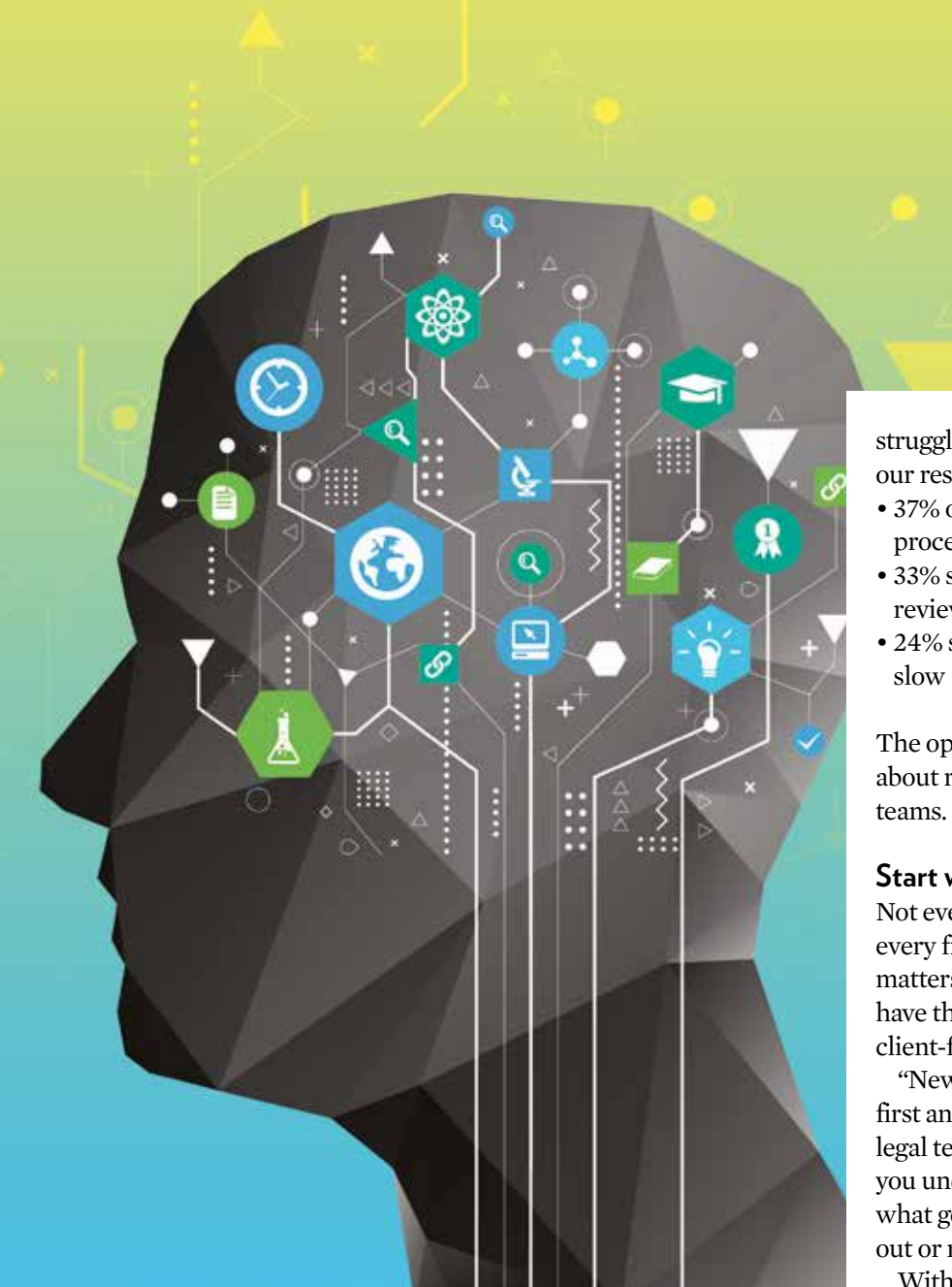
In the same survey, lawyers identified communication, strategic vision and emotional intelligence as the top leadership traits required for a law firm to succeed today. That's not accidental: these qualities are central to building the trust and alignment needed for change.

Tony Randle, partner at Shoosmiths, says: "Encouraging people to adopt new technology or new ways of working can be challenging due to resistance to change and a lack of understanding of their benefits. It's vital to provide comprehensive training and demonstrate practical, real-world advantages to gain user acceptance and trust."

That means starting small, testing rigorously and involving users early. Adoption isn't a given — it's something that must be earned through transparency, training and evidence of value.

