

epiq



HYPERION GP  
RESEARCH

Corporate Legal  
Workflow Automation

---

Trends and Key  
Implementation Strategies

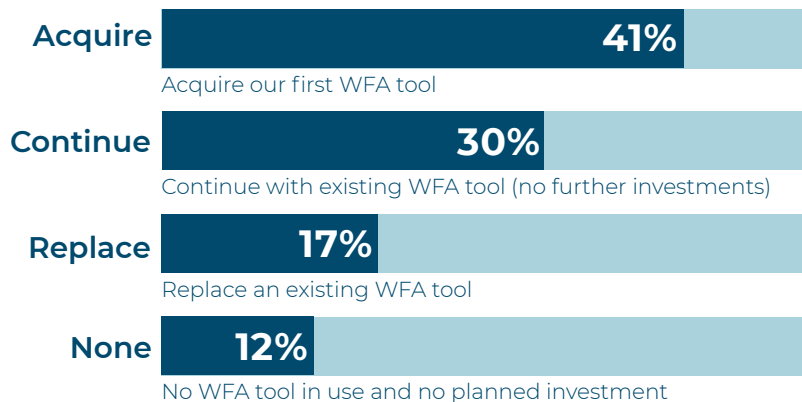
# Corporate Legal Automation Trends

In-house law departments have long faced rising workloads while coping with budget pressures, as the demands on their teams often outstrip expansion of the function. These challenges are leading to a significant wave of investment in workflow automation (WFA) solutions for the corporate legal market.

Nearly **9 out of 10** are investing in Workflow Automation

Hyperion Research benchmarking data shows 41% of respondents report their intention to acquire their first WFA tool in the next 12-18 months. Only 12% of respondents indicated they neither currently use nor have plans to acquire or upgrade these technologies.

## Planned Investment in workflow automation



## Forces Driving Corporate Legal Adoption of Legal Workflow Automation Tools

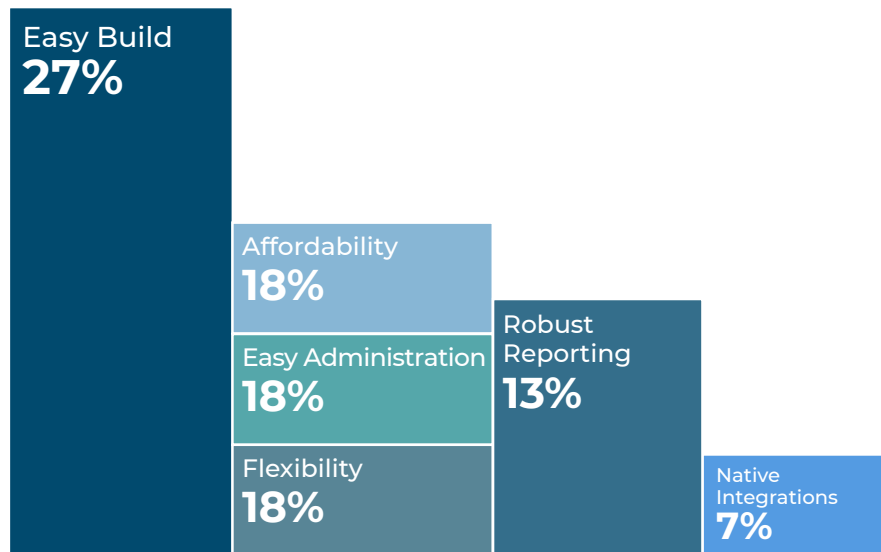
Hyperion’s in-depth research with users of WFA technology in corporate legal departments revealed a range of benefits including managing rising workloads, easing budget concerns, and alleviating risk management concerns while gaining autonomy by obtaining tools that require little or no IT support.

