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A MITRATECH COMPANY

The Legal Portfolio Solution

Where Efficiency, Tech, Risk, and Talent Connect

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Stop Juggling, Start Building:
How Legal Leaders Respond to Today's Pressures

Dear peers,

When you lead a legal team, every day can feel like a juggling act — there is the urgent work, the invisible work, and the strategic work, all competing for time that never expands. The priorities and pressures faced by legal teams sound a lot like what many of us also face in our personal lives.

Many of us face the same realities at work: growing workloads due to regulatory shifts (EU AI Act is the new GDPR and CCPA), the relentless pace of digital transformation, where legal teams are expected to immediately adopt and scale with AI, and an expectation to address all of this with no added full-time headcount and flat or decreased budgets.

This isn't just a corporate challenge; for me, the parallels hit home every single day.

Like many of you, I'm also navigating the complex demands of a busy home life. The pressure to manage it all — three children, a husband with his own demanding career, kids' sports commitments, meals, laundry, and everything else — is a constant lesson in resource constraint and optimization.

Think about it. When a new demand hits your personal life — say, a massive school project due tomorrow — your immediate reaction isn't to clone yourself. Instead, you instinctively run a triage of your priorities and resources that mirrors the exact process this ebook advocates for our legal teams.

The legal department's challenge is the Portfolio Problem. Our goal isn't merely to work harder; it's to work smarter by matching the demand (the problem) with the optimal supply (the resource).

The solution, both at home and in the office, lies in embracing the Portfolio Solution and diversifying your resources to ensure the right solution addresses the right problem at the right cost.

This ebook provides the roadmap for applying this model to your legal department.

It is time to stop viewing our constraints — our budgets, our limited headcount — as obstacles, and start viewing them as design parameters for a more optimized, strategic, and adaptable legal function.

Hang in there. You're not alone.

Jessica Nguyen

Jessica Nguyen

Deputy General Counsel at Docusign,
Head of Contract Nerds, Strategic Advisor at Paragon, and Mother of 3



Introduction

THE PROBLEM

Across our survey of 150 senior legal leaders, one pattern came through loud and clear: The gap between what legal is asked to deliver and what it's resourced to handle keeps widening — not because of poor management, but because the operating model itself is outdated.

Legal is being asked to run like a modern business function — agile, data-driven, and integrated — while relying on a staffing structure built for stability and hierarchy. The result is a system that can't flex fast enough to meet the pace of change.

Regulations shift without warning (37% of leaders cite regulatory uncertainty as a top concern). AI is transforming workflows faster than policies can catch up (88% expect major changes within two years). And nearly half of teams (46%) say they're already understaffed.

It's not a capacity problem — it's a design problem.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Legal teams face conflicting pressures: growing workloads from regulatory uncertainty and geopolitical shocks, budget constraints that limit headcount, and expectations to do more with the same resources. The path forward requires matching the right resources to the right problems.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Teams that are adapting fastest aren't necessarily bigger or better funded. They're simply organizing work differently.

This ebook shows you how 150 legal leaders are responding. We'll share survey data on the four priorities that matter most to GCs and CLOs (efficiency, technology, risk, talent), concrete strategies for each, and a 90-day roadmap to build a solution: the **Portfolio Solution**, a strategic mix of permanent staff, flexible legal talent, and targeted outside counsel that lets you match each problem to the most efficient resource.

Teams using this approach report measurable wins: 33% credit ALSPs (alternative legal service providers that include flexible legal talent) for recent successes, and leaders report better cost control while maintaining quality — with some reducing outside counsel spend by 30-50% while improving turnaround times.

The result isn't just a more efficient department. It's a more resilient one - built to flex when the business does.

Teams that are adapting fastest aren't necessarily bigger or better funded. They're simply organizing work differently.

HERE'S HOW

The four priorities work together when you have the right system. Build your portfolio systematically in five steps:

STEP 1 **Audit Current State (Week 1-2)**

STEP 2 **Identify Gaps & Inefficiencies (Week 3-4)**

STEP 3 **Assess Solutions Strategically (Month 2)**

STEP 4 **Pilot Targeted Solutions (Month 2-3)**

STEP 5 **Scale What Works (Month 3+)**

This approach makes transformation manageable and proves your team's value at each step.



KEY FINDINGS

1. **Legal teams face a resourcing catch-22:** high outside counsel fees push work in-house, but budget constraints prevent hiring the people needed to handle it. The result? 46% report being understaffed while navigating regulatory uncertainty (37%), AI disruption (88%), and climbing counsel costs (31%).

