

The GC of the Future

From Legal Manager to Risk Architect

Plexus Webinar · 2026



250+ of the world's best organisations run on Plexus



Seven global offices



Profiled in HBR



Financial Times "Top 10"

Harvard Business Review

FINANCIAL REVIEW

ACC
Association of Corporate Counsel

Gartner

ABC NEWS

THE AUSTRALIAN

FINANCIAL TIMES

YOUR HOSTS

Meet today's speakers



Andrew Mellett

CEO & Co-founder · Plexus

Andrew Co-founded Plexus to solve the structural inefficiency at the heart of enterprise legal — building the AI legal operating system for the modern enterprise. Plexus serves Australia's leading in-house teams via an integrated AI-powered CLM, Matter Management, Contract Review & Automation.



Jason McQuillen

Partner · MinterEllison Consulting

Jason leads the Legal Optimisation Consulting, AI Advisory and Discovery & Data Intelligence teams at MinterEllison Consulting. Formerly a Commercial, Technology and Outsourcing lawyer, Jason now works with in-house legal functions to optimise their strategy, delivery model, and legal technology.

THE RESEARCH

Grounded in our own data — 150 Global Legal Functions

53%

Australia

80 respondents

30%

United States

45 respondents

10%

New Zealand

15 respondents

7%

EMEA & other

10 respondents

INDUSTRIES

Energy · Finance & Banking ·
Technology · Healthcare · Consulting
· Insurance · Manufacturing, and 91
others

TEAM SIZES

78% manage teams of 10 FTEs or
fewer, reflecting the prevalence of
mid-market in-house functions

AI MATURITY

Respondents span every maturity
level, from no AI strategy (10.7%) to
fully operationalised models (6.7%)

Plexus Future-Ready General Counsel Survey 2026 · n=150 · Fieldwork: January 2026 · Self-reported responses

The future of Legal in five acts

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- ACT I The structural math of in-house legal and why it has never worked
 - ACT II How AI multiplies legal work before it reduces it
 - ACT III Why awareness of the problem is not the same as solving it
 - ACT IV The rise of the CLO title....and why it matters
 - ACT V Three moves that separate Risk Architects from Legal Managers
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ACT I

The Impossible Ask

The structural math of in-house legal has never worked.
The data makes it impossible to argue otherwise.

*'The problem is the elasticity
of demand for legal support in
near infinite.'*

- Financial Services GC

The elasticity of demand for legal support is infinite

1:500

Median lawyer-to-employee ratio at enterprise companies

The resourcing reality

Only 1 in 5 in-house counsel globally report sufficient staffing. 99% of GCs say the complexity and volume of work has increased over the past three years.

The headcount paradox

As demand grows, 78% anticipate a headcount freeze. The work grows. The team does not.

Your function is being asked to do the impossible

59%

of CLOs say workload increased last year

81%

of GCs say teams lack staffing to do their jobs effectively

69%

of GCs spend less than 40% of their time on strategic work

11%

of CEOs think they are getting optimal value from their legal function.

ACT II

AI Makes It Worse

Before AI can solve the legal capacity problem, it is actively amplifying it. The numbers, and the logic, are unambiguous.

The volume and quality of customer complaints is rising by the months. Customers are weaponizing AI against us.

AI doesn't reduce legal work. It multiplies it.

VOLUME

Every AI-generated contract, communication, and policy creates a downstream legal obligation. AI is a workload multiplier. For every task it completes in the business generates legal demand.

COMPLEXITY

AI liability frameworks, automated decision-making laws, and data governance requirements are compounding globally. The legal surface area of a modern enterprise has tripled since 2020.

SPEED

Businesses now expect legal sign-off in hours. AI has reset the SLA clock for every commercial interaction, without adding a single lawyer to meet it.

