



LI FEATURE LEGAL INDUSTRY/BUSINESS MANAGEMENT



## How Innovation Is Revolutionizing Client Service

*Law firms are increasingly implementing — and creating — technology that’s enhancing operations in new, inventive ways.*

Technology is one of the practice areas Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP focuses on, so it’s not completely surprising the firm has incorporated advanced tech capabilities such as artificial intelligence (AI) into its e-discovery and document review work over the years.



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The 25-office firm, though, is taking an even more tech-forward approach to service delivery — which includes offering a number of self-service tools clients can access via its website.

Some, according to Kate Orr, a former litigator who now serves as the firm’s global head of practice innovation, have resulted from an attorney or practice leader coming to her team with an idea. One firm member has noticed a need for a form clients could complete to obtain specific information about a topic.

Orrick Labs, launched five years ago, builds many of the solutions. But before work starts, the team internally scopes out the project parameters, including the involved requirements and who the end users will be, to understand what needs they’re trying to meet with the proposed solution, how it aligns with the firm’s strategy and the potential return on investment.

“When we see a need in the market for a particular tool — whether for our clients, or just for the market more generally — we work with our lawyers to build those tools,” Orr says. “We’ve learned over time that we need to have a process. We can’t just say yes and execute on every idea because not all ideas are great ones, and we [have] finite resources. If it makes sense to build, we carry the heaviest part of that load and just try to leverage the lawyers for their substantive know-how.”

### A TECH-CENTRIC MINDSET

In recent years, several law firms have contemplated how they might be able solve some of the challenges their clients are facing with technology — and how it could strategically tie into their value proposition, according to Daniel W. Linna Jr., Senior Lecturer and Director of Law and Technology Initiatives at the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and McCormick School of Engineering.

The overall thought process, Linna says, may have been a logistical progression from law firms utilizing legal process outsourcing resources that are located in other cities or countries to help reduce costs.

“Once you start thinking that way about how you can disaggregate legal work, you can better understand the process of delivering legal work,” he says. “You then can also start seeing opportunities to develop technology that can help with the delivery of legal services.”

The cutting-edge tech efforts can stem from a relatively small group of firm members who, with the continued client pressure to deliver value, may be able to attain buy-in from leadership.

“Sometimes, [it’s] even just one innovative lawyer who saw an opportunity and was able to navigate the organizational dynamics to get the approvals to build the technology tool,” Linna says. “It’s becoming more and more commonplace, where firms are realizing the potential advantage — and in some cases, the necessity — of doing these things to be able to satisfy and retain clients.”

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The outcome has involved firms introducing tech solutions ranging from items that streamline external communication, such as chatbots, to tools powered by large language models — an AI-based functionality that can be trained to comprehend and use existing content to create new content, such as a draft of a document.

Being able to leverage information from previous matters the firm has worked on within an industry or for a certain client could, according to Linna, give the organization an edge in the market.

“There’s a lot of interest in developing large language models,” he says. “If you have data that your competitors do not have, that’s something — even if your competitors were willing to spend all the money in the world — they can’t recreate, most likely. If you have a lot of data from that relationship, can you differentiate yourself [by] creating your own tool, with your own fine-tuned large language model, in that space?”

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### AN INTUITIVE OUTLOOK

Global law firm Baker McKenzie began piloting the use of large machine language models in early 2022, including ChatGPT-related functionality, according to Danielle Benecke, Founder and Director of the firm’s machine learning group, BakerML.

The firm initially formed a task force in 2017, Benecke says, to examine what effect emerging technologies might have.

“The firm saw the increasing impact of machine learning and other advanced AI in legal and in other industries,” she says. “The conclusion the firm came to back then was that the technology was not likely to immediately disrupt our core business, but we expected a much more fundamental shift to begin by 2022, 2023. Back in 2017, we had said Baker McKenzie needs to prepare for a future in which the high-value service we provide will be machine learning-enabled legal judgment.”

Today, the firm utilizes commercially available software suites like Microsoft 365, which feature AI functionality, and also works with smaller legal tech start-ups to round out its stable of discovery, contract analytics and other applications.

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As more commercial and open-source models have become available, Benecke says the firm has been performance testing some of the major options for various legal use cases through internal and client-facing pilots.

“The reason we are taking that approach, rather than just going ahead and deploying this thing to everyone, is there’s just so much that is unknown about the value — what kind, if any, do these models add to the work that we do?” she says. “What are the ways in which they might be used to optimize work? Is it speed, is it efficiency? Is it improving the quality of work?”

The firm, for example, is working with practice groups within a large global technology company to test the use of generative AI — which has been referred to as the next generation of AI functionality. The pilot involves using previous knowledge the firm has generated throughout the years it has worked with the client to help create draft responses for routine queries, Benecke says.

