# Law firms race to embed AI while clinging to human oversight



The legal profession’s cautious, centuries‑old rhythms have been ruptured by a new force: artificial intelligence. According to a recent industry overview, routine tasks that once consumed vast swathes of associates’ and paralegals’ time — drafting, document review, e‑discovery triage and research — are now routinely delegated to machine models that can cluster documents, surface issues and produce first drafts in minutes rather than hours. Firms that move fastest report measurable efficiency gains, but those claims are almost always accompanied by an insistence on human oversight and governance. (National Law Review; firm innovation pages.)

A cluster of firms has emerged as exemplars of how to deploy AI at scale. In May 2025 Adams & Reese announced it had adopted Everlaw as its exclusive e‑discovery platform, saying the cloud‑native, AI‑enabled tools have accelerated document review, improved data management and reduced case turnaround times. The firm and Everlaw executives described faster analytics, automated timeline building and summarisation capabilities — concrete efficiencies, the announcement framed, that are already lowering costs and improving client responsiveness. (National Law Review; Adams & Reese announcement.)

Some legacy global firms have pursued vendor partnerships as their primary route to capability. Allen & Overy was an early and high‑profile adopter of Harvey, rolling the system out through its Markets Innovation Group and trialling it with thousands of lawyers; the firm says the tool has been used for multilingual drafting, contract analysis and research while every AI output is audited by humans. DLA Piper likewise positioned a 2023 rollout of Casetext’s CoCounsel as essential to staying competitive, describing AI adoption in blunt terms: that the market is an “arms race” and no firm wants to be left behind. (National Law Review; Allen & Overy announcement; DLA Piper announcement.)

Other firms have blended vendor technology with bespoke internal systems. Baker McKenzie describes a period of piloting large language models to generate drafts and assist with legal research while emphasising client‑by‑client sandboxing to meet bespoke data‑security needs. Dentons has taken the step of building a client‑secure GPT‑4 environment — fleetAI — developed with third‑party partners to ensure uploaded client data would not be used to train external models and that retention rules and deletion policies are enforced; public reporting around the launch stressed staff training, governance and the need to verify AI output. (National Law Review; firm statements and press coverage.)

Some firms have chosen fully proprietary routes. Cooley publicises a suite of in‑house platforms — including Vanilla, a secure cloud system aimed at private funds, and Cooley GO with its embedded Cooley GObot chatbot — positioning these tools as client‑facing, quality‑led innovations governed by principles of ethics and transparency. Cooley’s materials describe the platforms as designed to streamline investor onboarding, compliance and practical guidance for startups, and the firm has been explicit about publishing a manifesto that sets out those commitments. (National Law Review; Cooley innovation materials.)

Specialist and practice‑led experiments are also common. Wilson Sonsini added an AI‑enabled, fixed‑fee commercial contracting offering to its Neuron platform after in‑house testing that the firm said achieved roughly 92% accuracy in identifying issues and applying its playbook positions; the model is presented as a lawyer‑in‑the‑loop tool to speed contract lifecycle tasks. Employment boutique Fisher & Phillips helped design and now uses Casetext’s CoCounsel to compress legal research tasks from hours into minutes. Elsewhere, firms such as Gunderson Dettmer, Macfarlanes, Holland & Knight, Cuatrecasas, Orrick and the Big Four‑aligned KPMG Law have each taken different paths — from bespoke chat apps and amplified internal workflows to ABS‑enabled, hybrid operating models that combine non‑traditional ownership with aggressive technology deployment. (National Law Review; Wilson Sonsini announcement; firm statements.)

That diversity of approach underlines the twin promises and pitfalls of legal AI. Vendors and early adopters trumpet time and cost savings and increased throughput; press releases and corporate pages point to measurable productivity improvements and new fixed‑fee offerings that can accelerate clients’ time to revenue. But these same announcements repeatedly attach caveats: models are sandboxed for particular clients, outputs are subject to human verification, data‑use and retention policies are prescribed, and training and governance are elevated as equally important investments. As DLA Piper’s chair of AI practice, Daniel Tobey, put it in the firm’s 2023 statement about CoCounsel: “This is an arms race, and you don’t want to be the last law firm with these tools. It’s very easy to become a dinosaur these days.” (Firm announcements; Wilson Sonsini testing; DLA Piper statement.)

The regulatory and ethical questions are now the most consequential. Firms and platforms are experimenting with notice obligations to clients, deletion and retention windows, and controls to prevent inadvertent model training on confidential information — measures that aim to reconcile commercial advantage with professional duties. Reports about secure, client‑only environments and enforced deletion windows have become a centrepiece of vendor‑and‑firm narratives because they respond directly to lawyer concerns about privilege, confidentiality and model leakage. At the same time, independent testing and transparent governance frameworks are still uneven: accuracy claims vary by task and by how tightly a model has been aligned to a firm’s playbook. (Firm statements and coverage; industry materials.)

For now the prevailing model is augmentation: AI as a tool that amplifies lawyers’ capacity rather than replaces professional judgement. But the pace of change — multiple vendor partnerships, bespoke platforms, fixed‑fee automation and Big Four entrants built on hybrid ownership structures — suggests an inflection point is approaching. If the next phase is shaped by reproducible, regulated, client‑facing automation, the profession will have to reconcile new business models, supervision rules and training requirements with longstanding duties to clients and courts. Firms that transparently marry technical controls with clear governance, and that treat human review as non‑negotiable, are most likely to shape how that future unfolds. (National Law Review; Cooley materials.)