99%

of functions say legal work has increased in volume and complexity since the 'chat GPT moment'

6.7%

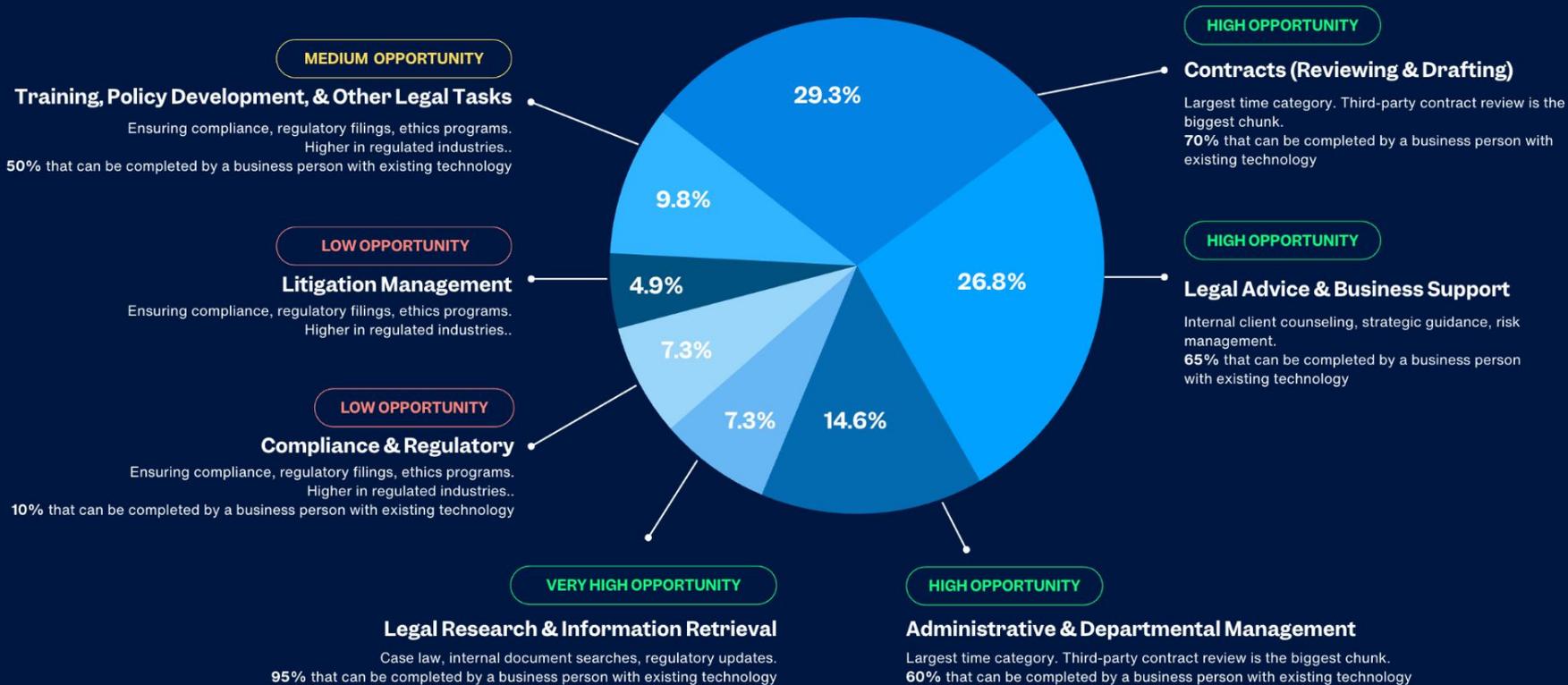
of functions have fully adopted AI to streamline legal workload.

