Definitive guides

Legal document automation for law firms

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Contents

Why should I read this?

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Legal document automation is not scary. Automating the creation of documents is not intended to replace, minimize, or threaten what lawyers do. Lawyers always have been, and always will be, the guardians of the legal documents that form the basis of all business; but by automating certain parts of the process, they can be liberated to focus on elements of the role that add real value.

But where to start? Document automation can bring speed, efficiency, consistency, less risk, and lower costs — but how do lawyers, whether in-house or in private practice, start to realize those benefits? How do we define the key terms, how does the process work, and which documents are suitable? What can we learn from the early adopters about getting buy-in, implementing solutions, and measuring ROI?

This guide will demystify document automation, helping lawyers to understand how to be ready for automation — and make a measurable success of it when it's time to implement.

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What is document automation and how is it used?

What is document automation?

What is document automation?

Document automation means creating automated templates, using software, for legal documents (such as contracts). Once the templates are created, users of the software usually answer questionnaires. Once it has this information, the software can instantly generate the contract, and you're done.

The purpose is to automate the repetitive process of building a document from scratch each time you need a new contract. In practice, many contracts are extremely similar, with just a few variations. So, for example, once you create an NDA template, the next time you need an NDA, you can generate the template much more quickly using the questionnaire. The completed questionnaire will enable the system to dynamically create the document, selecting and inserting clauses throughout based on answers given. The software also persists all formatting, numbering, and document styles as per your requirements which saves even more time.

Some solutions enable users to create a suite of related documents based on the same data input. For example, a real estate lawyer could generate a lease, a rent deposit deed, and a licence for property alterations without having to repeat the data entry.

Automating the creation of complex documents can dramatically reduce the human effort, time, and costs involved in drafting. It also helps to reduce risk as once the initial template build is done, the opportunity for human error to creep into the drafting process is significantly reduced.

Finally, law firm clients can be provided with direct access to automation services as a key element of the service offered by the law firm. This can add significant value to the overall customer offering and allows firms to partner even more closely with their clients.

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When to automate.

Consider document automation if your documents or processes are:

- High risk and require consistent inputs and outputs across a standalone document or a broader suite

- Done repeatedly, using well-established documents and processes

- Tedious or time consuming to complete manually

- Done on a fixed-price basis and/or with low profit margin

- Of a type that could benefit from clients or a third-party inputting data or participating directly in matter workflows

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When not to automate.

Document automation may not be suitable for:

- New areas of legal practice with processes and documents that are still to be settled

- Unique or non-repeatable tasks and bespoke matters, done on an ad hoc basis

- Matters with frequently changing requirements

- Documents that are not in Microsoft® Word format

If automation is not the right solution, consider other ways to improve matter management, such as task management tools and process mapping.

Jargon buster – terms you need to know

During discussions about document automation platforms you may encounter some unfamiliar technical terms. Explained here are some of the most important words and phrases.

Content Management System (CMS)

A Content Management System (CMS) is a computer application — often cloud-based — used to manage digital content. You can use it to add, edit, or delete content for publishing on an external website, or an internal intranet. A CMS can also be known as a Document Management System.

Decision tree

A decision tree is a diagram, which a user can follow to employ and automate the processes, expertise, reasoning, and decision-making that would usually require a human subject matter expert. A questionnaire in document automation software can act as a dynamic decision tree, guiding the user through data to produce repeatable legal advice.

Dictionary

Each template within a document automation system has a dictionary. The dictionary is a description of all variables and business rules contained in that template. It contains all aspects of the variables, including names, type, and how questions should be asked on the questionnaire. Dictionaries can be specific to each template, and included as part of that template's document, or used by multiple templates, in which case they are placed in a separate document called an external dictionary.

eSignature

An eSignature or electronic signature is a means by which a person can indicate their agreement with the content of a document or set of data.

Like its handwritten counterpart in the offline world, an electronic signature is a legal concept capturing the signatory's intent to be bound by the terms of the signed document.

Field

A field or variable is an area of the document being automated that must be able to change with each transaction or usage of the document. These could be things like the party name, a date, a monetary value, a registered address, and so on.

Generated document

The generated document (or documents) is the output of document automation — this is the document that your questionnaire page generates or assembles. Its fields will have changed to reflect the names, dates, and other variables that are specific to the transaction in question.

