

WHITE PAPER

Next-generation legal operations

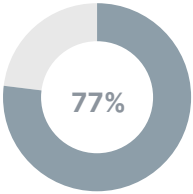
Trends fueling law department growth and influence



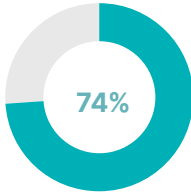
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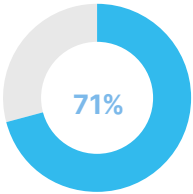
Taking control of eDiscovery is a key priority:



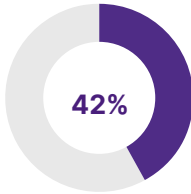
Contract directly with eDiscovery vendors



Control which eDiscovery vendors their outside counsel uses



Have adopted a centralized approach to managing eDiscovery data



Have adopted a single vendor model

Legal operations teams are at the heart of most changes in the modern general counsel's office, including using technology and artificial intelligence, deploying alternative legal services to complement traditional law firm support, leveraging metrics and analytics for better decision-making and driving innovation. OpenText engaged Ari Kaplan Advisors to characterize this movement and track its trajectory. The data shows that the next generation of legal operations is upon us.

Between July 9, 2019 and August 15, 2019, Ari Kaplan Advisors interviewed 35 legal operations leaders from a variety of corporations. Sixty-three percent of these corporations have annual revenues exceeding \$10 billion and 83 percent have more than 10,000 employees. The discussions focused on law department innovation, the growing influence of legal operations, cloud adoption, auditing the technological competency of outside counsel, the use of artificial intelligence (AI), how legal teams are balancing outside counsel and providers of alternative legal services, how to measure success in eDiscovery, legal operations metrics, perspectives on data management and approaches to document review, including the use of predictive coding.

Key findings

Corporate legal operations is quickly evolving to not only support core legal functions, such as eDiscovery, but other legal concerns, including security and document management.

- 100 percent of legal operations professionals say the influence of legal operations has grown over the past few years.
- Data security is a top concern, with 94 percent concerned about distributing electronically stored information to multiple discovery vendors and law firms.



“The legal operations team is trying to encourage more innovation, but it requires a drive toward learning and a shift in culture, which we have not yet achieved.”

- Moving to the cloud is a key initiative to optimize operations, with 69 percent of legal operations professionals saying their law departments are standardizing in the cloud.
- Taking control of eDiscovery is a key priority: 77 percent contract directly with eDiscovery vendors, 74 percent control which eDiscovery vendors their outside counsel uses, 71 percent have adopted a centralized approach to managing eDiscovery data and 42 percent have adopted a single vendor model.
- Spending on AI tools to address eDiscovery challenges is increasing, with 83 percent of legal operations professionals citing that they plan to increase spending on AI solutions to increase review efficiency.
- Legal operations metrics are increasingly focused on the total spend on eDiscovery—rather than metrics such as cost per gigabyte or review efficiency.

The number of legal operations professionals is rising

In 2017, 35 legal operations professionals participated in this study and reported 197 individuals in their departments in total, for an average of six people per department and a median of four. Seventy-seven percent were from organizations with more than \$5 billion in annual revenues. In 2018, the same number of participating professionals reported a consistent 201 individuals in their departments with the same mean and median. Eighty-three percent were from organizations with more than \$5 billion in annual revenues. This year, however, the 35 respondents reported 491 members on their collective teams, with an average size of 14, though only an incrementally higher median of five. Eighty-six percent were from organizations with more than \$5 billion in annual revenues.

In terms of outside law firms, in 2017, the average number was 121. In 2018, it was 136 and in 2019, it rose to 206, with median numbers of 100, 100 and 118, respectively. The number of participants from large organizations also increased, which may account for the higher numbers. In 2017, 57 percent of the respondents were from organizations with more than \$10 billion in annual revenues. In 2018, that number dropped to 49 percent, but in 2019, it rose significantly to 63 percent.

Outside law firms are still doing most of the work for the participants. Forty-six percent reported that their outside lawyers are performing 95 percent or more of their legal work, with alternative legal services providers managing about five percent. Sixty-six percent said that their outside lawyers are performing 90 percent or more of that work.

