

Archives to AI: A Knowledge Manager's Guide to Navigating the Tech Revolution

Introduction

A law firm's expertise and experience are at the heart of their value to clients. Firms gain a competitive edge by effectively utilizing their information and providing meaningful insights and top-tier legal services.

While the term “knowledge management” was largely unknown twenty years ago, the drive to access and utilize the best information quickly and effectively has led to a rapid transformation and expansion of the field. As well-known knowledge management expert, Patrick DiDomenico of InspireKM, stated in a recent Law.com article, [Artificial Intelligence Will Supercharge Knowledge Management for Lawyers](#), “[t]he future of knowledge management in the legal sector is not only secure but poised for a transformative boost with the integration of generative AI (GenAI)”. A function that began as a simple way to manage lawyer experience and documents has evolved into one of the most impactful functions at a law firm, accelerating firms’ efficacy thanks to the adoption of sophisticated systems and technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI).

This whitepaper takes a look at how knowledge management has transformed in law firms. It follows its progression from simple methods of sharing documents to advanced strategies that use the firm's data to benefit various areas of the practice. From streamlining workflows and enhancing decision-making to mitigating risks and ensuring regulatory compliance, modern knowledge management systems present opportunities and complexities that require strategic planning by law firms aiming to stay ahead in today's dynamic legal landscape.



The Dawn of Knowledge Management

Knowledge management, at its core, refers to the systematic process of identifying, capturing, organizing, and sharing knowledge within an organization to enhance efficiency, innovation, and decision-making. It leverages explicit knowledge (documents, databases, procedures) and tacit knowledge (personal expertise, experiences, insights) to create value and improve performance.

In the legal profession, knowledge management gained traction as law firms recognized the need to better organize and utilize vast amounts of information. Traditionally, lawyers relied on personal relationships and individual expertise to match client needs with the right experience. However, as the legal landscape became more complex and globalized, structured and efficient knowledge management methods became necessary.

The first significant development was the establishment of searchable repositories for documents. These centralized collections stored past cases, contracts, briefs, and other legal documents, making them easily retrievable. This innovation marked a shift towards more efficient and organized knowledge management practices, reducing work duplication and ensuring valuable knowledge was preserved and accessible.

However, while certainly better than pestering the whole firm with ‘pardon the interruption’ emails, these repositories depended on those building the databases to use the same terminology, naming conventions, and organizational structures as all their colleagues. They also required significant manual maintenance and upkeep to stay current—a time-consuming job that was never finished. In a recent webinar, Meredith Williams-Range, Chief Legal Operations Officer at Gibson Dunn, said of her first knowledge management role,

“I was trying to do things on my own and to find information, questioning why we did not have it.... it became the story of my existence.”

Kate Cain, Chief Knowledge & Innovation Officer at Sheppard Mullin, recalls the countless hours spent creating complex taxonomies to organize collections, noting “by the time we finished debating the multi-layered folder structure and the labels, the collection was already stale, and the lawyers had moved on.”



Making Knowledge More Accessible

As the quality and quantity of information increased, so did the interest in sharing said information and the need to add context to support it. In most modern law firms, knowledge management is now an integral resource due to its ability to optimize operations, improve decision-making, and enhance client services. The key to this transition relies on full-firm buy-in.

As DiDomenico says, “[a]n effective knowledge management program is really about changing the mindset of the people within your organization. When you deliver them something that really helps them, whether it is a practice-oriented thing or a business-oriented thing, the light bulbs go off and they are like ‘Oh, wow, I did not realize we could do something like this.... now I am going to be your best friend (or sometimes your worst nightmare) because I’m going to be contacting you all the time for help.’”

The knowledge management function has also evolved beyond precedent and file collections to span experience management as well as take on a more technical and analytical focus catering to the evolving needs of lawyers and clients. Evolving KM teams are becoming increasingly more valuable as they are not only responsible for maintaining that information, but also extracting content and critical details from mass amounts of information and organizing it in a way that aids decision-making.