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**"Law firm leaders don't need to become AI engineers. However, they do need to become people-centred change agents, because at every stage of legal transformation — from research and drafting to pricing and client service — it's human capability that will set firms apart."**



### Clients want value, not just expertise

For decades, law firms competed on legal expertise alone. Clients today want more: faster responses, commercial insight, digital integration and cost predictability.

When legal departments were asked what matters most, the top three responses were cost-effectiveness, responsiveness and agility, and specialist legal expertise. That expectation has a direct impact on law firms' operating models, and on how they use technology to support smarter delivery. Innovation is not about replacing people or chasing efficiency alone. It's about evolving the client experience in line with new expectations and staying relevant in a market shaped by speed and insight.

### Systems are still slowing people down

Despite a growing appetite for innovation, many large law firms are still slowed by legacy systems and siloed processes. The result is that lawyers are

struggling to do core tasks efficiently. According to our research:

- 37% of lawyers rated their firm's legal research process as slow or average
- 33% said the same for drafting and document review
- 24% said legal work delivery in general was too slow

The opportunity here isn't just about adding AI, it's about removing the frictions that slow down teams.

### Start with the right problems

Not every innovation is worth pursuing and not every firm needs to move at the same speed. What matters is clarity: identifying where change will have the biggest commercial, operational or client-facing impact.

"New ideas need to address a business problem first and foremost," says Bhavisa Patel, director of legal technology at Eversheds Sutherland. "Once you understand the problem, you can determine what good looks like when it comes to testing them out or running pilot programmes."

With 64% of lawyers expecting firms to be more reliant on AI for research and review in the next one to three years, and 54% predicting tech skills will rise in importance, the next chapter of legal innovation is already taking shape.

This won't be defined by shiny tools or reactive rollouts. It will be shaped by clear strategic priorities, a culture that encourages experimentation, and firm-wide commitment to capability building. The most effective firms will focus on removing barriers, upskilling teams and anchoring change in real-world needs — leading through thoughtful, collaborative evolution driven by people, not just platforms.

Law firm leaders don't need to become AI engineers. However, they do need to become people-centred change agents, because at every stage of legal transformation — from research and drafting to pricing and client service — it's human capability that will set firms apart. ▴

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## INDUSTRY INTERVIEW

# SAAS IS THE FOUNDATION FOR LAW'S AGENTIC FUTURE

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As Elite secures new investment and accelerates SaaS adoption, chief technology officer John Machado explains why the cloud is the emerging foundation for law firm operations — and how Elite is partnering with the most successful firms in the world to lead the way

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For more information,  
visit: [elite.com](https://elite.com)

75% increase in SaaS subscription use in 2025 — signalling a decisive sign that firms are not only experimenting but committing to it as the operating system of the modern law firm.

“The gravity-like pull of real, multi-tenant cloud is absolutely tied to deriving maximum benefit from a time of huge technological disruption. It is the foundation on which law firms will operate in the future,” says John Machado, Elite’s chief technology officer.

### Unlock AI’s potential

For law firm leaders, the business case for SaaS is not only about hosting. It is about fundamentally changing the operating model. Machado says this is no longer the disruptive transition of years past.

“Cloud in 2025 is less of a ‘before and after’ proposition,” he says. “It’s more of a continuous journey. With careful planning, the migration is far less disruptive than people imagine.”

Elite partners closely with customers to structure projects, and aligns with firms’ key timelines to minimise impact on staff, who are already familiar with most of the technologies involved.

Why does this matter? Because the ease of the



**“The gravity-like pull of real, multi-tenant cloud is absolutely tied to deriving maximum benefit from a time of huge technological disruption. It is the foundation on which law firms will operate in the future.”**

**R**unning a law firm in the cloud was once considered a distant prospect. Today it is no longer a question of ‘if’, but ‘when’.

In the 2025 edition of the annual **Briefing** law firm strategy benchmarking research, Frontiers, for the first time, every C-level leader completing the survey indicated that the cloud is in their vision for all core business systems. In fact, 16% have already migrated there, another 14% said it would take until early 2026, but most (62%) expect to migrate all core business systems to the cloud within two to five years (**Briefing** Frontiers, 2025, p17).

Leading legal tech provider Elite has seen the same trend: in 2025, the company reported a

journey determines how quickly firms can reach the real destination: systems that don't just record activity but actively guide better decisions.

"SaaS is the foundation, and AI is the advantage it enables," continues Machado. AI will help teams to work more efficiently with "systems of answers", he explains.