Law departments are becoming increasingly innovative

Innovation is a popular subject and, indeed, 63 percent of the respondents described their law department as innovative, though that term was subject to interpretation. “We have done many things to drive speed-to-market on transactions, enhance risk management, improve quality and reuse of data, foster transparency and increase responsiveness to regulators in their increasingly frequent inquiries into our portfolios,” said one legal operations leader.

For some organizations, innovation is elusive because of their market sector, governmental oversight profile and maturity. “We are a global company that must adhere to an array of regulations and standards, which makes innovation a challenge, so our innovation is being able to provide new ideas to tackle common problems while improving our efficiency and reducing costs,” added another. A third said, “There is resistance to change and while some would say the law department is innovative, there is no evidence to demonstrate that characteristic in how they do their work.”



For other teams, innovation is just beginning and they are focusing on small victories to set the foundation for a broader shift. “The legal operations team is trying to encourage more innovation, but it requires a drive toward learning and a shift in culture, which we have not yet achieved. For some organizations, innovation in legal could just be getting sourcing right and for others, just using software instead of spreadsheets is innovative.”

Some examples of innovations the respondents shared include:

- We have consolidated our panel from 700 to seven and we have modeled our pricing on blended and fixed rates, so it has changed the conversation from law firms worrying about billable hours to their margin and profit.
- We build integrations on top of existing tools to leverage analytics and automate as many processes as possible.
- We have implemented a document management system and have written rules to streamline the information governance aspects of the tool. We have also automated items, such as licensing management and payments, for which we previously used spreadsheets.
- There is constant process improvement in developing new procedures and streamlining old practices.
- We have a successful panel and project management program.

In addition to these ideas, how teams manage their outside legal spend and interaction is a critical component of law department innovation. “When it comes to outside counsel management, we are very innovative and are constantly looking at ways to streamline external processes,” said one leader. Another said, “Eighty percent of the company’s outside counsel work is not associated with the billable hour.”

There was also an emphasis on in-house legal and outside counsel collaborating to fuel collective innovation. “Outside counsel is not innovative because we don’t push them to be,” said one leader. And, there were a number of comments about the future, which may signal rapid changes to come in 2020. “We are getting there, but are not quite innovative yet; I think I will have a different answer in a year,” said one legal operations leader. A peer said, “The company is open to innovation.”

Automation was also key to this transformation. “We are trying to automate as much as we can,” said one respondent. Another said, “The operations team is especially innovative since it features a data scientist. We are trying to automate multiple processes and use software wherever possible to scale the team.”

Beyond innovation, there seemed to be a focus on constant improvement. “We always ask how we can do things better,” said one leader. Another said, “Innovations come through the way we distribute the work, break down the legal processes, engage providers for different work and use different technology and tools.” That concentration on improvement and a renewed willingness to derive value from change are generally transforming how law departments are operating.

Legal operations is influencing law department management

As law department management grows more complex, it requires a broad base of talent and support. For that reason, 100 percent of respondents agreed that the influence of legal operations has grown over the past few years, though the reasons vary.

For some organizations, a change in leadership has been driving this growth. “The influence of legal operations is driven by the leader of the legal operations

department and it has grown because the size, scope and participation of legal operations has increased to make the influence more institutional,” said a participating leader. Another said, “The company hired a new general counsel four years ago, which made many new things possible.” A third respondent said, “Following the installation of a legal operations director in 2018, we implemented a structure and a process and all of these changes have raised the influence of legal operations.”

There has also been an elevation of the role that the legal operation team plays. “We are a key member of the management committee and are seen as a key enabler of success in the department,” noted one leader. Another said, “We are a part of the conversation that drives how lawyers are relating to the business. While there is still resistance, when you show the benefits of legal operations and what it provides to the department in terms of resources, it gives us a seat at the table.”

Consistent with the trend, many legal teams rely on their operations professionals to manage outside counsel and overall costs more effectively. The practices range from more detailed evaluation of billing protocols to creative options, such as competitive bidding, alternative fee arrangements, budgeting discipline and project management. “The influence has grown to meet the demands of internal cost management, where legal operations has provided a good deal of pathway setting and process mapping to streamline our support for legal matters and harmonized business controls, both internally and externally,” explained a participant. Another said, “It has grown because there is a greater sensitivity to cost and budgeting; the legal operations team negotiates with outside counsel about rates in partnership with the in-house lawyers.”