As Cindy Bare, Chief Data and Innovation Officer at Frost Brown Todd, stated in our recent webinar,

“We’re talking a lot about making data-driven decisions and having the kind of information we need to support those decisions. Whereas people before were saying ‘well, I think this might be where we have a lot of industry expertise’, now I can give you the financial impact of every combination of industry and practice and matter type at our firm. So, we can make much stronger decisions.”

As the legal landscape grows more complex and clients’ demands increase, data-leveraging knowledge management tools become indispensable. Experience management software enables firms to quickly identify relevant matters and expertise, helping them to

deliver high-quality services, leverage their internal expertise, and win business. Contract lifecycle management (CLM) software streamlines the contract process, improving efficiency, consistency, and compliance while minimizing errors.

The integration of client tracking software into customer relationship management (CRM) systems is also vital. It allows firms to understand client needs and behaviors, tailor services, and enhance client satisfaction and retention, emphasizing the importance of CRM in legal practice.



Building Firmwide Enthusiasm for Knowledge Management

Implementing knowledge management in law firms presents challenges that require careful navigation. One primary hurdle is the fear of change, as legal professionals often adhere to traditional methods and may resist new systems. Overcoming this resistance involves introducing new tools as well as changing mindsets to embrace innovation.

When asked about overcoming fear of new tools and creating firm buy-in, Williams-Range summed it up when she said “[w]hen it comes to adoption, you have to engage to inform, but we also have to engage to influence. Why is this important to you? Why does this matter to you? What is going to add to your back pocket? What is this going to do for the client? When we engage with our individuals, understanding where we are coming from is very critical because no two audiences are the same. Their fears are not the same. Figure out how you support overcoming that fear and help them understand how you can really help them do their job better.”

Another challenge for law firms is that knowledge tends to be compartmentalized, hindering information flow and preventing the firm from leveraging collective expertise. Firms need to foster a culture of openness and collaboration, encouraging knowledge sharing across practice areas through integrated databases and cultural shifts promoting interdepartmental communication and cooperation.

However, Cain notes “Encouragement is important, but it is not enough for sustained, meaningful impact. The firms that do it well expect active engagement from their lawyers and related professionals. Actively contributing to and leveraging knowledge assets is an integral part of how they do business, how they practice.”

Joshua Fireman, President and Founder of the Fireman & Company, a legal industry focused management consulting firm, thinks the future will depend on this cross-collaboration.

“I think that structuring law firms around strict administrative functions may begin to change, shifting towards structuring towards outcomes. That would be a significant, but I suspect welcome shift with respect to removing barriers to success in some firms.”

Change management is crucial in this context. A smooth transition involves addressing concerns, providing comprehensive training, and clearly demonstrating the value of new systems. Training sessions should equip legal professionals with the knowledge they need to do their jobs well, complete with the skills to use new technologies effectively. Centering training on the desired outcomes, rather than features, functions, and buttons, is the best way to transform the way people work and realize a return on the firm’s investment in this space.



The Role of Technology in Knowledge Management

Technology plays a pivotal role in the evolution of knowledge management, acting as a catalyst for change and efficiency. The introduction of digital resources has revolutionized knowledge management, enabling the creation, sharing, and management of knowledge on an unprecedented scale. Digital repositories, cloud storage, and advanced search functionalities have made information more accessible and collaborative.

However, technology alone is not a solution. It must be strategically integrated with people and processes to be truly effective. The synergy between technology, people, and processes ensures that knowledge is captured and utilized effectively.

A balanced approach combining technological solutions with human insight and well-defined processes is essential for impactful knowledge management.

According to Fireman, “[w]hen you’re thinking of technology, it’s usually the last 10% of the solution to whatever problem you need to be solved, and that means that you’ve got to look at the people involved, the processes involved, the data involved, and the technology involved, and then come up to a holistic solution. If you simply try to apply fantastic, shiny technology to a very human problem, it will still be a problem that’s just shinier. You have to understand the interplay of the technology with the human process.”

The journey of knowledge management in law firms underscores the importance of adopting and adapting to new technologies through continuous learning and innovation. Training and development programs help legal professionals stay updated on new tools and methods, ensuring they can fully utilize modern knowledge management systems.