It will only include those clauses that pertain to the answers you gave to the questionnaire.

Guidance

Document automation tools allow you to add guidance to questionnaires, to help users fill in the correct data.

Guidance can contain hyperlinks to other pages on the internet or to your company's intranet.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is what the user of the document automation software interacts with, in order to generate the finished document.

Questionnaires are very flexible: the number of pages, their branding, the amount of guidance and hyperlinks, the text of the questions, and page and group headings can all be customized.

Jargon buster – terms you need to know

Template

A template is a document you create in the automation software that includes all possible clauses and scenarios. You then apply mark-up to the template, to give details of which clauses should be used in which circumstances.

Variable

Variables are containers for data in the document. This data could come from various different places: it could be acquired through answers to the questionnaire; it could be calculated with reference to numbers entered in the questionnaire; or shorthand terms that pull more substantial data from the dictionary.

Variable types

Every variable has a type which determines what kind of data it is holding, and which functions can be applied to it. Some types of variable within a document include:

• **Text** – A single line of text containing any alpha-numeric characters.

• **Multiline text** – Any number of lines of text, including alpha-numeric characters and line breaks.

• **Yes/No** – A variable that only contains a yes or no answer.

• **Text selection** – A variable that has many choices. This can be a multi-select checkbox question or a single-choice dropdown.

• **File upload** – A path to a document to be uploaded and re-generated.

• **Whole number** – A variable that contains a whole number only.

• **Decimal number** – A variable that can contain a whole number or decimal number.

• **Date** – Contains a date.

• **Time** – Contains a time.

• **Computable** – Contains a calculation or business rule.

Such a variable won't be 'asked' on the questionnaire, as it will be calculated from other inputs.

Key benefits of automation
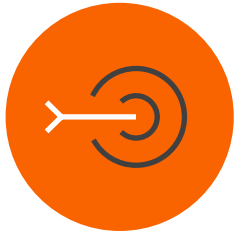
Improved consistency and standardization
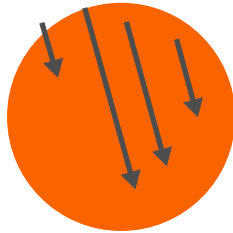
Reduced risk

Saved time and faster turnaround times

Reduced costs
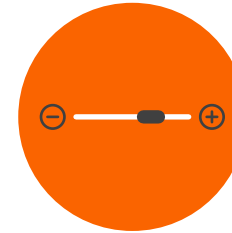
Allowed lawyers to focus on higher value work

Improved client relationships

Other benefits

- Increase matter velocity for more predictable and more profitable alternative fee arrangements

- Capture and codify lawyers' expertise

- Leverage workflows to develop new business models with clients

- Win new clients with better business development

1

What is documentation automation and how is it used?

Automation in practice at law firms

Case studies

Clifford Chance

Clifford Chance was one of the magic circle's earliest adopters of document automation, implementing automated templates in 2001. As one of the UK's biggest firms, its document volume was huge, but reliant on a system of manual templates that created inefficiency and risk. Templates were slow to build, and the number of variations and versions was difficult to maintain. The struggle to keep both the templates — and potentially hundreds of lawyers' use of them — consistent raised the possibility of unacceptable risk in the contract workflow.

The firm implemented an automation solution to reduce risk and bring efficiency to the process. Lawyers 'teach' the solution an agreed template, from which a robust contract can be generated by answering a questionnaire. The template allows enough flexibility for variations but ensures the principles and foundations of the document don't change due to manual human error. Gail Swaffield, Knowledge Management Specialist at Clifford Chance, explains the difference: "our lawyers need to answer just a single set of questions to get their new variation of the document. As well as the obvious time savings for them, there is more richness and value to the templates rather than managing multiple versions".

A key benefit for a firm of Clifford Chance's size is version control. The number of templates in a given area could be reduced from 6 or 7 down to 1, reducing the burden and risk of errors when updating templates. The risk when generating contracts from the template is also reduced — there's less scope for errors when contracts come from one source instead of several. Now document automation is standard for Clifford Chance and key to its delivery of an exceptional service level. "The key value is efficiency," says Swaffield. "Our lawyers can get to a first draft quicker, and both they and our document specialists are free to focus on more interesting and more valuable work."