## How Workflow Addresses Challenges in Legal

LEGAL DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES	UPWARD WORKLOAD PRESSURE	LIMITED/ NO IT SUPPORT	RISK FROM AVOIDING LEGAL	DOWNWARD BUDGET PRESSURE
HOW WORKFLOW AUTOMATION HELPS	<p>Automate processes to alleviate time-consuming, manual work</p> <p>Obtain data on legal service demand to better direct limited resources</p>	<p>Obtain tools designed for “citizen developers” who can use them with little training</p> <p>Take advantage of approachable, built-in administration capabilities for self-sufficiency</p> <p>Make IT engagement easy and pertinent, e.g. only for custom integrations and security review</p>	<p>Make going through Legal easier with quicker responses via communication channels internal clients are already using (email, Teams, Slack, intranet)</p> <p>Leverage native WFA features to ensure consistent policy enforcement</p>	<p>License relatively inexpensive WFA solutions, often with free trials and/or low entry-level price points</p> <p>Demonstrate the ROI of WFA investments to fuel incremental expansion</p>

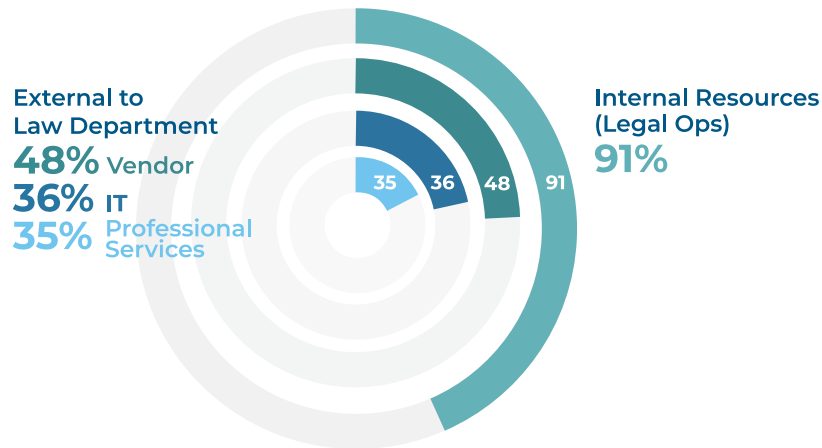
In keeping with growing trends toward business-led IT initiatives across other corporate functions, in-house legal departments have both motive and opportunity to take control of their digitization initiatives using relatively inexpensive and easy-to-use workflow automation solutions. When asked to indicate the most important benefit they receive (or anticipate), our data show that users and buyers of WFA rank their ability to easily automate processes highest, followed by sizable numbers that prioritize easy administration, flexibility, and affordability.

### Priorities for Workflow Automation



The ease of building, administering, and adjusting these solutions enables most corporate law departments to undertake at least some work themselves. **Hyperion Research data show that in over 90% of legal departments, Legal Ops staff build and manage the workflows – double the rate at which teams use supplemental support from vendor support, IT, or professional services.** Moreover, as typical “owners” of the WFA solution, Legal Ops staff often not only take on primary responsibility for building applications and administering the solution, but also provide training and drive awareness and adoption of workflow automation.

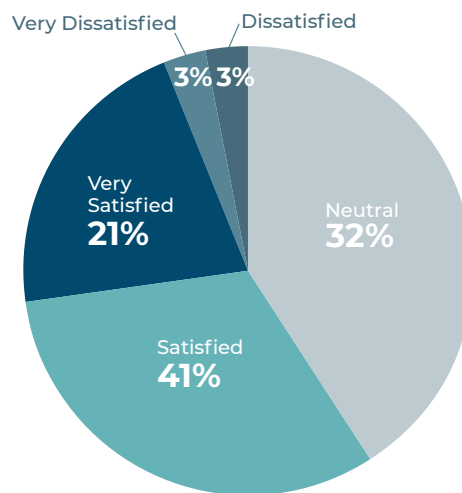
## Support Resources Engaged



## Vendors are Propelling the Movement

As a macro trend, vendors in this category are lowering the barriers to entry by making their offerings easier to use (no code) and more accessible (low cost). Some also offer solutions that can scale up to larger portfolios of more sophisticated applications through their low code capabilities. A few are now harnessing the large language models that are adjacent to their products' inherent AI-driven capabilities to offer more conversational interactions with users. In general, they are generating goodwill with customers.