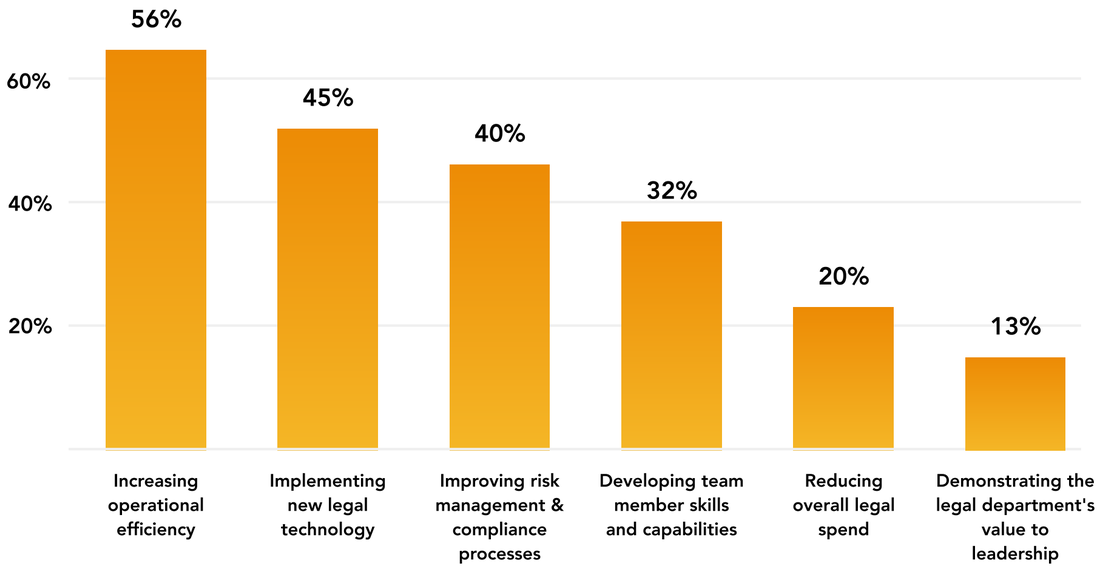
2. **Mixed staffing models are working:** 33% of teams credit alternative legal service providers (ALSPs, which include flexible legal talent) for recent wins, 30% are shifting work from big law to cost-effective alternatives, and leaders are building resource portfolios that blend permanent staff with external expertise.

3. **Four key priorities are interconnected:** Efficiency (56%), Technology (45%), Risk/Compliance (40%), and Business Alignment (39%) are interdependent. Legal teams have no choice but to address 4 priorities at the same time, given their interdependencies.

The Four Priorities Driving Legal Transformation

Legal leaders called out four priorities that define where leaders are focusing their efforts and what it takes to move legal departments forward.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES ARE CURRENTLY THE HIGHEST PRIORITIES FOR YOUR LEGAL DEPARTMENT?



TOP LEGAL DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES:

- **Increasing operational efficiency (56%)**
- **Implementing new technology (45%)**
- **Improving risk management and compliance processes (40%)**
- **Developing team member skills and capabilities (32%)**

These aren't standalone initiatives. They're interdependent systems that reinforce one another. You need people to implement technology and improve processes that drive efficiency. You need technology to automate low-value work so your talent can proactively address risk and compliance issues. And you need efficiency gains to fund the technology and specialized expertise that make everything else possible. The strongest teams treat these as systems that each support the others.

Here's how leaders are turning each key priority into an advantage. →

PRIORITY 1

Efficiency: The Foundation

Operational efficiency is the engine for everything else. Without it, teams struggle to implement technology, keep up with risk, align with the business, or develop talent.

What leaders are doing:

- **Use alternative delivery models:** 51% turn to ALSPs (alternative legal service providers that include flexible legal talent) when facing capacity constraints.
- **Build repeatable processes:** 32% develop playbooks and standardized workflows. The best teams move beyond ad-hoc work management to create systems others can follow.
- **Allocate resources deliberately:** 29% cite deliberate use of outside counsel as a success factor, which suggests leaders are moving beyond default relationships to strategic resource allocation.