Pinsent Masons

Pinsent Masons is renowned as one of the most technologically advanced law firms in the UK, winning several awards for innovation and embracing new solutions as a way to distinguish their client service levels. That ethos is driven by clients, says David Halliwell, Director of Knowledge and Innovation Delivery at Pinsent Masons. "We're under pressure from our clients to change the way we're doing legal services today," explains Halliwell. Clients' businesses are increasingly digital in nature, and they expect the external providers they use to reflect this transition. Document automation is a key part of delivering that value.

Pinsent Masons faced a common issue with the implementation of document automation: initial resistance from lawyers. "They couldn't understand that their work, which they'd seen as beautifully crafted, was just a process," explains Halliwell. Educating lawyers about this point is crucial: instead of side-lining lawyers, in practice, document automation removes low-value, high-volume document creation from their inbox. Firstly, this frees up time for them to take on more high-value, strategic, value-added work. Secondly, Pinsent Masons found that lawyers started to find innovative ways to use the automation technology itself; for example, creating 'self-serve' solutions for clients, so they could generate common contracts themselves, without needing to instruct counsel each time. "Once we shifted people into a different mindset, they've taken that and run with it in so many different ways," says Halliwell.

"The key value is efficiency... our lawyers get to a first draft quicker."

"The more we use it, the more our lawyers come up with even better ways of using it."

2

Key considerations

Document automation: a law firm buyer's guide

Buyer's guide

Here's everything you need to consider when choosing a document automation solution. First, consider internal use and adoption, and secondly, external use by your clients.

👍 Ease of use

You need quick adoption to prove ROI, so the solution needs to be easy to use. Aim for a solution that integrates with the platforms where its users currently live, like Microsoft Word. And to select a supplier that provides flexible services and support options that meet your requirements. For example, you may wish to create questionnaires and draft documents yourself or you may decide you prefer the supplier to do that on your behalf.

Appearance and user interface

First impressions count when it comes to new tools. Lawyers must be impressed by a software solution to stop it going unused. Avoid compromising on price.

There's no value at all in cheaper software that goes unused because lawyers hate its look and feel. Find an interface that engages your users.

➡ Ability to gather data

Smart law firms offer clients management information gathered from their contract data. Pulling data on the most negotiated clauses, or proportions of different types of document, can help clients to reduce risk and ultimately save money. It's a great way for you to differentiate your service from competitors.

Ability to 'suite' documents together

Some solutions let users create a suite of related documents based on the same data input. For example, a real estate lawyer could generate a lease, a rent deposit deed, and a licence for property alterations without having to repeat the data entry. This saves time and drives efficiencies across a range of areas, like construction appointments and warranties, or business restructuring suites of administrator sale documents.

Integrations

Save time by finding a solution that can speak to existing systems. Look for a product with an open API so you can build connections with your existing technologies if integrations do not come out of the box.

Ability to build in approvals and workflow

The best document automation solutions include governance and workflow in their questionnaires. This means senior lawyers can embed best practice and advice into the workflow, allowing junior lawyers to train at the point of need, and generate best-in-class documents at a much more competitive margin. Senior lawyers can sign off contracts faster and with greater confidence knowing they have been created by a smart and robust workflow configuration.

Internal use at your law firm

$ Fee models for client-facing functionality

You might want to allow clients and third parties direct access to contract questionnaires, either to add value or for business development. This might attract an extra cost from the software vendor — clarify this and include it in your business plan.

Customizable client areas

If clients log in directly, their workspace must be secure and separate from other clients, so your solution must let you create sub-sites. You will want to customize these with client branding to make them feel at home when they use the tool.

Reporting capability

Clients would benefit from data — preferably in accessible dashboards — that help them improve the efficiency of their contracting, just like law firms. Discerning clients have started to demand this feature — make sure you choose a solution that delivers.

Getting started
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Researching the available products with these features will enable you to choose the right solution for your firm's needs, and those of your client.

Next, build your business case.

- Scope the low-hanging fruit that you'd automate first.
- Calculate the time savings that would bring ROI for documentation automation.
- Make sure you clarify how you'll resource the project —whether that's in-house, an outsourced provide, or a combination of the two.
- Sense-check your plan with peers at other law firms. What did they choose? How was the roll out and would they make the same choice again?

