

Adoption Doom Loop

The Guaranteed Pathway To Project Failure

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Cliché or not, when it comes to the adoption of Legal Tech, the adage rings 100% true.

Many legal teams have set out with gusto to implement new legal technology platforms to automate mundane tasks and better manage legal operations and processes, only for the project to fall flat before they've had a chance to reap the rewards.

The reasons for failure are not a mystery. They are common missteps that can spell doom for any technology adoption.

Mostly, it comes down to the difference between **implementation** and **adoption**.

Implementation is getting the platform up and running – the technical part. The real challenge is taking the technology and **folding it into your business and your culture**. The adoption. Essentially, your goal is to interrupt the inertia built over the years, and to redirect your legal team and business users to the new and improved way of getting Legal work done. Simple, right?

Fail to recognise the difference, and you risk falling into the Adoption Doom Loop.

Read on for 15 steps to adoption failure, and how to avoid them.

1) Low GC involvement

Until now, the majority of projects that lawyers have worked on are centred on contracts. Value realisation, the stage after the contract is signed, is not typically the lawyer's concern. That's why when it comes to legal technology, GC's have a tendency to put more effort into the initial vendor selection and negotiation, and under-resource the deployment phase. Even though research by Gartner shows that more than 70% of IT project risk sits with end-user adoption.

Think of General Counsel as the face of the Legal Tech. As key leaders within the organisation, their participation is essential in driving adoption. They need to be willing to be at the forefront of the project from end-to-end.

2) No clear internal accountability

If you are not clear on who is accountable for getting your technology live, and driving adoption within your team, your project is doomed from the outset. The first rule of a successful adoption is to assemble a dynamic team of committed individuals who can drive and effect change in others.

Start by clearly defining three roles:

- Project owner – typically the General Counsel
- Subject matter expert – the person who understands the product the best
- Adoption champion – the person responsible for adoption, may also be the subject matter expert

3) No adoption champion

Gaining buy-in from every user across your organisation is a challenge. Without an adoption champion, it's practically impossible. Champions play an important role in the adoption of Legal Tech. They help translate the platform into the reality of different departments or teams and will be the point person every department can turn to, to help bring everyone on board with the project. They'll also be accountable for measurable user adoption and will provide feedback to the GC and subject matter expert regarding user engagement and adoption.

Choose someone with excellent communication skills and who believes in the value of Legal Tech. This should be the number one priority for this person for the next 90 days.

4) Deprioritising the rollout

Momentum is everything. If your team and key stakeholders do **not** have adoption as their top priority for at least the first 90 days, your project is on the highway to failure. It is important to communicate early and often with your internal stakeholders so they are clear on their role in the transformation's success and will stay committed.

5) Deviation from the mutual plan

Fact: Your technology partner wants you to succeed. They have experience of implementing legal tech solutions and know the proven steps to adoption success. So, when they work with you on clearly-defined milestones and obligations, it's in your interest to stick to the plan. Less chance of surprises, more chance of success.

6) Maintaining inefficient processes

One thing we've seen is an inclination to over-customising new technology to fit in with old inefficient processes, rather than implementing new best practice processes, enabled by technology. This simply comes down to resistance to changing broken processes. Let the technology do what it does best – that's where the real transformation begins.

7) Lack of change management

The most successful technology implementations focus 80% of their efforts on people, and 20% on technology, because with any new technology, behavioural changes required of users need to be managed to ensure success. People naturally resist change, so they need to understand what's changing, why it's changing and WIIFM (What's In It For Me). Spend time educating all stakeholders and end users on the reasons for the transformation and how the platform will bring value. Tell them **why** the organisation is making the change and what benefits it will deliver to each business unit.

8) Running a "pilot"

Operating a trial period for the Legal team without business users is waste of time and effort. Nobody sees value in the platform unless both sides – the Legal team and business users – are using it. An alternative is to start with an early adoption program with a key group of business users to gain some initial feedback, then continue the momentum by rolling out across the whole business.

9) Providing alternatives to the new way

There's a method for technology rollouts called "parallel running". It's where the old system keeps running while people get used to the new one. It might seem like a way to help people slowly get used to change. But what you're actually doing is undermining the project and stunting adoption as a result.

Don't run the new platform side-by-side with the old system. The only systems left in place should be ones that complement or work with your Legal Tech. Stick to your guns. Show the business from the outset how Legal Tech will empower both the Legal team and the wider organisation through accessible self-serve tools. Ensure users stick at it and don't let them circumvent new systems by reverting to old processes.

10) Failure to measure progress

What does success look like? When KPIs and targets are undefined, strategic purpose becomes unclear and the project starts floundering without direction. Begin with your end in mind. What is it you're trying to achieve? Set clear goals and KPIs for the successes of adoption. Then align all of that with the business and stakeholders. Examples of KPIs include:

- % of documents executed through Gateway
- Average time to execute a contract

11) Perfection over progress

Aiming for perfection is a big mistake. It means delaying real world end-user feedback in order to "perfect" the final product. Now is not the time to redraft your templates and go over flowcharts again. Everything can be changed later. In our experience, "done" is better than

perfect. Keep reminding yourself how the Legal process used to work and reassure yourself how big an improvement this is.

Aim to launch to the business faster, so you can gather more end-user feedback earlier and start acting on it sooner. Establish a timeline and plan to get live, then stick to it.

12) Unrealistic expectations

Key stakeholders probably have numerous expectations, from optimistic go-live dates to envisioning immediate end-user adoption – the list is endless. Set realistic expectations upfront and keep expectations current in the minds of project team and stakeholders so that they don't lose sight of the end-goal. Especially focus on timelines. One mistake we've seen is not ring-fencing time for change management – but as we've already outlined, this is a critical step.

13) Multiple sources of truth

Your new Legal Tech platform is probably taking the place of one or more of your current software applications. Make sure Legal and the wider business stop using these old and redundant systems and use the new platform to its fullest capacity. Keeping these old systems in place will undermine the effectiveness of your new technology and processes, and cause problems with conflicting sources of truth.

14) Failure to address user feedback

With failed technology implementations, we hear time and time again that users feel their feedback was either not sought or simply disappeared into a feedback black hole. Don't expect the first iteration to be perfect without any user feedback. Value their opinions by taking the time to collect and address feedback from the start and use it to solve real problems. You can also turn positive feedback into early success stories.

15) Overlooking the end user experience

Don't make it all about productivity gains for the Legal team over the broader business. Focus on the experience you are delivering for the end user – tell them what's in it for them. How will Legal Tech make it easier for everybody to get legal work done faster and easier? Highlight the direct value of new technology for everybody and trust them to become invested in its success.

RECAP

It doesn't matter how good the technology is if users don't embrace it. We've learned that the trick to successfully rolling out new legal technology is this: planning a thoughtful **implementation** project and having a user-focused plan for promoting company-wide **adoption**.

Driving adoption continues long after implementation. Collecting feedback, providing additional training on best practices and iterating new learnings will enable your tech implementation to be a successful one and, for the most part, smooth sailing.

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