"You essentially have access to virtually unlimited computing power in the cloud. That allows AI to analyse data and workflows at scale, and helps people to continuously improve processes by taking more intelligent actions."

Elite believes that this shift marks the beginning of a new stage in legal operations: moving from system interaction to system assistance. AI will allow teams to work more efficiently with the resources and skills they already possess, by providing better access to data and faster routes to answers.

"The big benefit of AI in the cloud is more real-time data, across more systems, to address problems where they arise," Machado continues. "The faster and more accurately you arrive at answers, the more value you deliver to clients. These are capabilities that lift-and-shift cloud or on-premises solutions cannot offer."

### **Elite innovations: AI in action**

Elite has already introduced a series of AI-enabled features designed to alleviate pressure points in firms' business operations. The common thread is that every innovation is embedded inside a single SaaS platform, not bolted on. That means firms capture benefits immediately, with security and scalability built in.

Machado sums it up: "The SaaS platform is

what turns these capabilities from experiments into outcomes. As everything runs as a service, we can deliver new AI features across the entire client base in days — not months or years."

Elite Validate (launched in early 2025) tackles billing compliance with outside counsel guidelines. AI parses client requirements to create reliable billing rules and enforces them throughout the work-to-cash cycle. This reduces invoice rejection and delays, thus helping firms to get paid faster. Where rejections occur, the system learns and builds better rules over time.

Proforma optimisation will apply similar intelligence to billing preparation, with AI surfacing suggested options for time entries and fee-earner decisions.

Month-end close is next in line. Elite is developing a guided, "wizard-style" interface that recommends efficient starting points based on past behaviours, streamlining one of the most time-consuming processes in firm finance.

Elite Payments, embedded natively within 3E, brings client transparency and flexibility for split payments. With AI applied, the goal is not only faster client payments but also data-backed decisions about prioritising invoices and managing cashflow strategically.

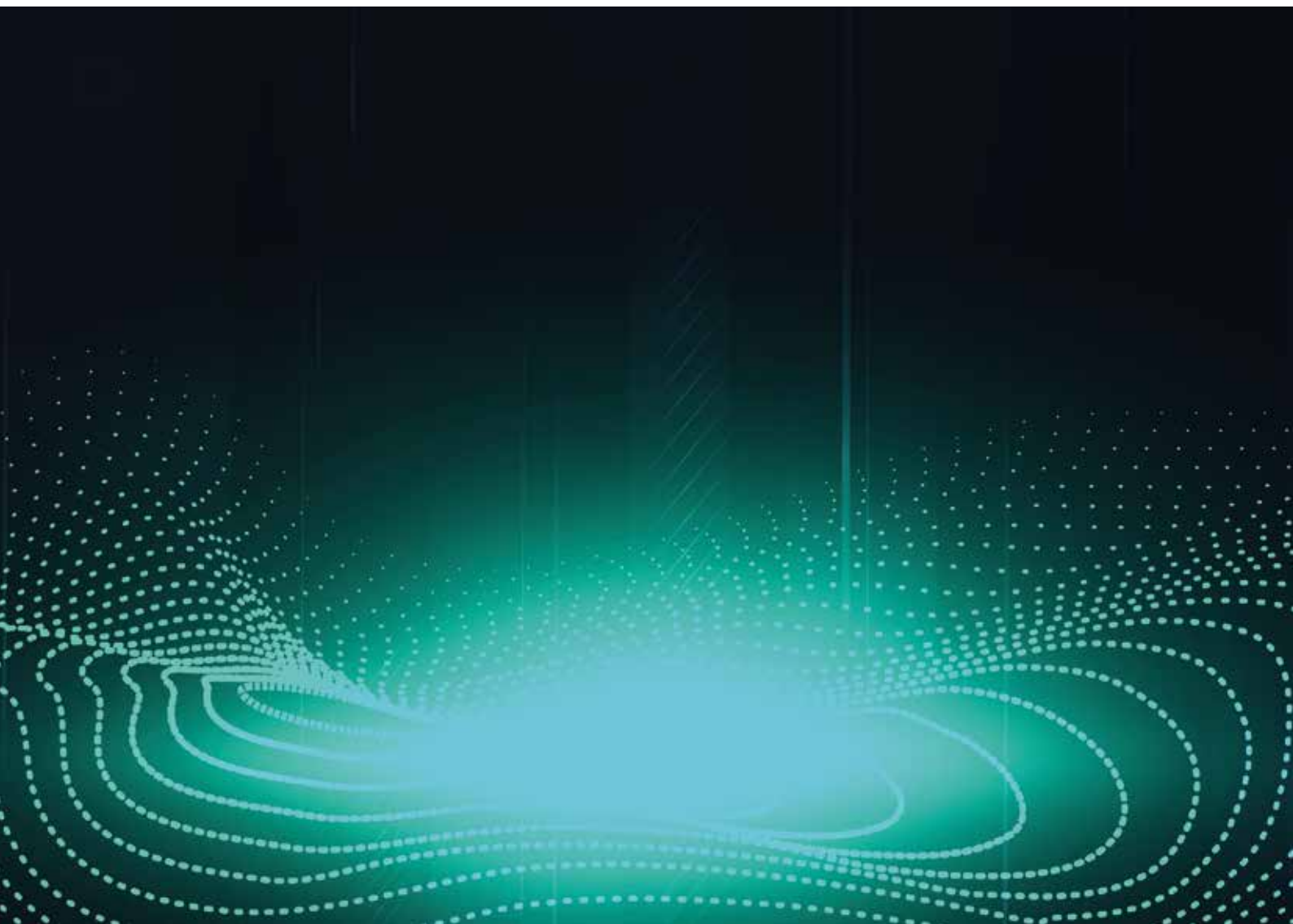
At ILTACON 2025, Elite also announced an AI assistant that will be able to handle natural-language questions on matter status, proforma routing and invoice escalation, further reducing manual intervention in financial workflows.