Once you're satisfied, request a pilot period with your chosen provider. Choose a discrete area with a high volume of similar documents, like real estate, and gather feedback from lawyers. If it goes well, you can proceed to launch. It's worth branding your solution with one name so that post-launch, lawyers all call it the same thing, rather than confusing each other talking about 'document assembly' and 'contract automation' when in fact it's the same thing.

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Key considerations

Measuring document automation ROI in law firms

It's no secret that law firms are under pressure from their clients to deliver more creative and cost-effective billing solutions. These pressures are driving law firms to think differently about their services, the way their firms are run, and the solutions they can leverage to give them the edge over their competition.

Turning to technology, automation is considered a staple of the law firm toolkit to drive down the cost of delivery for legal services, increase margin, create consistency, and improve risk management for the firm. Those that have ventured down the path of implementing document automation report that the software positively affects profitability and productivity in the firm. Which begs the question, how are firms truly quantifying profitability and productivity in order to justify the investment in these technologies?

To help demystify, we've broken down the main approaches into 3 key steps to demonstrate an ROI from your automation solution.

1. Measure   **2. Maintain**   **3. Manage**

1. Measure

Users report up to 82% time savings in generating drafts of legal documents with automation. This type of 'time taken' measurement is the most common way firms using document automation quantify the results of automating a particular precedent. How they achieve this is all about measurement. Delivering an indicative ROI lies in the power of your reporting. To understand how automation can positively impact your drafting process, you need to understand what the current picture looks like. The key areas to understand are the frequency of use of a document and the time taken to draft a document.

 For each document type you look to automate, you should be creating a benchmark. How long does it take

your lawyers to draft these documents manually from the existing Word precedents? How often are these document types being drafted each month? Once your content is automated, take these measurements again.

How has the drafting time decreased?
How does this improve the margins on this particular type of transaction?

QUANTIFYING TIME SAVINGS IN PRACTICE

For law firms, ROI can be established through close monitoring of monthly statistics for each practice area, and each individual precedent.

To calculate the ROI for each automated precedent, the document's manual drafting time is recorded. The automated drafting time is then subtracted from the manual drafting time to give the raw time saving.

Monthly usage statistics for each precedent will show how many times each precedent was used and produced a document.

Multiplying the raw time saving by the number of times a document was produced, and then by the average fee-earner's hourly rate gives the basic saving provided by document automation.

Manual drafting time   Automated drafting   Raw time saving

((Raw time saving x No. of documents produced) Average billable rate)   Monthly saving

"Document automation allows us to quicken the pace at which we produce documents while maintaining quality and mitigating risk. We can produce draft documents quicker, improve the quality and consistency of our service as a whole and, in the process, reduce costs."

Martin O'Donoghue
Partner at Kerman & Co

2. Maintain

A lesser considered by-product of precedent automation is consolidation of existing templates. Many firms consider their precedent bank to be a key competitive differentiator, so of course great investment is made in ensuring that these are maintained.

Many precedents are variants on a single document type with variations to handle specific circumstances or even clients' own preferred wordings and terms. Each of these variants must be individually maintained and updated as any changes are introduced. For the purposes of automation, these documents will typically be consolidated into one document containing all the possible variants. This significantly reduces the overall time spent having to maintain document templates.

For example, there may be up to 16 variant documents of a commercial lease. Through automation this is consolidated into one master document template. When legislation changes and citations need to be updated within documents, the document owner now only needs to update one single document, representing a significant decrease in costs for maintaining documents.

As part of the automation process, a record should be kept of any document consolidation. A benchmark figure for each document set should be fixed as an estimate for the time currently spent maintaining the individual documents. Going forward, future maintenance on the single or reduced precedent suite can then give an indication of the efficiencies and cost savings delivered.

3. Manage

Two frequently referenced benefits that automation brings to a firm are improved quality of output, and an improved client experience. From an ROI perspective, these are qualitative and more difficult to assign a number to but are absolute critical factors for a firm's commercial success.

Questionnaire   Generates documents
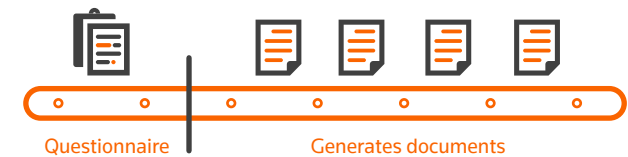
MANAGING YOUR BRAND

From a branding perspective, consistency in terms of quality of service impacts the client's overall perception of the firm's brand. As such standardization of documents is a key initiative for many firms. If firms believe that their own precedent bank offers significant competitive advantage, it makes sense to standardize this across the board and ensure that everyone is delivering the same high-quality service.