ACT III

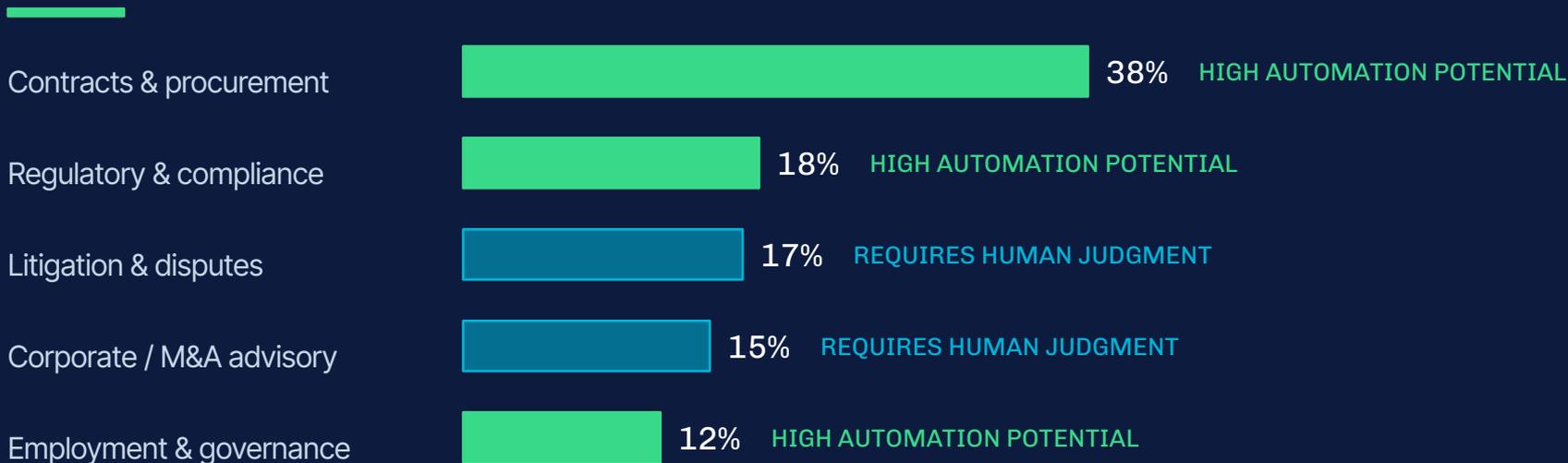
The Inaction Trap

Knowing there is a problem is not the same as doing something about it.
Awareness without action creates anxiety.

Work Category Distribution by % of time



McKinsey: 44% of legal tasks are technically automatable today



Plexus analysis across 340 in-house legal teams finds contracts and procurement alone consumes 38% of lawyer time and 56% of total lawyer time sits in categories with high automation potential.

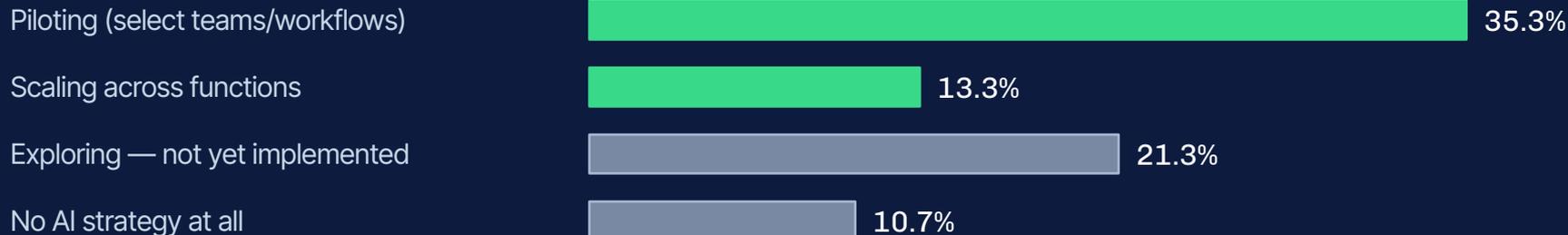
The Copilot Trap: Rubber yet to meet the road

58.7%

actively adopting AI
(piloting + scaling + implemented)

6.7%

have fully operationalised
AI-enabled operating models



The gap is not awareness. It is operationalisation. Most organisations are 12–24 months from AI maturity. The ones that get there first will set the benchmark. The question is whether you are closing the gap or the business is widening it.