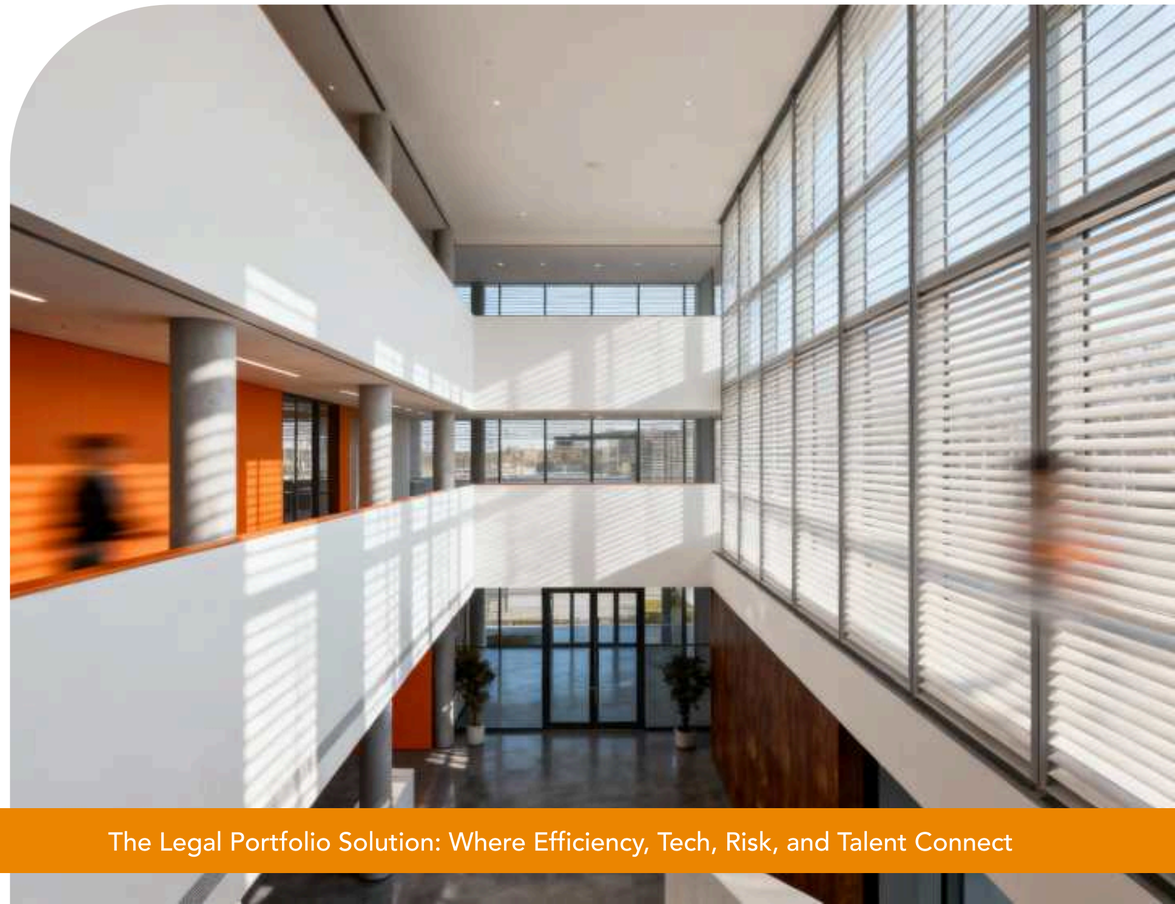
"We're a small legal team and overloaded. I've already tried hiring full-time, but we just can't fill the reqs. It's either find another model or break."

— GC, $1B-valued Employee Experience Platform

The best teams aren't trying to juggle faster; they're building foundations for repeatable systems that make speed possible. **Here's a practical step to start building efficiency right away:**

TIP TO GET STARTED

List your five most time-consuming recurring tasks. Circle the one that follows the exact same process every time. That's your first candidate for flexible talent.



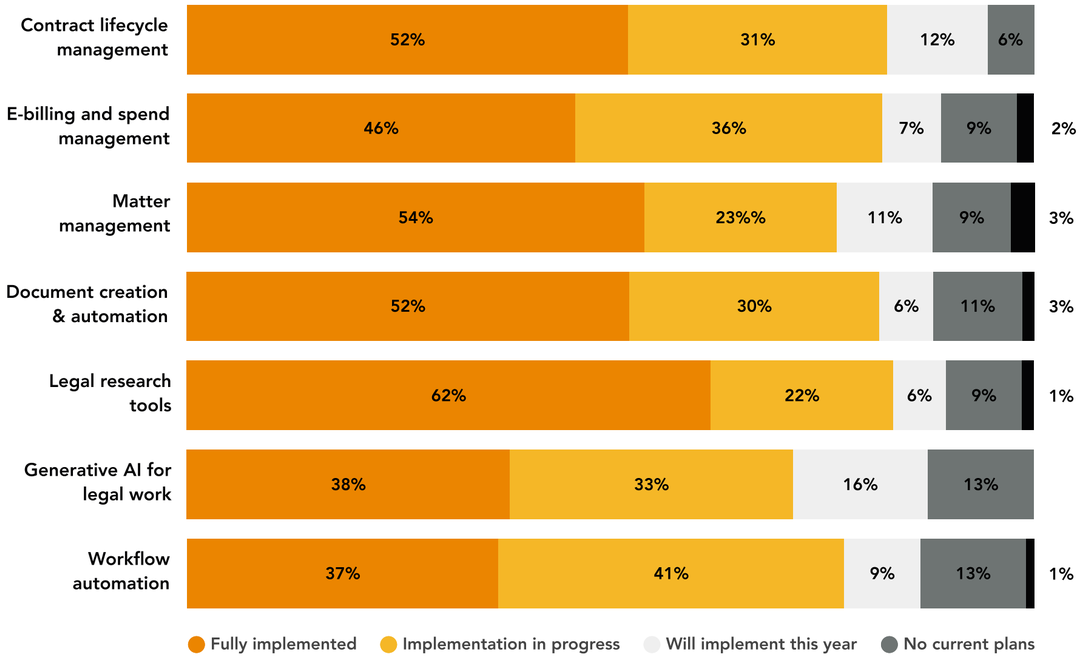
PRIORITY 2

Technology: A Force Multiplier

Technology multiplies what legal teams can accomplish, but only when you match tools to real business problems. The smart approach is to identify your biggest operational pain point, then test whether technology can solve it.

