

PRACTICE NOTE

Your lawyers already use AI.

Six steps a well-advised firm should take next.

At most firms, lawyers already use AI every day, though it is still not part of how the firm works. Turning that into measurable gains for the firm takes two things: establishing, as a firm, its own standard for the work, and getting its people to work that way. This note sets out the first steps for each. They are all things a firm can do on its own, starting today.

THE WORK

Once a firm establishes its own standard for work product, the AI tool applies it consistently for every lawyer, on every matter.

Each lawyer can then deliver more work to that standard. A firm in that position can compete for matters that once required more resources than it had.

Start with one practice area and the type of document it works on most. Choose the lawyers in that area who do this work best, whom others respect, and who champion the firm's adoption of AI.

- 1** Ask each of them to go back to a recent matter, pick a document of that type they drafted or reviewed, and reconstruct their work on it line by line: what they started from and what they changed and why, as well as where they went back to the client or consulted others.

Give those lawyers the task of setting out clearly how the firm works on this type of document: its standard position on each issue, fallbacks it will accept, what it never accepts, and which departures from these positions must be escalated to a partner or the client. Include where a position or an escalation depends on the particular matter, such as what the client has at stake or which side the firm represents. Then bring the practice area's lawyers together to work through it and decide the questions about how the firm works that it has never had occasion to settle.

- 2**
- 3** **Load what they set out into the firm's enterprise AI tool and test it on a past matter.** Review its output, including the points it flags for escalation. Compare that with what the tool produces on its own, and with how the firm handled that matter. The first comparison shows what the lawyers' work has added, and the second shows what is still missing. Add what is missing and test again until the output reflects how the firm works, then move on to the next type of document.

THE PEOPLE

The more a firm's lawyers and staff adopt the tool, the more the firm can deliver, faster and to its standard.

Most lawyers and staff adopt the tool when it fits their regular workflow and when they recognize that it relieves them of a time-consuming task.

4 Start with the lawyers who champion AI adoption and were involved in establishing the standard. They use the tool on their next live matter, then take the rest of the practice area through it: the quality of what the tool produced, the hours it saved them, and where it still needed their judgment.

5 Make the tool available to the rest of the practice area inside the applications they already use, such as Word and email. The firm's expectation should be that each lawyer and staff member uses it on their next matter.

6 Appoint one person responsible for adoption in the practice area. That person brings everyone together regularly to compare experiences with the tool, including what worked and what held people back, and builds what is learned into the standard. The role also includes clearing bottlenecks and driving adoption by whatever motivates the group, whether a friendly competition or recognition for good ideas or hard work.

Legal engineering: the role that makes AI tools work for the whole firm

The six steps above are presented because they are the most effective way for a firm to start building AI tools into how it works. Making those tools work for the whole firm takes further work, including:

- providing them with ready access to the firm's precedents and past work;
- setting rules for confidentiality and for checking output before it leaves the firm;
- maintaining the standard and the tools as AI improves, the law changes and the firm's practice develops;
- reaching senior attorneys who will never open an AI application; and
- explaining to clients the firm's policies and standards for its use of AI.

Taken together, this work is known as legal engineering. Legal AI companies and large law firms now employ legal engineers to do it, because that is what it takes for AI tools to improve how a firm works.

ABOUT CODIFIED COUNSEL

Codified Counsel is a lawyer-led Legal Engineering Advisory Firm (LEAF). It builds a law firm's own standard into the AI tools the firm has invested in, and takes responsibility for their adoption across the firm.

www.codifiedcounsel.com · contact@codifiedcounsel.com