Enough time has also passed to allow the legal operations team to earn the trust of the broader law department to influence true transformation. “The symbiosis is where the general counsel sees how legal operations brings in the right talent for specific tasks and aligns that with appropriate budgeting, technology and service model changes. We also need to ensure that project work starts and ends on time,” said a senior leader. Another said, “At the beginning, people were groaning because with any change or any time you try to bring in something new, the biggest challenge is change management. We had to win hearts and minds or the metrics wouldn't matter.” A third said, “The influence of legal operations has grown steadily and consistently over the past 13 years, from the expansion of our usage of technology to the company's relationships with outside counsel.”

Size has also been a factor. Legal operations teams are generally expanding in their numbers and composition. “Legal operations has doubled in size to include a KM specialist, a billing coordinator and a business analyst,” noted one respondent. Another commented, “Four years ago, there were 20 members of the legal operations team and now there are 23. Our influence has grown because we do what we say.”

“Cloud services has allowed the legal operations team to build technology on its own so that it is a lot more autonomous.”

That trust combined with the implementation of governance protocols that impact legal services globally have increased the influence. One respondent said, “People are coming to the legal operations team because they know they are helpful and have earned the trust of the organization. The leaders are also interested in benchmarking information for distribution within the organization.” Another said, “The more credibility we earn, the greater our voice.”

Most legal departments are standardizing on the cloud

Given the flexibility it provides, the cloud has become an integral part of the legal department landscape. In fact, 71 percent of respondents advised that their legal departments are standardizing on the cloud. Fifty-seven percent rated their current use of cloud-based tools at a four or five (on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest), which is consistent with the 60 percent who rated it a four or five in 2018 and up from 51 percent in 2017. Eighty-nine percent rated their openness to using cloud solutions in the coming year at a four or five, up slightly from the 86 percent who assigned it a four or five a year ago and up from 83 percent in 2017. “We have a cloud-first strategy as an organization, though there are various hurdles, such as data privacy, cross-border issues and an array of cloud-infrastructure security challenges,” said one leader. Another said, “We are moving all of our processes into the cloud.” A third respondent said, “Cloud is our working preference and we perceive a lot of value in working in the cloud from a collaboration, security and infrastructure flexibility standpoint; that said, there are some instances where we cannot leverage it.”

Those concerns included storing and finding data in the cloud. “There are IT challenges associated with migrating to the cloud because the company has a very conservative approach to it and there is a higher perceived risk profile associated with putting the work on the cloud,” noted an operations professional.

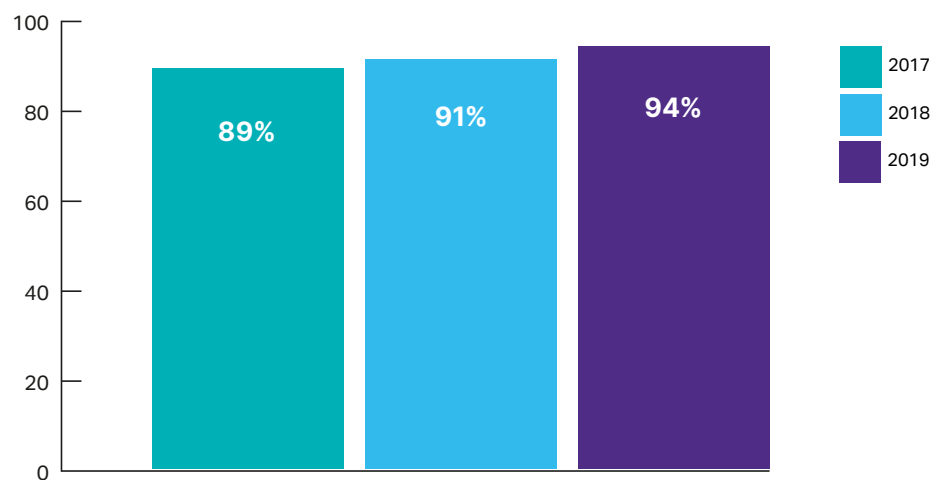
Despite those issues, cost is a major driver for many organizations. “The company is moving to the cloud because of cost, while legal is moving to the cloud due to the ease of sharing information with outside counsel and other providers. It is just so much cheaper,” said one respondent. Another said, “The enterprise as a whole is moving to the cloud as a strategic initiative to lower our IT costs.” A third said, “The more we can move away from in-house file storage, the more cost savings we can produce.”