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[4]](https://www.cooley.com/services/industry/artificial-intelligence/innovation-at-cooley)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[2]](https://www.adamsandreese.com/newsroom/ediscovery-investment-improves-client-service-litigation-processes)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[3]](https://www.aoshearman.com/en/news/ao-announces-exclusive-launch-partnership-with-harvey), [[5]](https://www.dlapiper.com/en/es-pr/news/2023/03/dla-piper-to-utilize-cocounsel-the-groundbreaking-ai-legal-assistant-powered-by-openai-technology)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[7]](https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/news/international/dentons-to-launch-client-secure-version-of-chatgpt/378791)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[4]](https://www.cooley.com/services/industry/artificial-intelligence/innovation-at-cooley)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[6]](https://www.wsgr.com/en/insights/wilson-sonsini-adds-ai-enabled-fixed-fee-commercial-contract-offering-to-neuron-platform.html), [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[6]](https://www.wsgr.com/en/insights/wilson-sonsini-adds-ai-enabled-fixed-fee-commercial-contract-offering-to-neuron-platform.html), [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race), [[4]](https://www.cooley.com/services/industry/artificial-intelligence/innovation-at-cooley)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://natlawreview.com/article/inside-legal-industrys-ai-arms-race> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.adamsandreese.com/newsroom/ediscovery-investment-improves-client-service-litigation-processes> - Adams & Reese announced in May 2025 that it selected Everlaw as its exclusive e‑discovery platform. The press release explains the move from on‑premises solutions to Everlaw’s cloud‑native, AI‑enabled tools, which the firm says accelerate document review, improve data management and reduce case turnaround. Firm leaders and Everlaw executives are quoted describing faster analytics, timeline building and summarisation capabilities provided by Everlaw’s AI Assistant. The announcement frames the partnership as part of Adams & Reese’s broader technology investment to enhance litigation services, lower costs and deliver more responsive client outcomes across its nationwide practices. It highlights measurable efficiency gains now.
3. <https://www.aoshearman.com/en/news/ao-announces-exclusive-launch-partnership-with-harvey> - Allen & Overy (A&O) announced an exclusive launch partnership with legal AI provider Harvey in February 2023, offering the tool to thousands of lawyers across its global offices. The firm said that Harvey, built on GPT‑4, was trialled by its Markets Innovation Group and that around 3,500 lawyers had used the system during beta, submitting roughly 40,000 queries. A&O described Harvey as assisting with multilingual drafting, contract analysis and research while emphasising human oversight of outputs. The announcement positioned the collaboration as a strategic innovation aimed at improving efficiency, client service and competitive advantage for the firm internationally and growth.
4. <https://www.cooley.com/services/industry/artificial-intelligence/innovation-at-cooley> - Cooley’s innovation page describes several proprietary technology initiatives, including Vanilla, a secure cloud platform for private funds, and Cooley GO, an online resource hub for startups that includes Cooley GObot, an AI‑powered chatbot. The firm explains that Vanilla was developed to streamline investor onboarding and fund compliance, while Cooley GO provides document templates, guides and an automated chatbot to surface practical guidance for entrepreneurs. Cooley highlights awards and recognition for its innovation work and states it follows principles of quality, ethics and transparency in developing technology. The content underscores Cooley’s commitment to building client‑facing AI tools and internal platforms strategically.
5. <https://www.dlapiper.com/en/es-pr/news/2023/03/dla-piper-to-utilize-cocounsel-the-groundbreaking-ai-legal-assistant-powered-by-openai-technology> - DLA Piper announced in March 2023 that it would utilise Casetext’s CoCounsel, an AI legal assistant powered by OpenAI’s GPT‑4. The firm’s statement explained that CoCounsel assists with legal research, document review, contract analysis and brief drafting, benefitting from Casetext’s Parallel Search and extensive testing. DLA Piper framed the adoption as essential to remain competitive, with its AI practice chair describing the wider legal technology shift as an 'arms race' and warning firms not to fall behind. The release emphasised security measures, accuracy testing and the intent to integrate AI tools into substantive legal workflows responsibly across global practices seamlessly.
6. <https://www.wsgr.com/en/insights/wilson-sonsini-adds-ai-enabled-fixed-fee-commercial-contract-offering-to-neuron-platform.html> - Wilson Sonsini announced in May 2024 that it had added an AI‑enabled, fixed‑fee commercial contracting offering to its Neuron platform, leveraging an AI agent tested to apply the firm’s playbook positions. The press release states the AI agent achieved approximately 92% accuracy in identifying issues and applying playbook positions during testing, supporting attorney review under a lawyer‑in‑the‑loop model. The initiative is presented as a means to accelerate cloud services agreements, reduce time to revenue for clients and provide predictable pricing. Wilson Sonsini emphasises ongoing development of the platform and the continued necessity of human oversight for legal quality and scalability.
7. <https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/news/international/dentons-to-launch-client-secure-version-of-chatgpt/378791> - Reports in 2023 described Dentons launching 'fleetAI', a proprietary, client‑secure GPT‑4‑based platform enabling lawyers to generate legal content, conduct research and upload documents for extraction and analysis. Coverage explains that Dentons worked with Microsoft to ensure uploaded client data would not be used to train models and would be protected from external access, with automatic deletion after a set retention period. The announcements framed fleetAI as part of Dentons’ innovation agenda to provide faster matter workflows while emphasising staff training, governance and the need for verification of AI outputs to mitigate risks such as inaccuracies or bias and client communication.