

AI Is Changing How Legal Work Gets Done

Six takeaways for law firm leaders from AI4 2026

AI adoption in legal services is entering a new phase.

At AI4 this year, the conversation extended well beyond individual AI tools and productivity. Law firms are beginning to think more broadly about how AI fits into legal workflows, how institutional knowledge can be captured and scaled, and what new capabilities mean for growth, talent, governance and the economics of legal work.

After attending several legal-focused sessions, these were six ideas that stood out to me.

01

FROM PROMPTS TO PLAYBOOKS

AI is moving into the workflow.

Giving lawyers access to AI is only the beginning. Firms are starting to turn repeatable processes and the judgment of experienced attorneys into structured, AI-enabled workflows.

One framework shared at AI4 captured the progression simply:



The bigger opportunity isn't another prompt. It's identifying where AI can become part of how the work gets done while preserving the judgment and review that require human expertise.

QUESTION TO CONSIDER:

Where could your firm's expertise become a repeatable AI-enabled workflow?

02

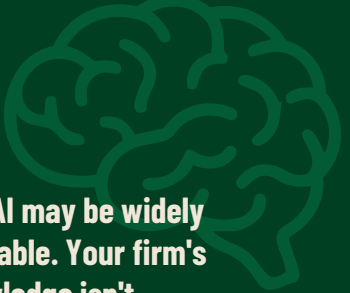
KNOWLEDGE + CONTEXT

The model isn't the moat.

The same foundational AI models are increasingly available to everyone. What isn't universally available is your firm's accumulated knowledge, experience and context.

Prior matters. Work product. Precedent. Client knowledge. Specialized expertise. The way your best lawyers approach a problem.

As AI becomes more accessible, the ability to organize, protect and activate institutional knowledge may become an increasingly important source of differentiation.



The AI may be widely available. Your firm's knowledge isn't.

03

GROWTH + ECONOMICS

AI isn't only making existing work faster. It's making new work possible.

Much of the AI conversation focuses on efficiency, but one of the more interesting examples at AI4 demonstrated what happens when AI expands what a firm is capable of delivering.

One firm shared a client need involving **900 easement assessments** that had to be reviewed over a weekend. Using an AI-enabled review workflow, the firm completed the work in **72 hours** and reported capturing approximately **\$200,000 in work it otherwise would not have captured**.

The value wasn't simply the hours saved. **AI made an opportunity operationally possible.**

That raises a bigger strategic question for law firms. As AI creates capacity, can firms take on work that previously wasn't feasible, serve more clients, develop new offerings or rethink how certain services are delivered and priced?

EFFICIENCY

900

easement assessments

CAPACITY

72

hours

GROWTH

\$200,000

in work

Efficiency creates capacity. Growth is where that capacity can create value.

04 | HUMAN EXPERTISE

Human judgment isn't disappearing. Its role is changing.

AI can gather, summarize and analyze information faster than professionals could before. That can allow lawyers to get to higher-value analysis and judgment sooner.

But context, strategy, relationships, professional judgment and accountability remain distinctly human responsibilities.

There is also a longer-term talent question worth considering:

If AI increasingly performs the work through which junior attorneys historically developed experience, how will firms develop the judgment of tomorrow's senior lawyers?

AI isn't only a workforce question. It's becoming a talent-development question.



05 | ADOPTION

This isn't a technology rollout.

THE LAUNCH IS THE BEGINNING, NOT THE FINISH LINE.

Making AI available doesn't mean people will use it effectively.

Successful adoption requires leadership, training, champions, redesigned workflows, incentives, measurement and ongoing iteration. Treating AI primarily as a technology project can miss much of what actually determines whether adoption happens.

AI transformation is as much about people and process as it is about technology.

- LEADERSHIP
- TRAINING
- CHAMPIONS
- REDESIGNED
- WORKFLOWS
- INCENTIVES
- MEASUREMENT
- ONGOING ITERATION

06 | GOVERNANCE

Governance can be an accelerator.

For law firms, responsible AI adoption brings particularly important considerations around confidentiality, privilege, client requirements, security, accuracy, professional responsibility and human oversight.

But governance shouldn't simply define what people can't do.

Effective governance gives professionals clearer boundaries for what they can do, where human review is required and how AI can be used responsibly.

That becomes even more important as AI moves from generating content toward agents capable of taking actions across workflows and systems.

The goal isn't AI without risk. It's creating the conditions to scale AI responsibly.



WHAT SHOULD LAW FIRM LEADERS BE ASKING NOW?

- 01 Are we using AI primarily to make individual tasks faster, or are we beginning to redesign workflows?
- 02 Which parts of our institutional knowledge could become an AI-enabled competitive advantage?
- 03 As AI creates new capacity, what work, clients or services could become possible that aren't practical today?
- 04 How will we develop future professionals as AI changes the work through which they learn?
- 05 Do our governance, data and change-management foundations support responsible AI adoption at scale?

Where does your firm go from here?

The starting point isn't necessarily another AI tool. It's understanding where AI can create meaningful business value, which workflows are worth rethinking, what new capabilities or opportunities it could unlock, and whether the firm's people, data and governance foundations are ready to support it.

Duffy Kruspodin helps organizations evaluate AI opportunities, readiness, governance and the path from experimentation to responsible implementation.

If your firm is working through these questions, let's talk.



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