Beyond lowering costs, legal operations teams are leveraging the cloud to gain self-sufficiency. “Cloud services have really empowered legal operations professionals, because in the early days, we were heavily tied to IT and needed to get on their queue for projects we could not push forward independently. Cloud services has allowed the legal operations team to build technology on its own so that it is a lot more autonomous,” said one participant. “We still need to work with IT, but the legal operations team can drive those projects instead of waiting for an IT project management assignment.”

Even security is becoming less of an issue. “As long as there are proper firewalls in place, we are moving to almost exclusively cloud-based. It was an issue in the past about privilege, but now that eBilling and CLM vendors are all cloud-based and can protect privilege, we are moving,” said one leader. Another said, “There are continuous reminders of data security risks and the need for controls as we move to the cloud.”

Data security remains a critical concern

Of course, data security is a key factor in migrating to the cloud, among many others. Ninety-four percent of respondents have data security concerns around distributing electronically stored information to multiple discovery vendors and law firms, which is an increase from 91 percent in 2018 and 89 percent in 2017. “We have the same concerns that any corporate client would have,” said one operations leader. But several respondents noted that many organizations treat law firms differently. Another respondent said, “We have great security in place, but have not established protocols for our outside counsel and expect that we will move toward that.” A third said, “Our company cares about our vendors, but our lawyers think our outside law firms are different from vendors and are not happy about equating them because it slows down the engagement process.”



Percentage of respondents with data security concerns



Despite this mindset, the decreased appetite for risk is prompting many organizations to reassess their approach. “We are remediating the risk, but it remains a risk for all companies,” said a respondent. Another said, “The prior assumption was that things were fine, but the legal operations team is taking a closer look at their law firms to overcome an implicit bias. We now have a trust but verify approach.” A third said, “We do have concerns, but we haven't really done much about it.”

There has been a material rise in auditing of law firm technological competency

As part of the concern over data security, audits are on the rise. In 2017, 74 percent of respondents indicated that they rarely or never audit the technological competency and systems of their outside counsel and, in 2018, this dropped to 69 percent. Last year, this report concluded, “There appears to be momentum in this area and a number of respondents are planning to focus on it in 2019.” That prediction was correct as there was a dramatic reduction in the number of respondents who rarely or never audit their law firms to 51 percent. Conversely, 26 percent often or always make this inquiry. A year ago, only 11 percent of participants did so, and 14 percent did so in 2017.

Given that almost all survey respondents reported having data security concerns around distributing electronically stored information to their discovery vendors and law firms, this increased scrutiny of their activities is not surprising. “We have a large technology risk organization to address this, which has been conducting exhaustive security reviews, which includes all of the organization's law firms,” noted an operations leader, who admitted that “at the same time, there is massive leakage in terms of how we share information on the fly.” This was a consistent theme among many of the participants this year. “We take proactive steps to audit the firms to ensure that they are in compliance, similar to any other vendor,” said one respondent. Another said, “We just finished all of them in the last two years and it will continue on a one- to two-year cycle.”