## Satisfaction with Workflow Automation Solutions



Our data shows that 62% of respondents who have implemented WFA tools are satisfied or very satisfied, with only about 1 in 20 reporting dissatisfaction. The warm reception to WFA stands in contrast to some other technology types like contract lifecycle management where just over a third of users (35%) reported satisfaction with their solution, per our survey in 2022.

Also notable is the nearly one-third of respondents who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This data, along with interviews with over 40 WFA customers, suggests a risk in getting carried away with the technology and related opportunities. Corporate legal departments tend to quickly ramp up to large numbers of automated processes; however, some struggle to manage and maintain those automations as staff come and go. Automating workflows requires more planning, oversight, and discipline than many initially realize.

## Opening the Door

A common starting point for Legal Departments is a “Front Door” where legal service requests are made, and questions are answered. This intake portal leads to capturing operational data, providing insight into demands on the legal function and operational performance. The benefits range from immediate to long-term and include:

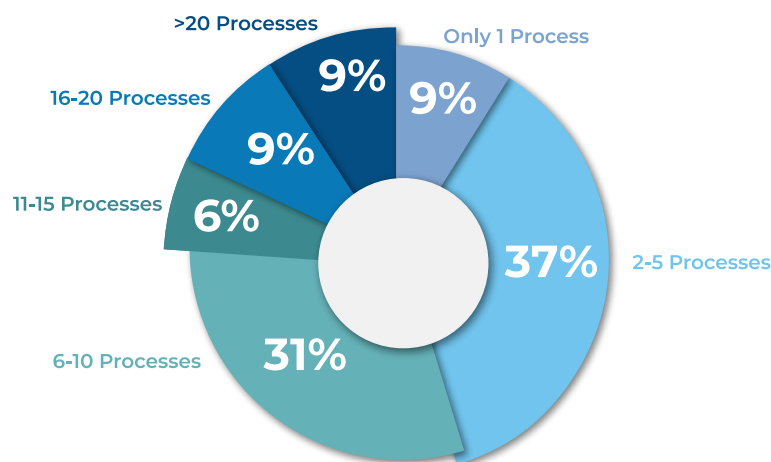
- **Some needs can be met immediately.** Questions are answered, policies are provided, training videos are obtained, and low-risk contracts are fulfilled.
- **Work can be triaged or diverted,** routing the right issues to the right individuals, or filtering out requests outside the legal department’s mandate.
- **Necessary information and documents can be collected,** alleviating the burden on legal staff to ask questions and gather relevant artifacts to address matters and draft or negotiate contracts.
- **Workflows can be triggered,** reducing manual effort and following standardized processes which also improve compliance. Data points obtained support expediting specific workstreams.
- **Operational data capture begins** and eventually accumulates to provide insight into demands on the legal function and operational performance (e.g., categories of request, how long it takes to meet clients’ needs, time intervals for each step, where bottlenecks lie, etc.).
- **Value can be demonstrated.** The work that came through the intake portal and got addressed can be shared via dashboards, helping Legal tell the story of what and how much it does.

## Expanding Automations

After a legal department has automated the intake process, we have found that the automation of processes often quickly expands. Hyperion Research benchmarking data shows that 54% of legal departments implementing workflow automation technology (WFA) have upwards of six automated processes, and 24% have more than ten automated processes.

More than **90%**  
are automating  
multiple processes

### Number of Automated Processes



Automated processes span the corporate legal and compliance practice groups. After general intake/triage, the most common applications of workflow automation relate to contracting (intake, fulfillment, and addenda) and compliance (assessments, tracking, reporting, review/approval), followed by IP use cases.