Automation is a key facilitator to ensuring that this happens. Inherent with that is risk management. With automation, the risk of errors and subsequent time and resource costs are significantly reduced.

MANAGE YOUR CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

Enhancing client relationships and delivering the best client experience is without a doubt the top driver for any law firm. Considering drafting efficiencies, if a fee earner can respond to a client request within hours — generating a document that might take the best part of a day without automation— there's no doubt the client will be impressed with that level of service delivery.

There is also a case to say that by introducing efficiencies in drafting, fee earner time is freed up to provide additional value-added services to the client. In certain transaction types it may also enable the department to be able to handle an increased number of transactions and therefore increase revenue, or indeed add new revenue streams that would previously have been deemed too unprofitable.

On the more innovative side of legal service delivery, clients could be provided with access to automation services directly which will add value to the overall service offered by the law firm.

COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

In the current competitive marketplace, driving cost efficiencies is a key initiative for firms. Document automation can deliver cost savings through efficient drafting and reduced ongoing document maintenance, which can be easily evidenced through robust reporting and measurement.

Automation also helps to drive cost savings in risk and brand management. But its value proposition extends beyond a simple cost saving. Leveraged to its full extent, it can provide new commercial opportunities with new and existing clients, and can drive delivery of exactly the kind of creative and innovative legal solutions that clients seek.

In practice: innovative legal service delivery

Clifford Chance Dr@ft is an automated document assembly system, based on Thomson Reuters® HighQ Document Automation software. Clifford Chance Dr@ft allows Clifford Chance clients to quickly and independently generate tailor-made and house-styled documents within the secure Clifford Chance Dr@ft private cloud.

"We've approached Clifford Chance Dr@ft like a start-up venture and are pleased with how quickly we are able to generate the interest of our client with this product and we can now start scaling it. Revenue from our new incomes streams is small in comparison to our overall revenue but within a relatively short period of time we'll be able to grow this type of business and when we get right up to scale I'm quite sure it will be an interesting income stream."

Bas Boris Visser
Global Head of Innovation and Business Change
Clifford Chance

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Getting started

Influencing key law firm stakeholders

Influencing key law firm stakeholders

If you've decided that you need document automation, then you've made an important step towards faster, more efficient client service. But your decision alone is unlikely to be enough. There are other key stakeholders in the firm who'll be affected by, and have an interest in, your decision to implement a new solution. Here are their main concerns, and how to address them.

The finance director

Here's how to address your finance director's chief concerns.

1. Business growth and profitability

Make clear to your finance director the return on investment (ROI) they can expect from the solution. You can use an ROI calculator to quantify both the time and cost savings and demonstrate how these metrics impact the firm's bottom line.

2. Efficiency

Document automation ultimately lets junior lawyers generate documents based on the templates created by senior lawyers. Fast, best-in-class documents that don't compromise on quality, but aren't constrained by resources, are a huge efficiency gain.

3. Managing risk

Thorough, transparent planning and proper scope should allay the fears here, but it's also worth considering factors like how much training is required, how long will implementation take, what are the security standards of the tool, and will there be a pilot scheme prior to full adoption? Consider each of these carefully to ease your finance director's concerns.

4. Staying competitive

Find out which other firms use document automation, and what for: do they enable junior lawyers to handle low-value work? Do they create self-serve portals for their clients? Do they target their efficiency savings at a particular team or a particular client sector? Work out where document automation would be a competitive advantage and make the case to your finance director.

Influencing key law firm

The IT director

Here's how to address your IT director's chief concerns.

1. The right tech at the right time

Make sure you have a solution that integrates with everything else you currently use. Find out how much upgrades and maintenance cost. If any of these raise red flags, you might have the wrong solution.

2. Can you deliver on time and on budget?

Check that you have the bandwidth in IT for a change project of this size. Starting with a small use case and a pilot, rather than taking the risk of committing to a huge implementation, will make buy in easier for your IT director.

3. Security and data privacy

Make sure your IT director is part of conversations with your supplier early on to address any concerns about security and privacy. This saves time being wasted pursuing a solution that's ultimately non-compliant.

