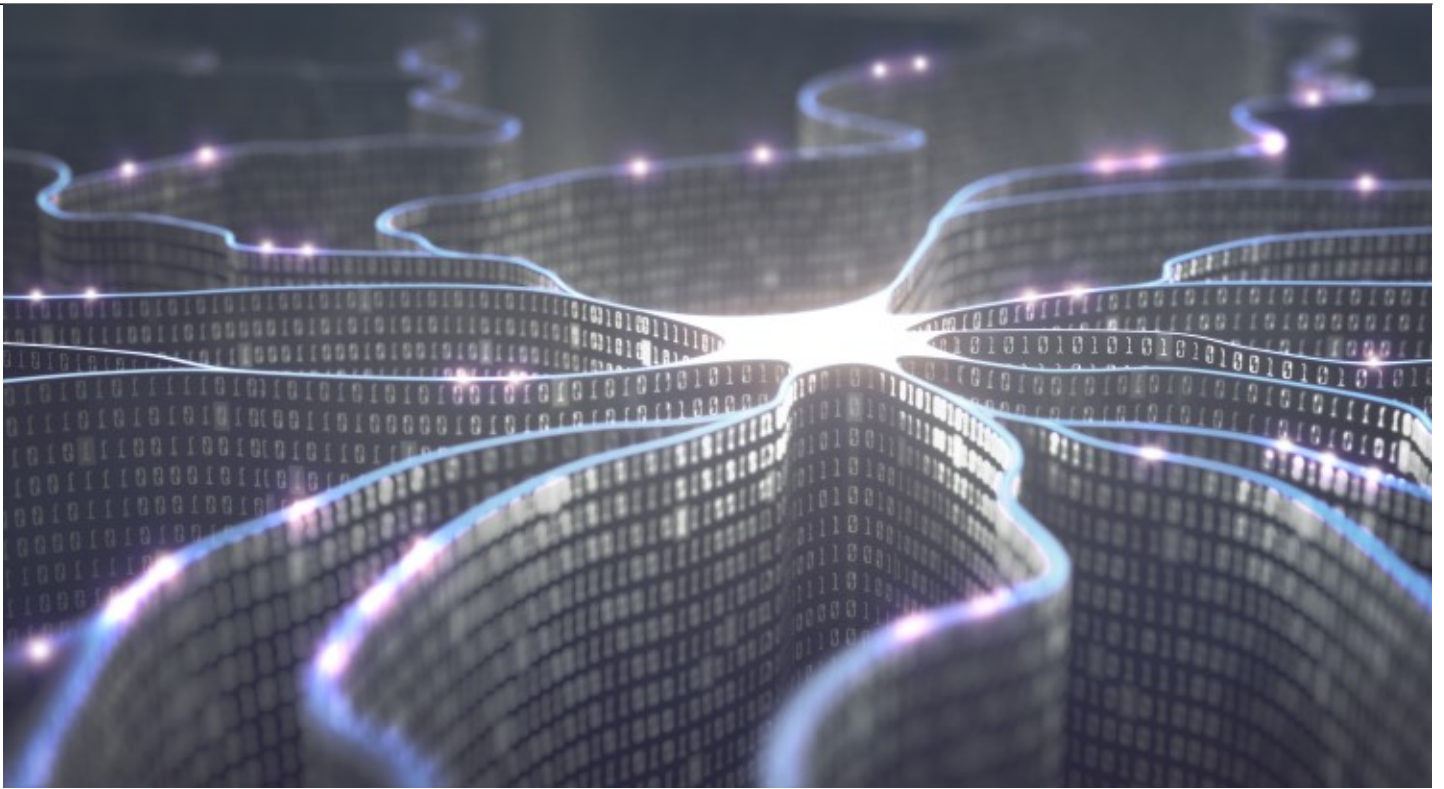




Beyond the “AI” Buzzword: 5 Questions to Ask About Your Legal Tech Solution

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce



For the last few years, we've been hearing a lot about “artificial intelligence” or “AI.” How will it affect the practice of law? How will our jobs change? And how will these changes affect the legal departments?

