



BY THE NUMBERS

7

The number of legal tech trends that will reshape every business in 2026, according to *Forbes*.

1) **AI agents will act as autonomous legal assistants**

that handle repetitive tasks, freeing human professionals to focus on high-value, interpersonal, and strategic work.

2) **AI will move beyond efficiency gains to become a core driver of business** strategy by forecasting risk, modeling regulatory change, and enabling new data-driven business models.

3) **Judicial systems will increasingly use AI and automation** to reduce court backlogs by improving scheduling, documentation, and prediction of delays.

4) **Always-on compliance monitoring tools will automate the tracking of regulatory changes** across jurisdictions, reducing surprise risks and improving compliance readiness.

5) **Cybersecurity will become a firm-wide survival requirement** as legal organizations face growing threats, higher penalties, and severe trust damage from data breaches.

6) **Predictive litigation tools will allow firms to forecast case outcomes and risks**, enabling smarter pricing, case management, and settlement decisions.

7) **Compliance will be embedded into everyday business software**, shifting legal teams' roles toward auditing and overseeing automated compliance processes across non-legal platforms. **WL**



SPOTLIGHT

Legal Trends for Solo & Small Firms

AI is no longer optional, but adoption is uneven, according to Clio's 2025 Legal Trends for Solo and Small Firms Report.

Clio provides cloud-based legal practice management software.

According to the report, solo and small firms are adopting AI more cautiously than larger firms, often due to time, cost, and uncertainty.

The report also notes that small tech upgrades can significantly boost growth.

Firms that improve client intake – using tools like online scheduling, e-signatures, and digital intake forms – see higher revenues, more leads, and faster hiring decisions, the report notes.

Clients want predictable pricing, not just hourly billing, the report also notes.

Clients increasingly prefer flat fees and transparent pricing, even as many solo and small firms still rely on hourly billing for stability.

As automation reduces billable time, firms that experiment with flat- or hybrid-fee models may be better positioned to meet client expectations and protect revenue, according to the report.

WL



GOOD IDEA?

Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence as an Access-to-Justice Strategy

A deliberate shift toward human-centered AI as a tool to expand access to justice without compromising trust, accuracy, or due process was a dominant trend in the National Center for State Courts' 2025 Trends in State Court Report released last month.

Rather than positioning AI as a replacement for judges, attorneys, or court staff, the report emphasizes AI as a capacity multiplier, one that helps courts meet people where they are, particularly self-represented litigants and low-income individuals.

Early-stage AI tools such as chatbots, guided interviews, and document-triage systems are already helping users understand rights, complete forms, and navigate complex processes.

The report underscores that successful AI deployment depends on keeping humans in the loop. Courts are intentionally limiting AI use to administrative, informational, or screening functions while reserving judgment, discretion, and legal determinations for people. This reflects a broader recognition that public trust in courts hinges not only on efficiency but also on perceived fairness, transparency, and accountability. **WL**

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Battening Down the Hatches

"Reverting again to a nautical simile, what does a sailor do when he encounters rough weather? Obviously, he tries to stop the leaks below, he battens down the hatches above, and tries to steer a steady and straight course through the rough seas ahead," wrote State Bar Executive Director Philip Haberman in the *Wisconsin Bar Bulletin* in 1966, six decades ago.

"Thus lawyers, too, should carefully chart their course ahead. They should 'inspect their ship' to plug the leaks in the office, stop the troubles from pouring in and sinking them, and fix a definite and steady course through their troubled waters.

"Probably the best approach is for each office to look over its 'ship' and see what the specific problems are that need attention."

Haberman, who coined the term "Judicare" and helped establish Judicare in 1966 as a program funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity, went on to list the specific problems lawyers were facing that year, including telephone interruptions.

"To paraphrase Admiral Farragut, the modern lawyer should often say, 'Damn the telephone – full speed ahead,'" Habermann noted. **WL**

DID YOU KNOW?

Legal Industry Report 2025

The American Bar Association's 2025 Legal Industry Report noted that a survey of 2,800-plus legal professionals shows a growing personal use of generative AI, "while firm-wide adoption lags due to policy and ethical concerns."

Large firms (firms with 51 or more lawyers) reported a 39% generative AI adoption rate, while firms with 50 or fewer attorneys had an adoption rate of 20%.

"When considering investments in legal-specific generative AI tools, 43% of respondents prioritized integration with trusted software as a top reason. Additionally, 33% highlighted the importance of the provider's understanding of their firm's workflows, while 29% expressed greater trust in the output of legal-specific tools compared to consumer-based options.

"Ethical alignment was a key factor for 26%, and 23% pointed to other considerations unique to their firm.

"These findings indicate that adoption decisions are heavily influenced by seamless integration with existing systems, a deep understanding of legal workflows, and confidence in the reliability and ethical compliance of legal-specific AI tools." **WL**

Source: ABA, *Law Technology Today*