## Diversity of Workflow Automation Use Cases

LEGAL SERVICE REQUEST	CONTRACTS	COMPLIANCE	IP AND OTHER
Legal Service Request <b>75%</b>	Contract Request/Intake <b>70%</b>	Conflict of Interest <b>24%</b>	Patent/Trademark infringement <b>12%</b>
		Compliance Issue <b>21%</b>	Invention Disclosure <b>12%</b>
	Simple Contract Fulfillment <b>67%</b>	Data breach reporting <b>15%</b>	Trademark Clearance <b>12%</b>
Compliance Assessments <b>15%</b>		Marketing Review <b>24%</b>	
Contract Addenda <b>18%</b>	Gift/Charitable Contribution Approval <b>12%</b>	Early Case Assessment <b>6%</b>	
			Other <b>56%</b>

Sophistication often continues to increase over time. Interviews with larger departments gaining traction in workflow automation revealed a high likelihood of deploying the tools to engage with multiple internal and even external stakeholders in tailored or bulk processes. Additionally, adding integrations with other legal and enterprise systems unlocks even more power through data orchestration, eliminating many manual processes legal departments undertake to transfer information from one tool to another.

# Corporate Legal Automation: Key Implementation Strategies

## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR YOUR WORKFLOW AUTOMATION JOURNEY

With a diverse set of solutions, corporate law departments must carefully consider what automations technology and management models will best address their most critical use cases. Further, the most effective organizations treat their WFA initiative as a ‘team sport,’ select solutions judiciously, and adopt an iterative approach to these investments.

The characteristics of individual WFA solutions – and indeed, the needs of a given law department – vary widely. Below, we provide some generalized scenarios to assist in thinking through management models and requirements. For some, these scenarios may represent stages of maturity; others may not need to progress – but rather to land on a model and build a program with the right tool.

## Workflow Automation Models

	Cohesion	Scope	Integration	Abstraction	Administration
Simple	Discrete apps for distinct processes	Key use case is Front Door (intake, triage, and routing)  Small number of use cases (1-3)	No/few integrations needed, typically using pre-built connectors	Pre-built applications preferred	App building and administration often rests on 1 or 2 super users; part-time focus on WFA
Complex	Portfolio of apps - some are more complex and/or interdependent	Larger number of distinct workflows (5+), perhaps including self-service  Some processes kick off others	Integrations automate cross-functional interactions and connect to point solutions in Legal	Building blocks preferred	App building and administration is performed by a team; resources may be dedicated to WF or relying on external resources
Sophisticated	Ecosystem of sophisticated applications; interdependencies are common	Use cases include external and business-facing mission-critical capabilities, e.g. high volume contracting and orchestration among systems	Extensive integrations within Legal & across functions	Flexibility to build complex flows preferred	Dedicated team handles build and administration; presence of "legal engineers"  Management model is codified – SOPs, builds, and test/release protocols are documented

## Set Up a Winning Team

While a workflow automation program typically features a champion who is also willing to handle much of the design, build and administration, the most effective legal departments take a team-based approach, forming a committee to plan and directly support the initiative – and also apply long-term governance practices as workflow automation programs expand.

Roles within the team can include (with overlap):

- **Executive Sponsor:** ensures resources and plans are in place and on track to achieve defined goals.
- **Program Lead:** engages stakeholders to achieve strategic alignment, put in place a roadmap, and to successfully execute the tactical steps to achieve program goals.
- **Subject Matter Experts:** the legal professionals at the center of processes that are being automated, sharing knowledge of what needs to be done by whom per regulations and policies.
- **Workflows can be triggered,** reducing manual effort and following standardized processes which also improve compliance. Data points obtained support expediting specific workstreams.
- **Workflow Builder(s):** develops, tests, and deploys automated processes, also called “citizen developers” or “legal engineers.”
- **Workflow Administrator(s):** oversees the design, implementation, monitoring, and optimization of workflow automation solutions to ensure they operate smoothly.