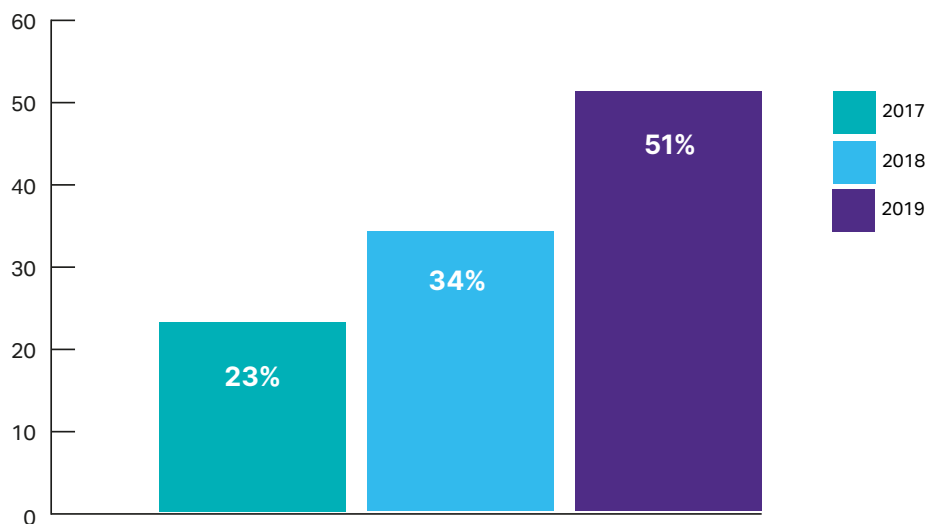
Despite the interest in auditing, many organizations are either conducting these inquiries on a selective basis or infrequently. “We only do this initially and there is no follow-up,” remarked a participant. Another said, “We rarely audit our law firms on a formal basis, though we do so on an ad hoc basis. That said, there is no regularity to it, and it is not part of our typical process.” A peer said, “We focus on the large law firms, so we only perform an audit on a portion of our firms though all of our outside law firms, regardless of size, contractually agree to uphold our security standards.”

And, for those that do not conduct any audits at all, it is generally because law firms are treated differently than traditional vendors. “Law firms get a free pass because of the attorney-client privilege. We assume that because we are getting legal advice, the firms have their [stuff] in order,” said an operations leader. A peer said, “The company has an active vendor management process run by the data security team, but they are not touching the law firms.”

Given the interest in this process and the opportunity to gain greater value from it, the number of audits is likely to increase. “In the coming years, there will be more of a push towards auditing because it is definitely on our radar,” predicted a participant. Another said, “This is on the 2020 initiatives list.”

As expected, AI usage is on the rise

While 80 percent of legal operations leaders work for organizations that use AI, 51 percent use it in their law department. That reflects a significant rise from 2018 when 34 percent of respondents claimed to have used AI in their legal department and from 2017, when 23 percent did so. “We have started to dabble in it for eDiscovery and technology-assisted review in connection with privilege review, which is where it is most used. We don’t use it yet for contract management and have spoken to some providers for bill reviews, but we are still just talking about it,” advised an operations leader. Another said, “We are implementing a contract AI tool that extracts contract metadata and will formally launch it in January of 2020. A third reported, “We are testing AI-based anomaly detection software to support outside counsel with realtime data analysis, including predicting matter costs and the value of settlement if there are budget overruns.”



Percentage of respondents who have used AI in their legal department

The challenge for some is identifying the proper application. “We are interested in it, but we are trying to find the right use case,” noted one respondent. Another said, “It is the hot topic these days, but the headlines outweigh the actual usefulness in many cases. It will get there eventually, but it is not there yet.” One of the most common areas where companies are applying AI is for eDiscovery. “We use AI through third-party vendors providing discovery support,” said one leader. Regardless, there is definitely a push toward greater testing and usage. Another said, “We also have some ‘old-schoolers’ in legal, but in 2019, we received budget to investigate the AI options.”

Those who are using AI or interested in using it reported a range of benefits, such as:

- Simplifying the document review process.
- Standardizing non-value-added tasks and freeing professionals to perform more interesting work.
- Automating the process to reduce the investment of time and improve the level of accuracy in identifying critical information.
- Putting a large tranche of data through an analytics or AI tool to provide information that does not rely on individuals or is biased by human decision-making. “I like it because it is unemotional and data-driven.”

- Moving contracts from a legacy system and extracting metadata to help with M&A review.
- Saving additional time and providing a self-serve function to the business units, which enhances engagement with the legal team. "It is a way to get us out of the Microsoft® Word document, red-lining business."