Where adoption stands:

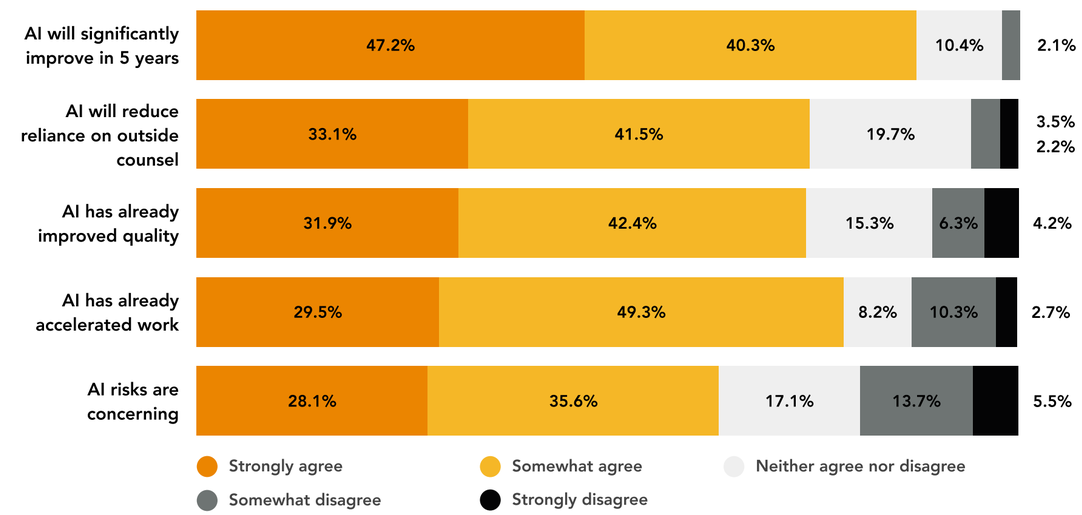
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS FOR LEGAL TECHNOLOGIES



Legal research tools (62%) and matter management (54%) lead adoption, while generative AI (38%) and workflow automation (37%) remain in early deployment.

The impact of AI:

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT AI IN LEGAL WORK?



Leaders expect AI to improve quickly (88%), many already see quality gains (74%), and most recognize real risks (64%).

Most leaders already see quality gains from AI (74%), showing that the technology works when properly deployed.

The lesson: adoption is no longer the hurdle, integration is.

TIP TO GET STARTED

Pick one narrow use case (like NDA review). Run a 30-day AI pilot. Track three numbers: cost saved, time reduced, and error rate. Use those numbers to secure buy-in for broader rollout.

PRIORITY 3

Risk and Regulatory Compliance: From Checkbox to Early Warning

Leaders are moving beyond checkbox compliance toward early warning systems that flag issues before they disrupt business operations.

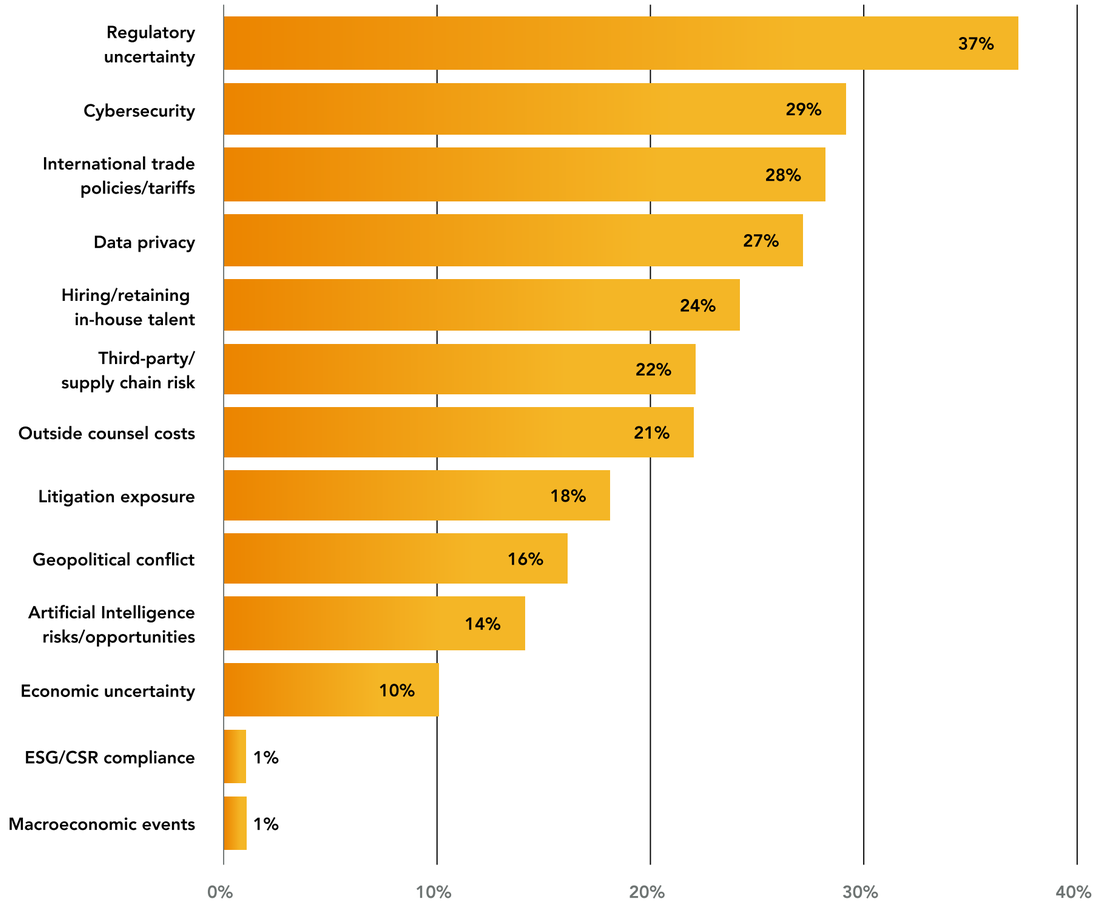
Top challenges reported:

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS YOUR BIGGEST CURRENT CHALLENGES?

Legal leaders face three challenges that rank nearly equally: regulatory change (34%), implementing new tech effectively (33%), and talent issues (33%). The close clustering shows these problems are interconnected pressures hitting teams simultaneously.

Top concerns cited:

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS FOR LEGAL TECHNOLOGIES



Regulatory uncertainty is the greatest concern for legal departments at 37%, followed by cybersecurity (29%), trade policies and tariffs (28%), and data privacy (27%).

Smart teams are building early-warning systems using multiple resource types rather than building everything internally. They partner with specialized flexible legal talent for regulatory monitoring, engage attorneys with niche expertise during major rule changes, and use technology vendors for automated tracking systems.

The shift reflects a broader trend: teams that build adaptable compliance systems using external resources can respond faster to regulatory changes than those trying to handle everything with permanent staff.

Strategy matters, but it only works when reinforced by repeatable actions.

✓ QUICK CHECK

Can you answer these three questions right now:

1. **What regulatory changes are pending in your top three jurisdictions?**
2. **Which business units are most exposed?**
3. **What's your 30-day response plan?**

If not, here's where to start: Assign one person to track pending regulations in your top three jurisdictions, identify which teams will be affected, and draft a 30-day response plan for the most likely scenarios.

Cybersecurity Spotlight: From Risk to Resilience

Nearly a third (29%) of legal leaders rank cybersecurity among their top concerns, and with good reason. Ransomware, data breaches, and AI-powered phishing are rising, making security a critical consideration for any legal department.

The strongest teams turn security from a liability into an advantage. They:

- **Get the basics right:** Multi-factor authentication (MFA), backups, and employee training block most attacks.
- **Secure the supply chain:** Build minimum requirements into vendor contracts, run joint drills, and enforce accountability.
- **Use AI defensively:** Deploy AI-powered tools to detect anomalies and flag suspicious activity faster.
- **Practice under pressure:** Run quarterly simulations with Legal, IT, and communications so everyone knows their role.

Security isn't just protection — it's trust. And in a world where one breach can define a brand, trust is strategy.

"We're doing internal legal audits ad hoc, and our old templates don't scale across countries. We need to upgrade and operationalize the process."

— Regional GC, Global Agricultural Company

PRIORITY 4

Talent: Teams That Flex With Demand

Talent is where all the other priorities either succeed or stall. Nearly half of teams report being understaffed, and four of the top six challenges relate to people.

The old model of permanent staff supported by outside counsel can’t keep pace with today’s demands.

The budget reality makes this worse: headcount approvals are notoriously difficult to secure. Temporary support is financially easier to justify, especially when framed as significant cost savings compared to outside counsel.

The situation requires a tailored response. Forward-looking teams are reframing their talent strategy to power their other priorities. Instead of hiring their way out, they are designing for elasticity — blending permanent staff, flexible legal talent (provided through ALSPs), and targeted outside counsel into a portfolio model that scales with demand.

TIP TO GET STARTED

Calculate what one missed deal costs versus hiring temporary help for peak periods. When you frame flexible talent as revenue protection rather than an expense, approvals get easier.

Here’s how to pair specific talent challenges with concrete solutions:

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
Finding and retaining talent (33%)	Use flexible talent to "try before you buy." Evaluate skills and cultural fit before making permanent offers. This reduces hiring risk while building your talent pipeline. Also compete on what firms can't offer: diverse opportunities and direct business impact.
Managing outside counsel costs (31%)	Diversify your counsel portfolio: keep bet-the-company issues with big law, but route routine work to ALSPs, boutique firms with specialized expertise, or firms offering alternative fee arrangements (AFAs) that eliminate billing surprises and often reduce costs 30-50%.
Workload exceeding capacity (29%)	Build surge capacity with flexible legal talent. Develop relationships with contract lawyers supported by playbooks for fast onboarding. Automate repetitive work to free core staff.
Lack of specialized expertise (27%)	Engage flexible lawyers with niche expertise for limited engagements or partner with specialized legal service providers for deep expertise at scale.

The message is clear: You can’t solve for talent with headcount alone. Build adaptable teams that flex with demand, tap expertise when you need it, and turn fixed costs into strategic investments. In doing so, you transform talent from a chronic bottleneck into a true competitive advantage.