Collaboration with Microsoft reinforces this single-platform approach. Later in 2025, Elite's SaaS platform will integrate with Microsoft Fabric, enabling customers to access data through a real-time data lake within their own Microsoft Fabric instance — fully managed by Elite. This will unlock easy-to-use data anytime, through Elite's robust embedded dashboard and analytics capabilities, while also supporting direct access from external BI tools. According to Machado, this innovation delivers a single source of truth across time, billing, collections, and profitability, allowing firms always to be in sync and make more informed decisions, faster and without complexity.

"Elite lifts the burden of operational

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**"The big benefit of AI in the cloud is more real-time data, across more systems, to address problems where they arise. The faster and more accurately you arrive at answers, the more value you deliver to clients. These are capabilities that lift-and-shift cloud or on-premises solutions cannot offer."**



complexity for firms, empowering them to scale with confidence and stay focused on strategic growth,” he says.

### **The agentic business of law**

The long-term vision is what Machado describes as an “agentic” workplace. Individuals will be empowered to decide whether a system ought to perform a series of actions within a workflow instead of them — and whether outcomes are such that it’s trusted to take on certain tasks on an ongoing basis, or a human check-in is required to manage risk.

“This can apply across back-office operations, but also to the fee-earner experience,” he says. “The system can take on repeatable functions without constant user interaction, while still giving people the control to decide whether certain workflows should run autonomously or require human oversight. Different parts of the firm will evolve at different speeds, but the potential is significant.”

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Client experience will also be a driver of adoption. “Firms understand that client experience is critical to their reputation,” Machado says. “AI will allow them to spend less time on billing and more on the collaborative interactions that clients value most.”

For Machado, the message is clear: AI adoption is no longer a question of if, but of when — and only a true SaaS platform can make that seamless, scalable and secure. ▀



## INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

# LEGAL INNOVATION AT LIGHTNING SPEED

Changing a legal tech system often takes a long time — but not always. Slater and Gordon chief technology officer Simon Martin showcases how its strong partnership with ShareDo enabled the firm to deliver the first phase of its new CMS migration in the blink of an eye

Over the past year and a half, Slater and Gordon has been working hard to take its digital transformation to the next level — with plans to move 95% of its business operations and systems to the cloud by 2026, confirms its chief technology officer Simon Martin. “Our tech strategy is focused on multiple things, with the main priorities being the transition to a SaaS-based architecture, having a data platform that enables us to see real-time analytics across our entire business, and laying the foundation that will support future technological advancements, including AI and genAI,” he says.

One of the core pillars of this strategy is a revamp of its case management system (CMS). A history of law firm acquisitions and siloed tech purchases has resulted in the firm using multiple CMSs (including three on-premises systems) across different areas of the business. The result: inconsistent processes, difficult system maintenance and management, and overall reduced productivity — a trifecta acting as a major blocker for the firm’s innovation strategy.