Those who are not using it claim that:

- A lot of the artificial intelligence is not where we would like it to be. "In the next few years, however, we are absolutely open to it and I see it transforming the way we work."
- In legal, we don't have a ton of data to which we can apply AI where the benefit would justify the cost.
- We are trying to use more automation and robotic processing, but are not yet using machines to make decisions.
- There is still a lack of trust in using it for contracts. "Lawyers are very concerned and getting them over the hump is challenging."
- Lawyers are more trusting initially of using AI for analytics, rather than immediately using it to replace human activity.
- Some are also worried about AI replacing jobs.
- There is a lack of concentration. "We cannot get everyone focused on developing the workflow and properly managing it."
- We have limited resources and limited funding. "It is a game of inches, but we will get there eventually."



Legal operations leaders are increasingly driving eDiscovery discussions

Over the years, legal operations leaders have become more familiar with, and influential in, eDiscovery. This year's report offers additional support for that growing level of understanding.

Transparency from law firms

For instance, they are requesting and receiving more transparency from their law firms. Forty-nine percent of respondents reported that they receive effective reports from their outside counsel on discovery budgets and review efficiency, which reflects an increase from 34 percent a year ago. Still, "You want data managed rather than simply reported," said one leader. "It is effective to a degree, but we would prefer more data analysis and would like to see a report showing trends or activity and offering suggestions for proactive steps we can take in budgeting and strategies in the future."

Proactive management of vendors

Legal operations leaders are also proactively managing their relationships with vendors. Seventy-seven percent of respondents contract with eDiscovery vendors directly, which reflects a slight drop from the 80 percent who claimed to do so in 2017, but still higher than the 63 percent in 2017. "Going forward, we prefer a three-way MSA with the law firm and vendor that establishes a clear division of responsibilities," said one operations professional. Another respondent said, "We have historically been triaging and took the path of least resistance through our outside counsel, but now, we are trying to get ahead of the issue and are bringing vendors into our portfolio." In fact, 74 percent of the participants dictate which specific vendor outside counsel should use, up from 63 percent in 2018 and 57 percent in 2017. And, 66 percent of respondents use some type of review software tool in the cloud through a vendor or a law firm.

Centralizing eDiscovery management

The ability to manage their relationships more closely and understand a greater portion of the process seems to be allowing legal operations teams to better manage their data. Sixty-nine percent of respondents have employed a centralized approach for hosting and managing discovery data, which reflects an increase from the 63 percent in 2018 and a significant jump from 43 percent in 2017. "We have centralized how data is exchanged with providers internally and have two partners that do most of the hosting," explained one operations leader. Another said, "It is all centralized through the internal discovery center with a single hosting provider."