The Portfolio Solution: Match Resources to Problems

Teams managing all four priorities successfully share a common approach: they match each type of legal work to the resource that handles it most efficiently.

Building this system requires a resource mix that flexes with demand. Permanent staff handles strategic work and maintains institutional knowledge. Flexible legal talent provides surge capacity and specialized expertise for defined periods. Outside counsel takes high-stakes matters requiring deep specialization. Technology automates repetitive, high-volume tasks.

The table below shows when to deploy each resource type:



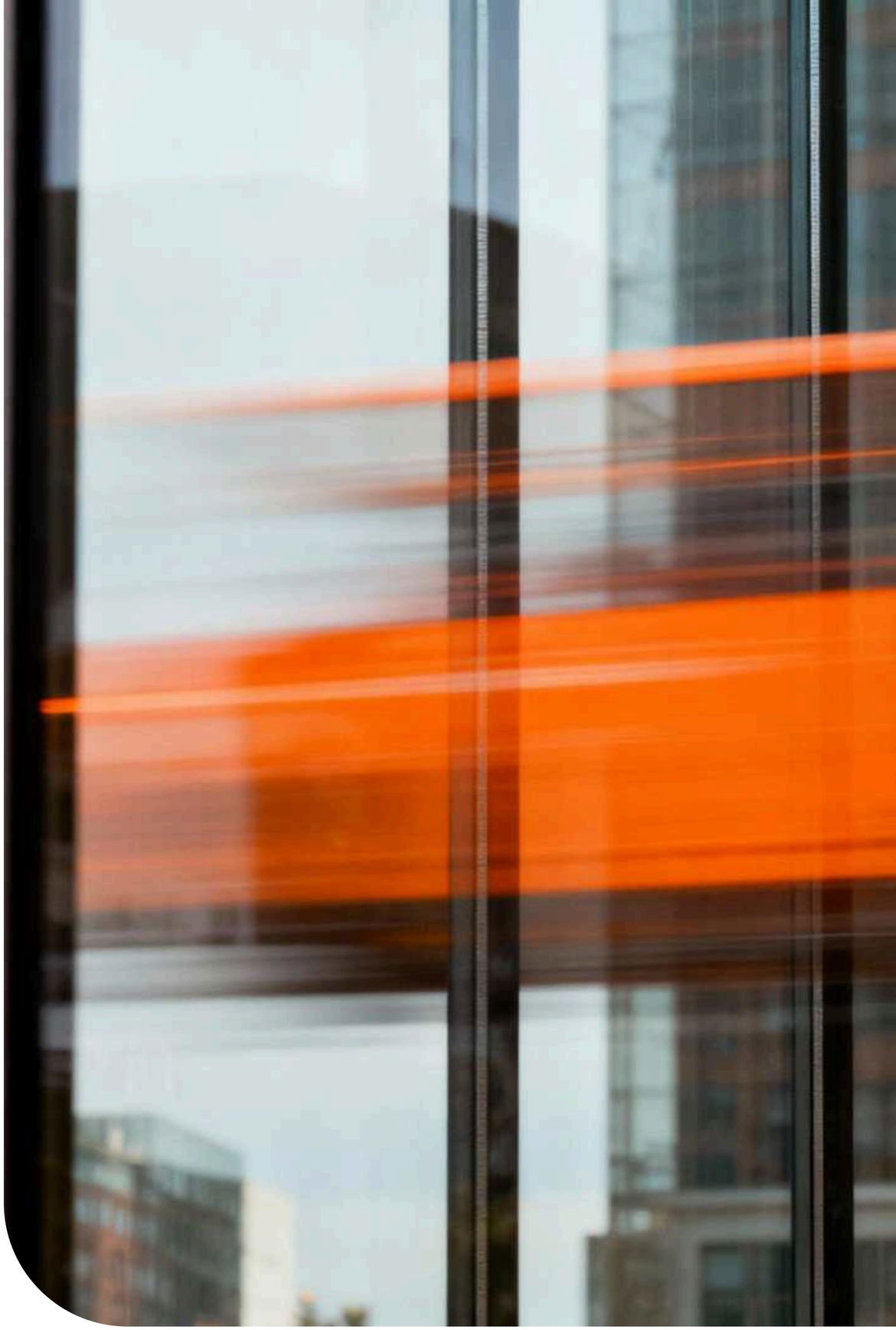
RESOURCE TYPE	BEST FOR	WATCH OUTS
Core Team (Permanent Staff)	Strategic matters, bet-the-company issues, institutional knowledge, long-term client relationships	Limited capacity, can't scale quickly, expensive to add headcount, fixed cost regardless of workload
Flexible Legal Talent	Surge capacity during peak periods, specialized expertise for limited time, predictable/repeatable work, coverage during leaves	Requires clear playbooks for fast onboarding, relationship building takes time, need defined scope
Outside Counsel	High-stakes litigation (BigLaw), specialized expertise in narrow areas (boutique firms), jurisdictional knowledge you lack internally (regional practices), routine work at fixed fees (AFA firms)	Service model varies by firm size: BigLaw brings deep resources but premium pricing; boutique firms offer specialized expertise at mid-range costs; firms with AFAs provide cost predictability but may have capacity limits
Technology	Repetitive tasks, high-volume document review, legal research, compliance monitoring, contract intake	Implementation time, team training required, not suitable for nuanced judgment, ongoing maintenance

The teams proving this model works report concrete wins: 33% credit flexible legal talent for recent successes, 30% are shifting routine work from traditional outside counsel, and leaders see better cost control while maintaining quality.