Keen to move away from the legacy on-prem systems and to embrace the cloud, the firm scoured the market for the right tech partner and a CMS that would check most, if not all, items off its rigorous, 198-point evaluation matrix.

After a year-long RFP process, it was ShareDo’s CMS that emerged as the clear winner, meeting 95% of the firm’s thorough evaluation criteria. Of those, the system’s cloud-centric approach, easy integrations with other tech solutions (including

Microsoft products) and low/no code capabilities were the key factors that attracted the firm.

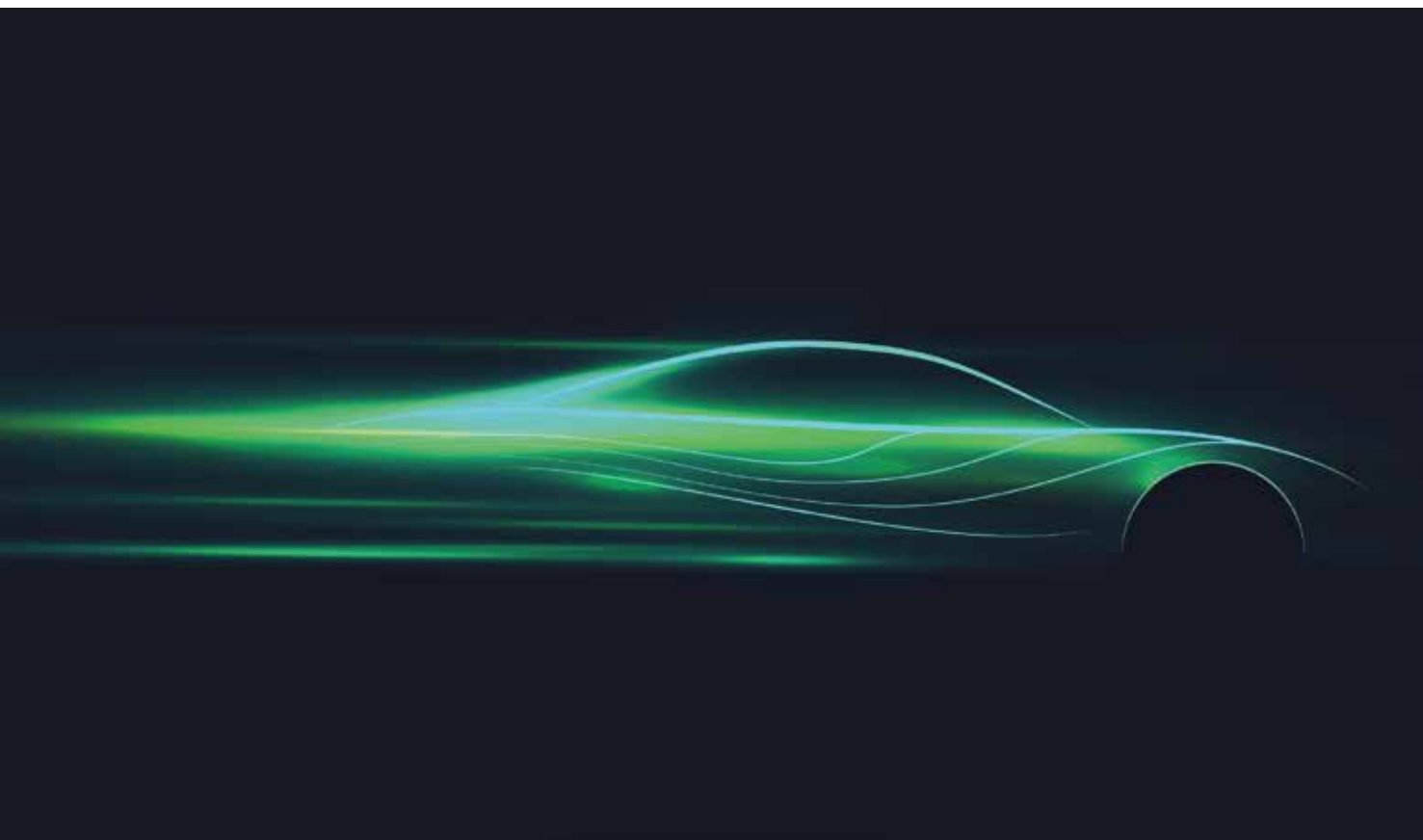
“While lots of other tech providers we tested out were in the process of building the capabilities we were looking for, ShareDo was already 12 months ahead of the curve,” notes Martin. “That was quite a big deciding factor for us, as we didn’t want to wait a long time to be able to use those capabilities — we wanted to hit the ground running, quickly.”