When asked about roles she thinks will benefit knowledge management in the future, Bare responded:

“I hope we see more titles around the word coach, because companies don’t change, people do, and you’ve got to help people understand how to practice new and different ways of using your technology.”



The Future of Knowledge Management with GenAI

In knowledge management, Generative AI (GenAI) is revolutionizing practices in law firms. GenAI analyzes vast data sets, identifies patterns, and offers valuable insights. In legal contexts, it can analyze contracts, suggest clauses, and flag potential risks.

CLM systems enhanced by GenAI streamline processes by comparing current contracts with historical negotiations, suggesting clauses, and highlighting outliers, thus improving efficiency and risk management. When you combine these tools with GenAI's ability to convert unstructured data into structured datasets, you have the added benefit of unlocking the hidden insights needed to enhance informed decision-making.

According to Fireman, “a certain number of point solutions will emerge that get traction in the market and that solve usable problems. We’re going to see existing vendors in the market, integrating AI tools into their platforms that also solve problems. And then I think that we are going to see generalist tools evolve a little bit, like some other companies in legal have where they go from being development platforms to again, offering up business solutions.”

While there is still a lot to learn about how GenAI will shape the future of law firms, there’s no doubt that the integration of artificial intelligence into knowledge management signifies a paradigm shift. As technology advances, knowledge managers that adapt and embrace GenAI tools will find themselves ahead of the competition, able to navigate the evolving information management landscape quickly and effectively.

As Williams-Range says, “I actually think knowledge workers in particular are going to play a critical role moving forward in this realm of AI. I think there’s not a better suited group of individuals to understand the data, the architecture, how to profit, how to eliminate hallucinations, than knowledge workers... We need to know that we are empathetic to our people, but we also need to make certain that we’re resilient and we can adapt to the changes that are coming.”

Cain agrees that knowledge professionals are uniquely positioned to help lawyers, practices and firms realize the full potential of AI solutions. “There is a lot of distance between delivering the software and actually transforming the way people work. Their combination of practical legal experience and technical acumen allows knowledge management professionals to bridge that gap, helping lawyers integrate new methods and the right tools into their workflows.”

The future of knowledge management in law firms will likely see GenAI integrated with other technologies, creating systems that not only organize knowledge but also generate new insights. While these advancements promise competitive advantages, firms must prioritize data security, accuracy, and cost management to ensure successful implementation. Embracing innovation while maintaining ethical standards will be key to leveraging the full potential of advanced knowledge management systems in the evolving legal landscape.

Knowledge Management at Your Fingertips with Litera Foundation

Litera Foundation helps over 50% of the Global 100 efficiently deliver legal excellence by capturing firm knowledge, increasing collaboration, and improving client experience.

Whether you are delivering legal work, managing matters, or winning business, Foundation provides your data backbone, centralizing and transforming firm data into easily accessible and fully connected client, matter, lawyers, and third-party profiles.

And now, together with the new GenAI-powered Foundation Insights, Litera is shaping the future of knowledge management, empowering teams to exceed client expectations by unlocking a firm's collective knowledge previously trapped in siloed systems and deal documents.

Previously out of reach real-time data-driven market insights, enabled by legally focused GenAI technology and experience data, are creating a group of super-charged firms with proprietary deal point databases, so they can know 'what's market' for deal provisions, giving them a powerful edge in negotiations, and revolutionized marketing, business development, and knowledge management functions.



To learn more about Foundation and Foundation Insights and how its GenAI capabilities are helping firms gain a competitive edge, download our product sheet [here](#).



For more than 25 years, Litera has been at the forefront of legal technology innovation, expanding the impact and potential of what legal professionals can accomplish using industry-leading AI and machine learning tools from the best minds in the business. The world's largest law firms and corporate legal departments use Litera's best-in-class ecosystem of legal technology to transform the way they win matters, perfect documents, run deals, and manage cases. With more efficiency, productivity, and accuracy, Litera empowers legal professionals to do less busy work, and more of your life's work.

For more information about Litera visit litera.com or follow us on [LinkedIn](#).