The power of the portfolio solution is adaptability - the ability to reallocate talent and spend dynamically, without starting from scratch each time.

Now here's how to build that system in 90 days.

→



Your Next 90 Days: Priorities & Portfolios

You've seen the building blocks: efficiency, technology, risk, and talent. This roadmap shows how to use them to create real and visible momentum in 90 days.

Start with your biggest pain point. Is it contract delays? Budget overruns? Compliance gaps? Pick one area, test one solution (flexible legal talent or AI pilot), measure results, and then expand.

Here's what that looks like based on what we've seen from high-performing teams:

MONTH 1

Find Your Biggest Pain Point

Start by understanding where your team's time, spend, and capacity actually go. You can't fix what you can't measure.

Review your calendar and workload from the past month. Identify tasks that meet three criteria:

- Take more than 3 hours per week
- Follow the same pattern every time
- Could be handled by a less experienced attorney

Calculate the cost: Your hourly rate x hours per year on this task = what you're spending on routine work.

> **TIP TO GET STARTED**
>
> **Export your calendar and use an AI tool to automatically categorize and rank your time.**

Once you've identified your biggest time drain, determine why it matters to the business:

Speed: Contract turnaround killing deals?

Cost: Outside counsel spending out of control?

Risk: Regulatory changes creating compliance gaps?

Scale: Volume exceeding team capacity?

This becomes your business case for change. Now you know where you're losing time and money, and why it matters. Next step: Build the foundation that lets you delegate effectively.

OUTCOME: A one-page snapshot of where your resources actually go - your "before" picture for change.

TIP: Don't wait for perfect data. Directionally correct is good enough to start.

MONTH 2

Match Your Problem to the Right Resource

You've identified your biggest pain point from Month 1. Now use the resource framework to match it to the most efficient solution.

Use flexible legal talent when:

- Work is predictable but periodic (monthly privacy reviews, quarterly filings)
- You need specialized expertise for a defined period (regulatory change implementation)
- Volume exceeds capacity but doesn't justify permanent headcount (contract review backlogs)
- You need coverage during leaves or peak periods

Use technology when:

- Tasks are repetitive and high-volume (NDA reviews, legal research)
- Work follows the same process every time (contract intake, compliance monitoring)
- Speed matters more than nuanced judgment (document review, due diligence)

Keep with core team when:

- Work requires deep institutional knowledge
- Matters are strategic or bet-the-company
- Long-term client relationships are critical

Use outside counsel when:

- Stakes are high (major litigation, M&A)
- You need jurisdictional expertise, which you lack internally
- Specialization is too narrow to justify building internally

Run your first pilot: Pick one solution where a small, visible improvement will earn credibility. Test it for 30 days:

- Set clear metrics: cost, time, quality, team satisfaction
- Compare results to your current baseline
- Track strategic value: What can you now do that you couldn't before?

Focus on proving value so you can scale in Month 3.



✓ **QUICK CHECK**

Pull last year's outside counsel invoices and sort by matter type, not by firm. Identify the 20% of matter types consuming 80% of spend. Pick one high-spend category (but not bet-the-company type work) to test with an ALSP at 30-50% savings.

OUTCOME: A measurable success story — proof that a smarter resourcing model works.

TIP: Publish your results internally. Visibility builds momentum faster than perfection.

MONTH 3

Prove Results and Scale

Your Month 2 pilot is complete. Now demonstrate value and expand what works.The goal is to turn a win into a pattern.

Document your results. Take your pilot results to leadership with concrete numbers that speak their language:

For CFOs (focus on financial impact):

- "We avoided $500K in regulatory penalties through proactive compliance monitoring."
- "We reallocated $150K from legal fees to strategic growth initiatives."

For business units (focus on speed and friction removal):

- "Deal cycles shortened by 5 days, letting sales close more deals per quarter."
- "Contract bottlenecks eliminated. No deals stalled in legal review last month."

For CEOs (focus on competitive advantage):

- "Legal efficiency gains funded our AI pilot, putting us ahead of competitors still debating implementation."

Expand what works. Scale successful pilots to similar workstreams:

- Extend proven solutions to adjacent matter types (if flexible talent worked for NDAs, test on vendor contracts).
- Build relationships with 2-3 strategic legal service providers who can partner with you on solutions, provide visibility into market talent, and scale capacity as needs evolve. You’re not looking for on-call staffing, but true advisory partnerships.
- Document successful processes in playbooks for consistent execution.
- Target 20-30% of routine work through external resources rather than permanent staff.

BUILD YOUR TEAM BEFORE YOU NEED IT

Identify providers now so you can engage within 48 hours when the next crisis hits. Pre-negotiate contracts, run one low-stakes test project, and establish the relationship before demand spikes.