ACT IV

The Identity Question

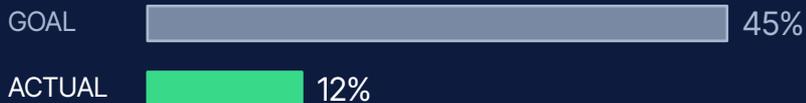
The GC and the CLO are not the same job.
The distance between them is not time served, it is a deliberate choice.

"A future-ready General Counsel in 2026 will be defined less by technical legal mastery (which is assumed) and more by how effectively they translate law, risk, and technology into business value."

- Steve Maycock GC Spirit of Tasmania

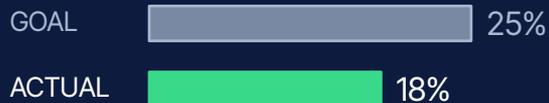
Legal Leaders say they want to be strategic. Their calendars disagree.

STRATEGIC ADVISORY



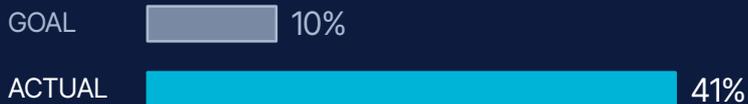
Gap: 33 percentage points

RISK & COMPLIANCE



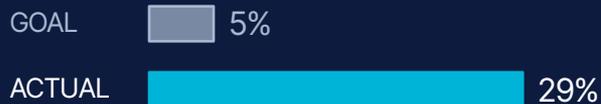
Gap: 7 percentage points

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT



Gap: 31 percentage points

INTERNAL TRIAGE & EMAIL



Gap: 24 percentage points

The GC and the CLO are not the same job.

GC

The Legal Manager

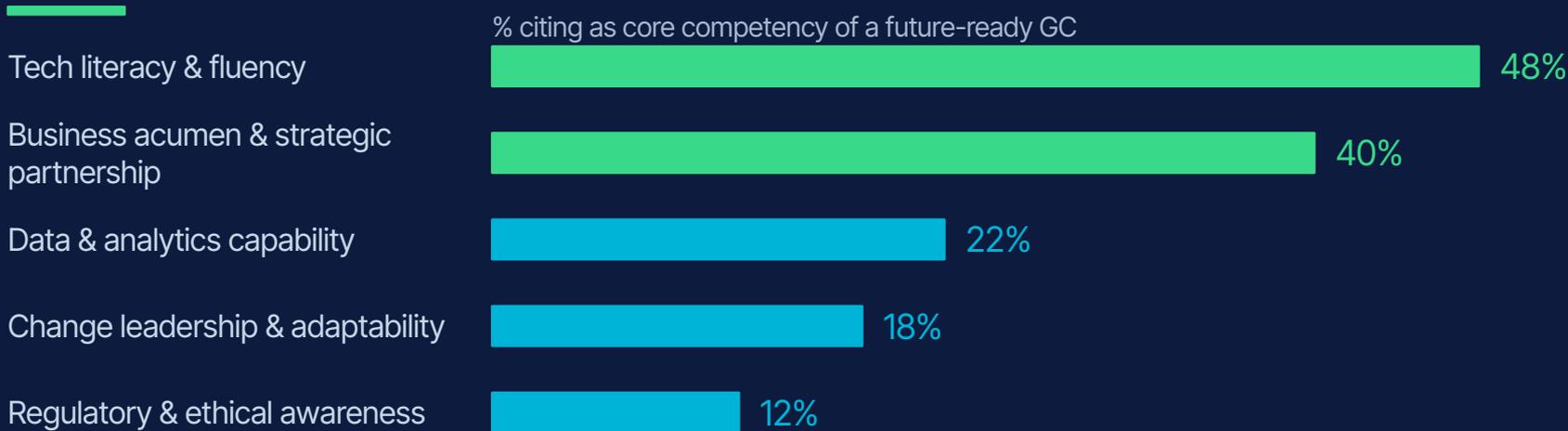
- Reactive. Matter by matter.
- Risk mitigation as the primary mandate
- Reports to CFO. Measured by cost.
- Legal expertise is the core credential
- Manages what the business sends over
- The safe pair of hands — the legal manager

CLO

The Risk Architect

- Proactive. Portfolio view.
- Value creation as the primary mandate
- Reports to CEO/Board. Measured by outcomes.
- Business acumen equals legal acumen
- Shapes what the business does before it needs legal
- The strategic architect

What 150 GCs say defines the future-ready leader



AI literacy tops the list for the first time. Cited by nearly half of all GCs surveyed. Not legal expertise. Not experience. The leaders GCs believe will define the next decade are those who can deploy AI responsibly and speak the language of technology.