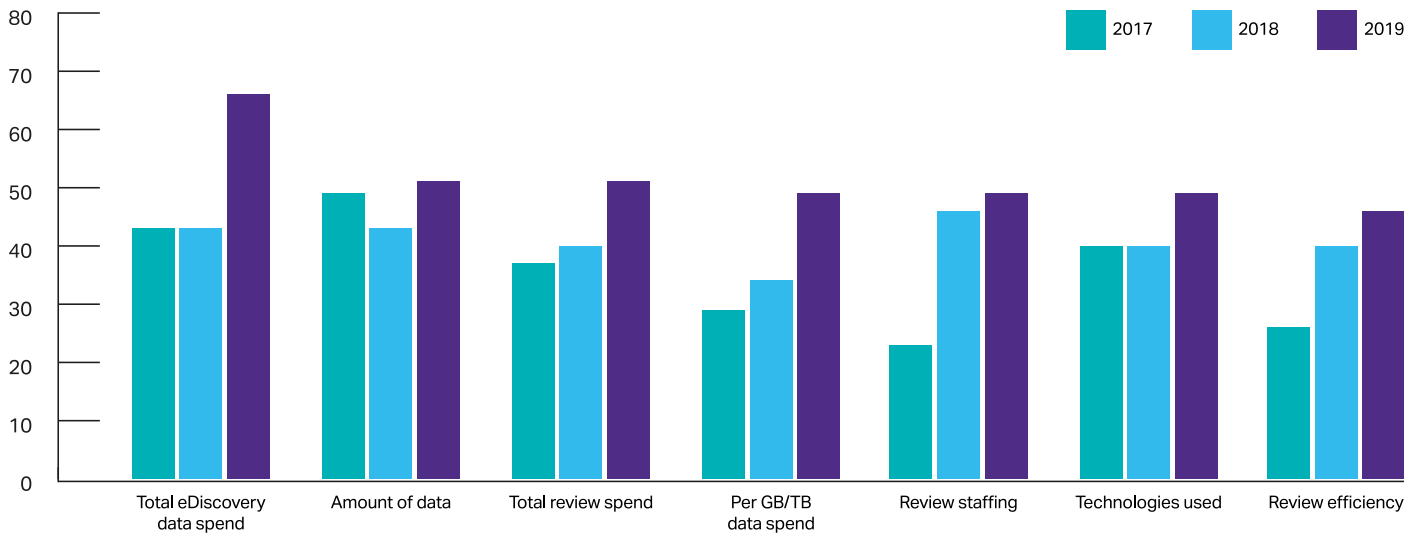
Benchmarking success

As they become more proactive, the number of companies that measure their success in eDiscovery continues to rise. Fifty-seven percent of participants reported doing so, up from 54 percent in 2018 and 34 percent in 2017. "The team compares the cost per document matter to matter to gauge efficiency," said one professional. "We gauge the amount of effort that it takes to collect data and the ability to input it into the analytics tools," said a respondent.

While some have a fully defined process, measuring success remains a work in progress for a range of organizations. "We don't have a formal, quantitative way to measure eDiscovery, but we look at response time, speed of resolution and reduction in outside counsel spending," said one leader, who emphasized that the

lack of formal measurements represents an opportunity for the legal operations team. Another said, “We are increasingly trying to get our arms around eDiscovery metrics, but the vast majority of our spend in eDiscovery is in a bet-the-company litigation, so while we are trying to control those costs, the stakes are very high.”

Given the interest in developing greater benchmarks, it was not surprising to see that the number of organizations tracking metrics continues to rise year-over-year. For example, a majority of the respondents are generally tracking metrics.



Partnering with managed review vendors

All of the respondents reported that their outside law firm provides some document review when necessary, but 71 percent perform that work in-house when they have the ability to do so and 83 percent outsource that work to a managed review provider. Although the respondents could not provide exact allocations of how they generally perform this work and not all respondents could share or provide any data, the median percentage breakdown was 48 percent for managed review providers, 25 percent for law firms, and five to 10 percent for in-house teams.

Increasing use of predictive coding

Forty-nine percent of respondents reported using predictive coding in the past year, which is a material increase from 31 percent in 2018 and 34 percent in 2017. When asked whether they define predictive coding differently than technology-assisted review, 66 percent had an opinion, which reflects a significant increase in the granular understanding of the sector by legal operations teams. Thirty-seven percent define it differently, while 29 percent do not.



Predictions for 2020

More companies will replace some of their traditional law firm services with alternative legal services

Beyond integrating tools and technology, legal departments are re-evaluating their outside legal services support beyond the traditional law firm. While 46 percent of respondents reported that their law firms still perform 95 percent or more of their legal work and 66 percent use their firms for 90 percent or more of those tasks, there is a rebalancing afoot. “The company has historically given its eDiscovery work to its outside counsel, but is starting to give it to its vendors. It is then going to focus on compliance and other areas of risk,” said one leader. Another said, “It is absolutely shifting. There is more work going to alternative legal services providers, especially in financial services, where we have been relying on them for regulatory compliance.” A third reported, “The general law department consensus is that we don’t really care who does the legal work as long as it gets done, which seems to indicate that a lot of the work should be done by ALSPs. That said, many of the in-house lawyers are still reluctant to take certain elements of work from the law firm.”

This impending change seems to signal a much broader transformation than simple staffing changes or work reallocation. “My vision is that the traditional legal services will begin to die out or morph into a managed services contract system, allowing us to buy a particular service from the law firm instead of a full partnership,” said one respondent. Another predicted, “Law firms are going to try to continue down the path as long as they absolutely can, but there will be an economic crash for legal services and law firms; the advent of AI-based solutions to perform legal research and look at precedents will have an impact on what a first- or second-year can provide, especially since a company can get those services from a legal outsourcing provider for cents on the dollar.”