Feedback from over 40 in-house professionals that have deployed WFA and [Epiq's Legal Business Advisory's](#) work in this realm point to some specific characteristics needed among builder and administrator roles (sometimes embodied in one person), including:

- **Interpersonal and Analytical Skills:** like business analysts, builders benefit from the ability to elicit the information needed to fully automate a process.
- **Design Savvy:** beyond digitizing an existing process, the best builders embrace the challenge of designing automated processes, selecting among multiple potential approaches.
- **Mindshare:** for both builders and administrators, frequency of hands-on experience sustains facility with the tool; whereas infrequent use of the more sophisticated platforms demands refamiliarization with each interaction.

## Select Judiciously

We recommend using a weighted scorecard to evaluate how the product's attributes match prioritized requirements, and assessments of the company's strengths and stability, product roadmap, ease of deployment and user adoption success.

Key guiding principles include:

1. **Start with a well-defined set of user needs and requirements.** Ensure you have a concrete articulation of areas to address.
2. **Try before you buy – carefully.** A “free trial” opportunity is rare in legal technology, but some WFA vendors make it easy to experiment before making a longer-term commitment. Ask for a prototype workflow, ideally built in-house, if that's your intended model in the long run.
3. **Understand the vendor's licensing model and pricing.** The range of pricing practices in the WFA market involves important, interrelated considerations, including the number of deployed workflows as well as the number and types of users. Ensure that the pricing model supports (rather than impedes) the specific business objectives of your WFA initiative.
4. **Scrutinize vendor references.** Direct client references provide valuable perspectives, especially about working with the vendor through implementation and beyond – but also about use cases and management models that may be worth considering for your organization.
5. **Review the vendor's business plan and financial condition.** Many WFA vendors are comparatively young and small or constitute parts of large companies. Ask for financial plans regarding the WFA software business, including sources of funding for investment in product development.
6. **Understand the product development approach.** While current features are important, the vendor relationship is long-term. Consider the roadmap for new features, the approach to prioritizing enhancements, and the cadence of updates. Distinguish what's in place, in the works, or aspirational.
7. **Evaluate support options.** Ensure sufficient and appropriate in-house resources to build and manage workflows and to collaborate with the vendor (or professional services partner) for advice on sequencing, design, and troubleshooting as the portfolio of automated processes evolves.

## Review and Adjust

While using an iterative and adaptive approach constitutes a good practice for all long-term legal department initiatives, it is especially important in this realm because workflow initiatives often expand far beyond original intent. Given the fast evolution not only of the tools in this category but also in how they are used in corporate legal and compliance departments, disciplined management practices are important including:

**Establish and revisit the roadmap.** Set forth the sequence of workflows to be developed based on a rigorous assessment of department needs. Once a few processes are automated, gatekeeping may be needed to ensure that additional projects are tackled in a deliberate order. The most effective organizations account for a number of different elements, including:



- Gap analyses, bearing in mind that oiling the “squeaky wheel” may lead to overlooking higher impact projects.
- Priority, ideally based on a scoring system that ensures alignment around goal achievement.
- Opportunities to integrate systems, which may not be tackled in early stages but can emerge as needs when data or documents are being manually moved from one system to another.
- Interdependencies, especially given that some processes can kick off others.

**Leverage the data.** With well-presented data, you can showcase Legal's contributions to the corporation or pinpoint practice areas needing additional resources. Consider tracking categories of demand for services, the extent of each application's use, and how often adjacent processes are handled manually.

**Track product developments.** Solutions in this category are evolving remarkably quickly. Proactive engagement with the vendor and peer customers helps ensure the tool is fully leveraged over time.

**Formalize as you scale.** Don't wait too long to formalize roles and protocols. Our research revealed that the in-house legal professionals managing these systems, along with many other responsibilities, can struggle to understand and update existing workflows and keep up with the demand for automated processes – having standard operating procedures enables agility and effective oversight.

### **Move Into New Territory**

While handling low-judgment work and building structured performance management data, users of these solutions can bridge technology gaps and, importantly, pass through the gateway to AI. Legal departments using (inherently AI-enabled) WFAs can build a foundational system – and practices - that can be enhanced, and will deliver value, over time.