As exciting as it is to imagine a sci-fi future, the most important questions are far more ordinary — and practical. After all, when you consider any products or services, for legal departments or otherwise, what you care about is whether they solve your problem. The bells and whistles are great if they are helpful; otherwise, they're just not necessary.

In other words, when assessing the relevance and fit of a potential legal solution for your department, asking whether it *has* AI is not as relevant as asking what results it can achieve.

Asking the right questions is critical. For example, when booking a flight, questions about the outcome and experience — how long the trip will take, whether you would be comfortable, what time you will arrive — are more relevant than knowing the model number and makeup of the plane.

When you are considering modernizing your legal department with technology — contract lifecycle management, e-billing, matter management, knowledge management, eDiscovery, or anything else — to streamline your operations, you need to think beyond “Do you have AI?” Here are the top questions you need to ask to make a prudent long-term decision when it comes to legal tech.

1. Does the legal tech solution solve your top problems today?

It is important to understand where you are today and where you are trying to go with a legal tech solution.

Start with assessing your people and processes. What systems are in place? Who runs them? What are the top pain points? Is there a shared vision of what tomorrow looks like for your business? How can you build this shared future vision?

In other words, if you have a checklist of what you're looking for, you're much more likely to purchase a solution that addresses your challenges.

2. Is the legal tech solution intuitive and easy to use?

When I was a college student in the early days of the internet, I used to wait five minutes for an adorable cat picture to download. These days, I get annoyed when my video streaming slows down on my way to work as my train submerges under the water en route to San Francisco. It all feels normal today. By now, we are spoiled with endless modern applications and tools that we use in our personal and professional lives.

But we are also experts. We know when products are intuitive and easy to use. And as legal experts, we should have the same expectations from our products and services that help us run 21st century legal departments — that they be intuitive and easy to use. Today, this is a table-stakes question.

3. Does the legal tech solution help you achieve more with less?

While there are many reasons to explore various legal tech solutions, I found it much easier to have an internal budget conversation where I can articulate how a solution would contribute to company goals or key performance indicators (KPIs) with fewer resources.

Business professionals are hard-wired to look for efficiencies. They naturally look for ways to optimize business operations and gain a competitive edge. You are much more likely to get support

in modernizing your legal department if you are clear, preferably in a very quantifiable way, about what efficiencies would be gained as a result of your efforts.

4. Can the legal tech solution scale with your business and your team?

The only thing you can be sure of today is that the company you join today will be different from the company you will work at tomorrow. Will it go public? Will it acquire other companies? Or, will it be acquired? Will the company go through a downsizing? Do you anticipate a management change or leadership transition? Will it expand internationally or be subject to new regulations?

While it is important for your legal provider to solve your pain points today, it is also prudent to consider whether your legal provider scales and adjusts quickly and nimbly as your company and department change. Since transitions from one vendor to another are often costly and resource-intensive, it's prudent to buy a long-term legal solution, not just the one that works today.

5. Is the legal tech solution designed to continue innovating to take advantage of disruptive technologies and new business practices?

If this question seems optional, I urge you to reconsider. Think back to the time you first went in-house, and consider how much your department has changed. Chances are it is a lot.

Not all changes are driven by technology, but many are — especially in recent years. For example, we are seeing a corporate trend toward valuing openness, transparency, and collaboration. This cultural trend is often enabled by technology, but it is fundamentally a cultural shift that runs much deeper.

Likewise, it's now the norm, no longer a luxury, to make data-driven decisions and use data analytics to track your business. Likewise, we know that disruptive technologies — AI, blockchain, virtual reality, and many others — are maturing. Therefore, it is critical to assess whether your legal solution provider is vigilant enough to withstand the test of time in helping you continuously improve and improve impact.

Don't get distracted

In today's fast-paced, competitive business climate, everyone wants to have answers. As technologies become more and more sophisticated, everyone wants to be using the next shiny object just for bragging rights. But don't get distracted: Fancy new technologies are only as valuable as they are helpful to a business. When it comes to AI, think practical. Yes, we seem to be living in a future age with technologies we could have only dreamed of just a few years ago. But the driving question should be: What does that *actually* mean for your business?

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