But not everyone was convinced. “Alternative legal services will never be able to do what law firms do. In terms of legal advice, the notion that an ALSP will take over what a law firm does will never happen,” said one leader. Another said, “Whether corporations embrace it more is a tough one because I see it where I work, but not in as many places as possible. We are comfortable with our firms and rely on their names and reputations so it will continue to shift, but I just don’t see a big push.” A third said, “It will be a slow change and I don’t think it will be anything dramatic. In fact, I foresee hourly rates remaining the standard and if you want an alternative fee arrangement, you really need to ask for it.”

As a result, more organizations are trying to establish some level of equilibrium. “We will increase usage of alternative legal services providers for commoditized work, but simultaneously increase the use of law firms for high-priced legal work that the in-house team is currently performing,” noted a legal operations leader. Another said, “We are predominantly focused on traditional services, but will increase our use of alternative legal services in five years. It will not surprise me if ALSPs and law firms increase their level of collaboration to give clients one number to call.”

Many respondents suggested that law firms focus on staffing, standardization and process improvements, among other key areas. “Most law firms now will need to be innovative and look at ways they are adding value to the client relationship. Outside firms should be comfortable providing advice in a systematic way to eliminate some facets of their work as they need to address their holistic value, rather than offer and bill for piecemeal advice,” one respondent explained. Another one said, “Eventually, law firms will go away and be just 10 percent of the overall legal market. Everything will be alternative legal services, with 40 percent of that being technology-enabled services resulting in a combination of art and science.”

Spending on AI will increase

Eighty-three percent of respondents reported that their spending on AI will increase in 2020, up significantly from the 66 percent in 2018. “As we start to expand the usage, our spending will definitely increase. We are also looking at other areas in which AI could be beneficial,” said one participant.

Still, there was uncertainty as to the extent and purpose of these investments. “For the organization as a whole, it will increase massively and rapidly, probably inefficiently, but for the legal department, the rate and amount will be negligible, but it will only increase,” said one leader. Another added, “It will rise at the company, but its trajectory is unclear in legal,” noted one respondent. “It will increase, but not substantially.”

Some are still trying to determine where it makes sense. “The different forms of artificial intelligence will become more prevalent and I hope our spending will increase, even for a small use case scenario, like the piloting of chatbots,” remarked one professional. Another said, “As the technology gets better and we feel more comfortable, we will increase our investment. Also, as we see other companies using it and get more references, we will seek to implement AI further.”

Integration efforts will have a much broader impact

With an array of technology options available to most corporate legal departments and a growing appetite for AI, 77 percent are generally integrating their different systems and are likely to continue to do so. “We are integrating our matter management system with our workflow and legal hold systems,” reported one individual. Another respondent said, “We are integrating a combined matter management, legal hold, eBilling and data visualization tool.” A third reported, “we integrate the systems for data mapping and analytics.”

For many organizations, however, even those who are having success with integrations, it is a challenging process. “We have a lot of integrations, but they are mostly siloed and not nearly where they need to be,” said one respondent. Another said, “We would like to integrate more and there is an enterprise-level initiative to move in that direction, but it is slow.” A third respondent said, “We are in the process of integrating, but are not fully there yet.”

There were also skeptics. “Generally, that is the unicorn and I would love nothing more than to have one stop for every piece of data. I don't think that exists anywhere,” said one operations leader. Another said, “Absolutely not; it is a fool's errand to think that a large company can do this.”

For some, the aim of integration is simply to generate more accurate and actionable intelligence. “Our objective is to integrate our systems, but now we have to independently generate reports from different systems,” said one leader. Another said, “We pull data for reports, but the ultimate goal is to create a general counsel's dashboard.” This is especially important since 67 percent of participants emphasized that integrating their enterprise content management systems with their eDiscovery systems would help their legal departments.

Conclusion

The beginning of a new decade often serves as an opportunity to simultaneously reflect and look ahead on a macro scale. In the historically slow-moving legal industry, the recently rapid pace of change is likely to continue and redefine the practice of law. As law departments adapt to this new paradigm, legal operations professionals will help guide them into an era characterized by technology and process-driven innovation, realigned relationships with their outside support teams and an increased deployment of analytics, automation and machine learning. It should be a period of collaboration and promise that helps to move the entire field forward.

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