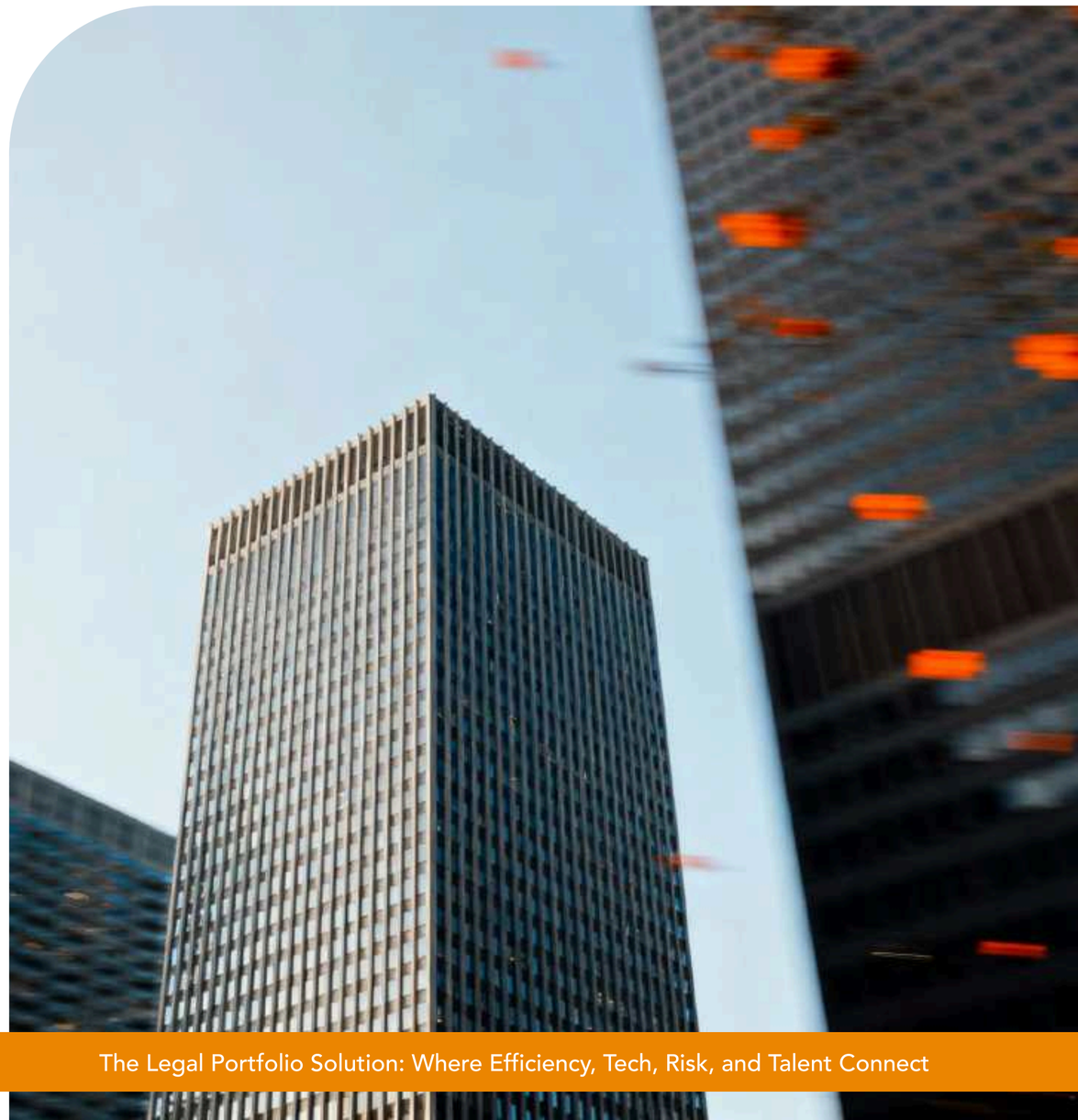
OUTCOME: A repeatable process, a trusted partner, and a data-backed case for continued investment.

TIP: Translate your results into business impact: “We accelerated deal cycles by five days” lands better than “We reduced contract turnaround time.”

By Day 90

You'll have moved from theory to practice. One successful pilot becomes your proof of concept. That proof unlocks budget and buy-in for broader transformation.

Most importantly, you'll have options when the next crisis hits.





Stop Juggling, Start Building

Legal teams can't solve today's challenges with yesterday's models. Efficiency, technology, risk, and talent aren't separate choices. They're interconnected pressures that demand integrated solutions.

The bottom line: The teams that will thrive over the next few years won't be the ones working harder — they'll be the ones that built smarter systems. What's emerging across the most forward-thinking departments isn't just a new staffing model; it's a new mindset.

They're shifting from headcount management to capacity design — viewing talent, technology, and external partners as interchangeable levers instead of fixed costs.

The portfolio solution isn't coming; it's here! Those who start building now won't just keep up; instead, they'll create the momentum that defines the next era of growth.



Contact us

to discuss how our flexible legal talent solutions can address your specific needs based on your assessment results.

CONTACT

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