## A spanner in the works

Slater and Gordon began working with ShareDo at the end of 2024. The process was split into three phases — one for replacing each existing on-prem CMS — and was originally set to be completed within 18 months.

However, a last-minute issue with one of its existing providers accelerated the first phase of the plan: migrating the firm’s cost department, which runs a varied caseload of high-value professional

**“Our internal team and ShareDo had to be very responsive and adapt fast to deliver training both virtually and face-to-face, but also create the necessary knowledge base. We had many moments when the team had to deliver training less than 24 hours after a new capability was built.”**



indemnity and clinical negligence cost cases. As such, Slater and Gordon was forced to migrate 80 users, thousands of cases and a million documents to the new CMS within 12 weeks — about half the original allotted time, and during the festive season no less.

This is where ShareDo's solution accelerator packs — pre-defined workflows that can be tweaked to fit a firm's particular processes — proved particularly valuable, allowing the firm to significantly speed up the migration process.

Migrating the department's documents and data was only half the battle, however. The transition also required an extensive training programme to teach the users how to work in the new platform. Martin recalls: "Our internal team and ShareDo had to be very responsive and adapt fast to deliver training both virtually and face-to-face, but also create the necessary knowledge base. We had many moments when the team had to deliver training less than 24 hours after a new capability was built, and even when we were two weeks away from the go-live date, we were still building features and processes. It was incredibly challenging."

During this tough time, ShareDo provided constant and extensive support — both for completing the migration and for training — which impressed the firm and confirmed it was the right vendor with which to partner. "ShareDo's team was brilliant in terms of rapid development and

support — very thorough, personable and authentic. We wouldn't have been able to deliver this phase without it," notes Martin.

While the journey's not yet complete, Slater and Gordon can already see the positives the new CMS brings to the table: higher system stability, better performance and, above all, the ability to make changes much faster and smoother.

### Full steam ahead

With phase one complete in record time, the firm is now in the midst of delivering the second phase, which involves migrating its complex practice areas, integrating several existing tech solutions into the CMS, and implementing additional features that were not delivered in phase one. The last phase will see Slater and Gordon deliver the final CMS migration, and implement automation for certain processes, among other tasks.

"We can't rest on our laurels. The second and third phases are more complex, so both we and ShareDo really need to step up our game," says Martin. Nevertheless, given the baptism of fire the firm has already been through, Martin is confident in this strong partnership's ability to keep the momentum going until the end. ▴

For more information,  
visit: [sharedo.com](https://www.sharedo.com)

## INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

# CLOSING THE COMMERCIAL SKILLS GAP

James Markham and Darren Mee, founders of The Legal MBA, outline the key barriers to implementing a successful commercial skills training programme within large law firms — and offer key tips for overcoming them

**I**ndustry surveys consistently show high intent for dedicated commercial skills training for lawyers, but the reality is that firms are struggling to implement programmes in practice.

From our conversations with firms over the past 12 months, we've identified three key challenges firms are facing when embedding stronger commercial skills and behaviours in law firms.

## 1 Lawyers' time and availability

Practising lawyers are very busy. Additionally, the senior associates and partners that have most influence on the commercial success of the firm have the highest charge-out rates — and thus a strong disincentive to take time out to hone those commercial skills.

The opportunity cost of those lost billable hours is a far higher barrier than the actual cost of delivering the training. Combined with the risk of last-minute non-attendance, effectiveness of the training can quickly be undermined.

Consequently, successful firms are — and should be — moving away from full-day workshop formats and towards bite-size training sessions instead. These shorter lessons can then have an emphasis on changing commercial behaviours, not just teaching the concepts, in order to boost ROI.

## 2 Capacity and capability of internal subject matter experts

Commercial skills programmes tend to lean

heavily on internal subject matter experts to create and deliver training — typically people from the firm's finance, marketing and business development functions.

However, there is a high time-cost, both to creating the materials and delivering the training for these experts. As one senior finance professional put it, it's like painting the Forth Bridge — by the time you've trained everyone, it's time to start again.