“That technically is taking the best-performing foundation models that we identify for this particular set of needs — and then we combine that with some retrieval techniques, where we’re basically pointing the model at relevant previous advice playbooks and other firm and client know-how to create draft responses that our lawyers can review and validate,” she says. “The key value we’re looking for there is obviously to optimize the way in which we’re doing that work to make it faster, and also to improve the quality and consistency of that work, too.”

### EXPANDING SERVICE DELIVERY

At some firms, tech initiatives have been spun off into entirely new businesses — such as Gravity Stack, which Reed Smith, a law firm with 31 offices throughout the world, established as a separate entity in 2018.

Its creation, according to Managing Director Bryon Bratcher, stemmed from the firm’s realization that certain services require deep technical expertise and don’t necessarily fit into the traditional law firm model.

“Gravity Stack addresses a critical market need for specialized legal tech services and business operations consulting,” Bratcher says. “While legal experience remains essential, the complexities of today’s data-rich environment require exceptional technical capabilities for effective data management, analytics and cybersecurity. We provide a one-stop solution for clients who previously had to coordinate between multiple service providers.”

The service delivery-enhancing technology the company has created include a contract review platform, which Bratcher says has significantly cut down the time needed for mergers and acquisitions due diligence, and proprietary data analytics tools, designed to assist legal departments with making make data-driven decisions — which automate the collection and interpretation of massive datasets to help inform litigation strategy or contract negotiation.

While Gravity Stack operates outside of the firm, Bratcher says Reed Smith ultimately benefits from its operation.

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“Being a separate, but affiliated, entity has allowed Reed Smith to extend its service offerings and brand itself as an innovative, full-service provider,” he says. “This has been instrumental in both attracting new clients and retaining existing ones that are seeking comprehensive solutions.”

Whether law firms are looking to create an external consulting group, like Gravity Stack, or strengthen their internal tech creation capabilities to introduce new, efficiency-producing proficiencies, Linna feels the ability to identify areas where emerging technology could have an impact on operations likely won’t flow from the top down.

“It’s going to come from creating an environment where everyone’s encouraged to innovate [and] produce greater value for clients — and people have responsible ways they can experiment with how to use those tools,” he says. “The firms that learn how to get this tool into the hands of the people who are closest to the work are going to be the ones that really innovate and make a lot of progress in both the short and the long term. They’re going to find tremendous ways to add value for the client; become more efficient; do their jobs more effectively — in a broad range of areas, from administrative tasks to complex legal tasks.”



### About the Author

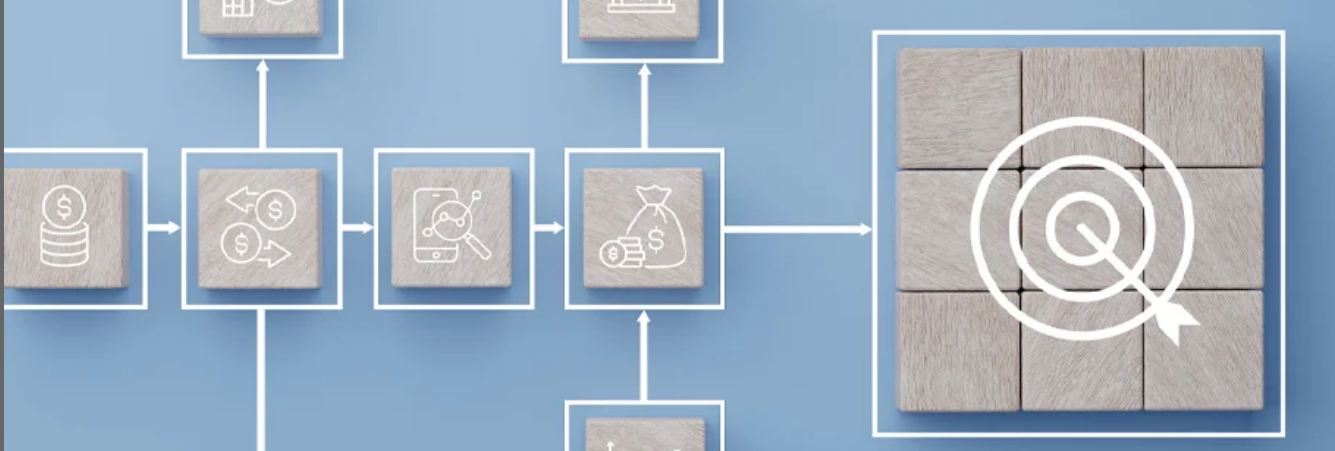
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