

GUIDE

Leading legal transformation:

A guide for General Counsel

A practical framework for embedding technology across the legal function

Leading legal transformation: A guide for General Counsel

In 2025, digital transformation has evolved from a buzzword to a strategic imperative for General Counsel. Today's legal leaders face mounting pressure to deliver more with less, enable faster business decisions, and manage increasing complexity—all while demonstrating measurable value.

This guide provides a practical 9-step framework to help in-house legal teams bridge the gap between ambition and execution. From securing stakeholder buy-in to selecting purpose-built AI solutions, we address the unique challenges of implementing technology that truly transforms legal operations – whether your goal is workflow automation, intelligent contract review, or seamless business integration.

Success depends not on technology alone, but on deploying it with clear purpose, functional alignment, and adoption strategy.



STEP 1

Focus early efforts where they drive the most impact

Transformation doesn't begin with a sweeping strategy. It starts with solving one meaningful problem. Focus on high-volume, low-complexity tasks—such as NDAs, low-risk contract reviews, or legal intake triage.

AI-powered tools can be particularly effective here, offering measurable time savings and reducing manual review effort. Many technology providers offer trial environments or pilot programs that allow you to test performance and usability before investing more widely.

STEP 2

Treat transformation like a long game, not a sprint

Digital transformation cannot be delegated as a side project. It requires structure, accountability, and leadership. Without these, momentum fades quickly.

This is especially true for AI initiatives, which require thoughtful oversight, training, and, in some cases, alignment with governance or ethical standards. Assign a clear owner with the authority to lead—and treat the program with the same rigour as any high-impact legal initiative.

Implementation guidance

Establish clear governance from the outset with:

- Weekly progress meetings with key stakeholders
- Documented success metrics that align with business objectives
- Regular reporting to leadership on milestones and outcomes
- Dedicated time allocation for the project lead (minimum 25% of their capacity)

(See Step 5 for guidance on structuring your team.)



STEP 3

Build for adoption, not just implementation

Technology that isn't adopted delivers no value. Too often, projects fail not because of the platform but because users don't engage.

This is especially relevant with AI-powered tools, where trust, ease of use, and transparency are essential. Ensure lawyers and business users understand what the tool does - and what it doesn't. Build in training and feedback loops from the start. Implementation is only half the journey; adoption is what drives results.

Success metric

Technology implementations with structured change management programs achieve 78% higher adoption rates than those focusing solely on technical deployment.

STEP 4

Turn legal transformation into a business advantage

To secure internal support, your business case must speak beyond Legal. Yes, technology reduces admin - but it also accelerates commercial processes, improves compliance, and enables data-driven decision-making.

AI can amplify these benefits by surfacing risk faster or enabling consistent decision-making at scale. But outcomes—not features—are what matter to the business. Frame your case in terms of what becomes faster, safer, or more strategic.

Benefits beyond Legal:

- **For Sales:** Faster contract turnaround (average 60% reduction in wait times with contract automation)
- **For Finance:** Improved visibility into obligations and payment terms
- **For Executive Team:** Data-driven insights on contractual risks and opportunities

STEP 5

Appoint decision-makers, not decision-by-committee

Effective execution requires a lean and focused team. Avoid the temptation to over-consult during early phases—too many voices dilute clarity.

Two roles are essential

- **Executive sponsor:** typically the General Counsel, providing vision and decision-making authority
- **Subject matter expert (SME):** someone with deep process knowledge and functional context

This core team can draw in other contributors as needed—without losing direction.

Why this matters

Legal transformation projects with more than five core decision-makers take, on average, 3.4x longer to implement and have a 65% higher risk of scope creep. Keep your kitchen clean by limiting who gets to “stir the pot” during critical decision phases.

STEP 6

Consult across the business but remain in charge

Technology implementation involves multiple stakeholders. IT, procurement, compliance, and finance all bring important expertise. But they are there to support—not dictate—legal’s transformation.

This is especially true when deploying AI tools, where privacy, risk, and transparency concerns may surface. Address those collaboratively—but ensure that Legal retains ownership of its workflows, processes, and technology outcomes.

Stakeholder engagement approach

IT: Focus on security requirements and integration points, not functional decisions

Procurement: Partner on vendor evaluation criteria while maintaining decision rights

Risk/Compliance: Establish clear boundaries for AI use with appropriate safeguards

Finance: Quantify ROI beyond cost savings (e.g., risk avoidance, business acceleration)

STEP 7

Deliver early impact before chasing full integration

A fully integrated legal tech stack may be the long-term goal—but it's not where transformation should begin. Integration can introduce cost and complexity before any value has been proven.

AI solutions often deliver value as standalone modules. Prioritise capabilities that solve real problems now—like reviewing clauses, flagging deviations from precedent, or routing matters—then scale and integrate once benefits are established.

Phased approach to technology implementation:

Phase 1: Implement point solutions that solve specific pain points

Phase 2: Connect high-value workflows once adoption is established

Phase 3: Pursue deeper system integration for enterprise-wide benefits

Results

Legal departments following this phased approach report higher satisfaction with their technology investments compared to those pursuing full integration from the start.



STEP 8

Choose tools purpose-built for legal, not multi-purpose

Legal workflows are unique. Generic enterprise tools may lack the specificity, nuance, or controls that legal teams require. This is particularly true for AI solutions, which must understand legal language, precedents, context, and risk thresholds.

Look for platforms purpose-built for Legal—whether for contract lifecycle management, matter tracking, or AI-assisted document review. Pilot when possible. Limited engagements help reduce risk, validate suitability, and build trust within the team.

STEP 9

Just do it

There is no perfect time. Legal workloads will remain heavy. Resources will always be stretched. And the urgency of day-to-day work will continue to compete with long-term priorities.

The most successful legal functions aren't those with the most elaborate transformation plans—they're the ones that take action. Pick a focused problem. Implement the right tool. Demonstrate value. Then scale.

Getting started checklist

- Identify your highest-volume, lowest-complexity legal task
- Calculate the current resource cost (hours x lawyer cost)
- Research 2-3 purpose-built tools that address this specific need
- Request demonstrations focused on your actual use cases
- Implement a 90-day pilot with clear success metrics



CONCLUSION

Transform or be left behind

Legal transformation is no longer about adopting technology for its own sake—it's about enabling Legal to deliver faster, reduce friction, and contribute more strategically to the business.

Whether through automation, AI, or better workflows, the opportunity is real—and so is the cost of standing still.

Technology alone isn't the solution, but in the hands of forward-thinking legal leaders, it becomes the catalyst for lasting impact.

The data is clear: legal departments that have embraced digital transformation report:

- 40% faster contract cycle times
- 65% reduction in routine, low-value work
- 45% more time for strategic advice and risk management

The greatest risk now? Doing nothing.



Transform your legal operations with Plexus. By embracing AI and automation, legal teams achieve improved risk management, faster outcomes, and a significant reduction in manual workload—empowering your team to focus on what matters most.

Get in touch today:

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