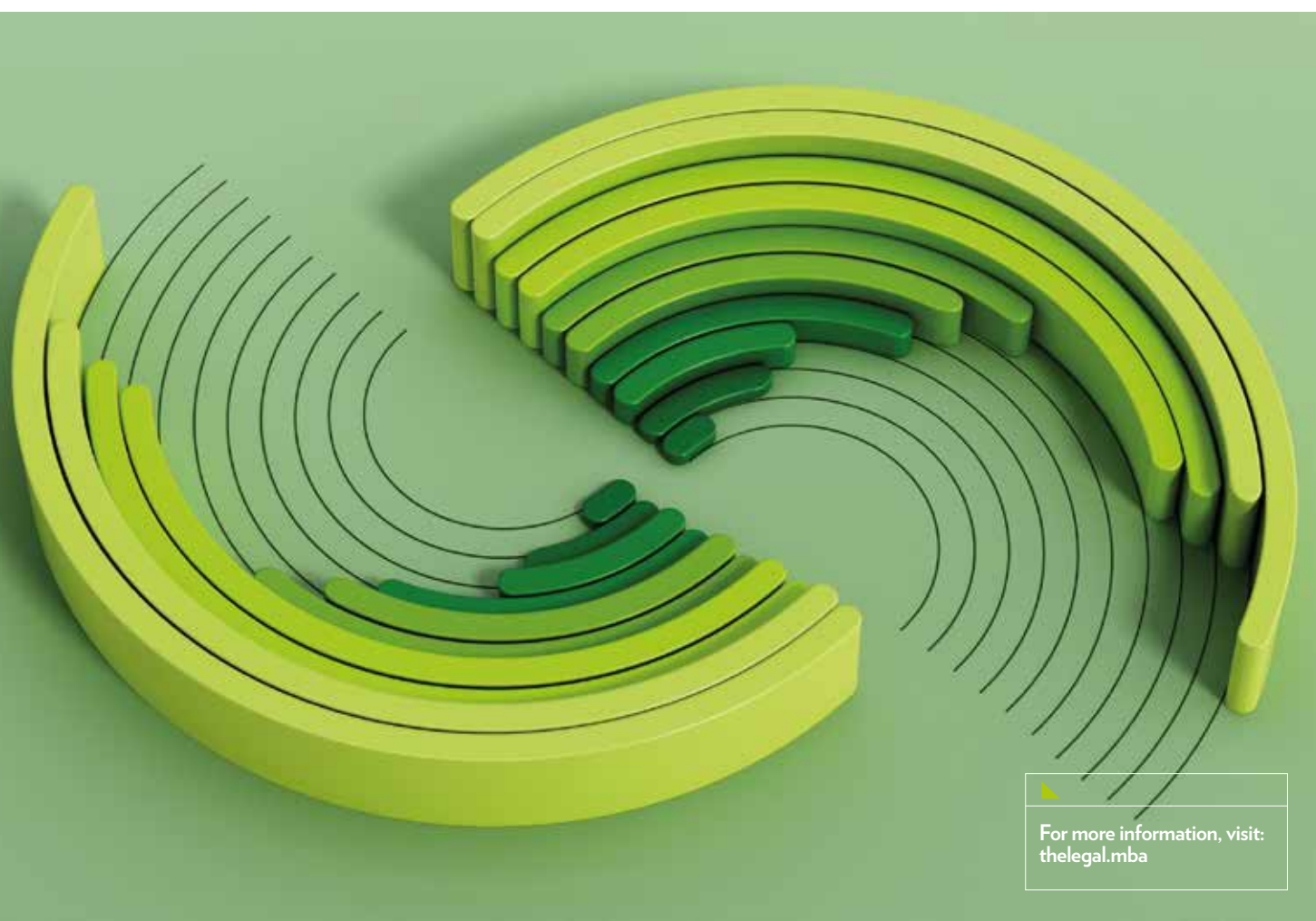
Firms are also often stumbling into a potential capability gap, as not everyone might be suited to such a task. After all, the skills to analyse data and work one-on-one with a partner are not the same as the skills to generalise learnings and confidently deliver training to a wider group.

To solve these problems, firms are increasingly investing in train-the-trainer support for their internal subject matter experts, even if that means increasing the lead times to ultimately deliver the commercial skills training to their lawyers. We also see greater attention on ensuring there is sufficient capacity — either by ringfencing time for training delivery within wider job descriptions, or by hiring dedicated trainers.

## 3 Unique nature of law firms

Firms may look to programmes run by external providers to deliver commercial skills training. The challenge here is to ensure the training is relevant to private practice law firms, and the specific context and priorities for the firm.





Law firms are different to other businesses, and the commercial skills training needs to reflect the specifics of partnerships, billable hours and the broader regulatory environment — these all have an impact on what commercial behaviours lawyers can realistically put into practice.