Plexus Future-Ready GC Survey 2026 (n=150) · Open-text responses coded to competency themes · Includes quotes from Belinda O'Toole (Global GC, Deloitte), IAG, PETRONAS Australia and others

ACT V

The Path Forward

Three moves that separate the Risk Architects from the Legal Administrator.
The sequence matters. So does the urgency.

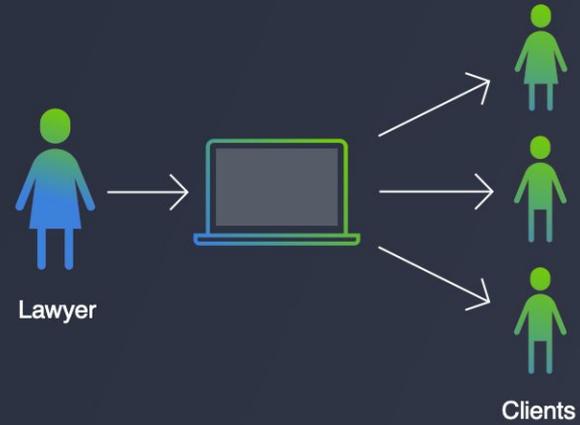
The Function of The Past

Legal was focused on delivering value by building legal function capacity to support more decisions.



The Function of The Future

Progressive functions are focused on building the organisation's capacity to make better decisions.



APAC legal teams are 18 months behind. That is an advantage.

| | US / UK | APAC |
|---------------------------|---------|------|
| AI adoption rate | 61% | 34% |
| CLM penetration | 74% | 49% |
| Legal ops maturity (0–10) | 7.2 | 5.8 |
| Dedicated legal ops (%) | 58% | 31% |

The first-mover cost: US and UK legal teams are unwinding failed first-generation CLM implementations. The rip-and-replace cycle costs millions and takes 12–18 months before the real transformation work begins.

The late-mover opportunity: Australian GCs can skip the failed implementations and deploy proven, second-generation technology from day one. The playbook exists. The only variable is urgency.

94% of AI users start here. The playbook is clear.



Three moves that separate architects from managers.

01

AUTOMATE THE COMMODITY

CONTRACTS & COMPLIANCE

Identify the 56% of work in high-automation categories. Buy infrastructure to handle it without lawyer time. Every hour recovered from contract execution is an hour reinvested into strategy.

43% of GCs using AI already report a 21–40% reduction in manual work. This is where the gains begin.

02

ARCHITECT THE FUNCTION

OPERATING MODEL

Define explicitly: what lawyers do, what self-service handles, what technology decides. An undocumented operating model defaults to the most urgent request. Every time.

Documented legal operating model model that outlines mission, roles, and systems highest-ROI investment a GC can make.

03

OWN THE AI AGENDA

TECHNOLOGY GOVERNANCE

The GC who controls the AI governance framework controls enterprise risk. That is a board-level mandate and it is currently vacant at most organisations.

Only 8.7% of GCs currently own AI governance. The vacancy exists. Claiming it redefines your seat at the table.

"The legal function that waits to see what AI does to the profession will spend the next decade catching up to the one that decided what the profession does with AI."

— Andy Mellett, CEO, Plexus

The GC of the future is already operating today, in teams that have automated the commodity, architected their function, and owned the AI governance agenda.

The question is not whether your function transforms. It is whether you lead it.

PLEXUS

Legal automation for in-house teams. CLM, compliance workflows, and the operating model.

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MINTERELLISON

Legal ops transformation, AI governance, and target operating model design.

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