However, industry-agnostic providers may focus on topics of little practical relevance to lawyers and the legal sector. False economies we've seen firms struggle with are having to translate an external provider's training into the specific context of the firm — either before or after the training takes place — or having to join up the

firm's key messages across a range of different specialist providers.

The time saved in having external providers deliver training can quickly be lost through these high internal coordination costs. Playing to the strengths of both internal subject matter experts and the right external training partners is key to scaling training quickly across the firm.

### **Crafting the right training programme: a balancing act**

Given the nature of commercial skills training, there are typically high expectations to demonstrate results and ROI — particularly where that training is geared towards more senior lawyers and the high opportunity cost that comes with their time.

To get a positive ROI on commercial skills training, firms must design and deliver relevant programmes that respect the finite and valuable time of lawyers, consider the capacity and capability of those expected to deliver training internally, and carefully integrate that internal expertise with the right external training providers. In doing so, firms can effectively embed stronger commercial behaviours among lawyers. ▴

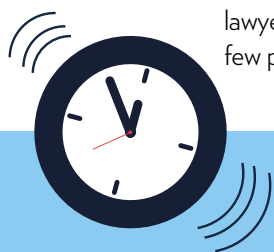
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**“To get a positive ROI on commercial skills training, firms must design and deliver relevant programmes that respect the finite and valuable time of lawyers, consider the capacity and capability of those expected to deliver training internally, and carefully integrate that internal expertise with the right external training providers.”**



**CATRIONA WOLFENDEN**,  
product and innovation director,  
Weightmans

I hope no one in a law firm should have to explain that a mixed project team doesn't just mean lawyers with different kinds of specialisms! The magic happens when we put together people (both lawyers and business support individuals) who have diverse interests, knowledge and seniority, and this needs to be a given. I don't think client demands will change as, fundamentally, clients want accurate, timely, cost-effective and easily consumable legal advice. However, using a mixture of people, process and technology will enable law firms to better serve these demands in the future — and not need to have lawyers reviewing documents at 4am when, frankly, few people work at their best.



## TIME CAPSULE

What will the law firm of the future look like (in five years' time)? Four legal business leaders make their predictions



**LIZZY FIRMIN**, chief operating  
officer, Ellisons

I hope firms will grow even further in ways to keep client relationships and service front and centre of all we do, to train and develop talent in a meaningful and fulfilling way with more varied career paths, and to become more efficient. This might mean more automation, better use of AI and more advanced software, as well as simplified compliance through better technology.

I think all business services functions will evolve over the next few years. The introduction of more established AI tools will change how marketing, IT and compliance operate. Greater levels of automation will positively impact on finance and HR, so the proportion of their time spent on strategic development and proactively supporting and developing the business should grow. Front of house will become more adaptive to clients in terms of communication. I could go on!



**EMMA DOWDEN**, chief  
operating officer, Burges Salmon

There will likely be an ever-increasing focus on client experience and demonstrating value. In five years' time, I hope to see a holistic, tech-enabled multidisciplinary service offering that is tailored to client needs. I also predict the rise of the business professionals as part of the front-line delivery team — and having legal project managers embedded into matters will be commonplace. As for the biggest challenges, I expect the spotlight still to be on tech adoption, integrating genAI tools into daily working practices, and the impact of those tools on the business model. What we need to remember is that not all that glitters is gold — we must look beyond the hype to make focused investments that drive differentiation in service delivery.



**CHARLOTTE GREEN**, head of  
clients and markets, Gowling WLG

Many of today's challenges will remain, such as differentiation in a crowded market and cross-team collaboration. I don't think traditional remuneration and reward will be rearranged on an industry-wide basis, although its days will be severely limited — it will feel like a coat that's got too tight, and savvy firms will be looking for a new coat altogether, not patching up the old one. I think we'll see more non-equity partners coming through, which will allow for more capital to meet the need for increased and ongoing tech investment.

Firms that haven't normalised adoption of evolving tech platforms will be under threat. Larger firms will likely be working down the value chain because they can add new business models more easily with their greater resources. In doing so, they will start to crowd out the mid-market law firms and build additional annuity revenue streams, which are less reliant on doing the big deals. That said, a few respected and savvy smaller firms which have expertise in the right areas will start to climb the value chain too.

In business services, I think we'll see larger IT departments and innovation teams, but fewer people in other areas owing to the impact of agentic AI and other tech advances. This reduction will be visible, but gradual. Training of lawyers and business services people will also need to change, increasing in client-centricity as we focus our offering in a more strategic and human way. ▀