The managing partner

She or he shares many concerns with the IT and finance director, around growth, staying profitable, and staying competitive. However, they will have their own specific concerns.

1. Client satisfaction

Any managing partner will focus heavily on how a new way of working affects the client experience. It's important to position automation as a benefit to clients too, in terms of the turnaround time and quality of work they receive, rather than as an efficiency that they ultimately perceive as a cost-cutting exercise that doesn't benefit them.

2. Employee engagement

Deployed correctly, new technology can revitalize employees, liberating them from mundane work so they can focus on high-value tasks. Make sure the solution is communicated in this way, so lawyers don't feel they're being automated out of a job.

3. Company reputation

Beyond competitive advantage, a managing partner will consider how new technology affects their perception in the market. Will document automation increase the firm's profile as an innovative, cutting-edge provider? This can be a powerful message to bring a key stakeholder on your side.

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Getting started

Making the case for document automation

Making the case for document automation

You've now identified that your law firm can benefit from legal document automation and have evaluated your automation options. The next step is to start building a business case.

To help you build your case we've identified some key business considerations your business case should address:

- Why the business should automate and what will the return on investment be

- That the appropriate resources required are available, or the costs are included in the business case

- The impact of change and a plan on how to manage it

- What a successful implementation looks like

The key business considerations in more detail:

Business application

Set your strategy. What is the firm trying to achieve, what are the specific goals and objectives, and how will you measure the success of this initiative?

Documents and document templates

You have a set of standard precedent templates and have identified a strong business need to automate them. Do you have final versions of your documents? Are your documents in the best condition possible — up-to-date content, language, house style, and cross references?

Executive sponsorship and change management

Plan your business change roadmap. Identify what the overall plan and direction of travel is for transforming the way in which your business currently works and what the new model of working will be. Identify your key executive sponsors and change champions who will help you promote the program and solution internally. Determine your project team and steering group structures. What resources are required?

Communications

Map out a clear communications plan including timelines and delivery channels to support roll out and internal promotion of the solution. Define any key activities that might need to take place, such as internal case studies, demonstration events, and roadshows.

Training

Identify your target audience for the initial phase. What training and briefing requirements will the audience have and what internal resources will be required to support the training process? Some training examples include training to understand the automation engagement process, basic training on using the solution.

Evaluation and success

Clearly define evaluation criteria for an initial proof of concept/small scale roll out. Schedule regular sessions to review progress against goals and objectives and implement changes to process where required.

3

Getting started

Successful implementation of document automation

"It's important to have a sound idea, but the really important thing is the implementation."

Wilbur Ross

We've all been witness to it before. A new initiative, program, or tool promising to revolutionize the way we work. A big launch announcement. A week of internal promotion. And then we never hear of it again as it dies a slow death due to poor implementation.

Implementation of document automation solutions is no different. Successful implementation is essential to automation being fully adopted and utilized by the business. Many automation solutions have failed to be fully utilized across the contract lifecycle simply due to implementation issues.

Once you have selected your vendor and have been through any pre-implementation activities, you will start the implementation project. Document automation implementation is a very collaborative effort, involving several key stakeholders from the business as well as the solution supplier. Each supplier will often offer their own project plan. But to help you better understand the steps you need to take and who from the business has a role to play, we've outlined a list of general key project roles and implementation project milestones.

The Project Team

The following roles are recommended for the implementation project, multiple roles may be fulfilled by one person.

Central Project Team

Business Sponsor – A senior or executive member of the organization who can provide global authority and support.

Senior User – The central interface with individual business area leads. Responsible for escalating feedback and confirming acceptance on deliverables with the various business liaisons and test groups.

Senior Lawyer – A global legal interface who can provide avenues into local legal teams. Manages feedback from the Project Manager on legal inputs such as harmonization and output review.

Senior Technical – Provides a central interface to infrastructure and integration resources. Manages feedback from the Project Manager on technical projects.

Project Manager – The key project overseer who will work with the supplier project manager in delivery and will report up to the Seniors and Sponsors. They will need to draw together the various document and stakeholder elements from the organization for the project.

Communications Manager – Responsible for approving and confirming communications around the project are appropriate and sent in a timely manager. Typically combined with the Project Manager role.

Project roles

Practice Area Project Team

The below roles will be held by many individuals over the course of the project as different practice areas are included in the roll out. For each target practice area, we recommend an automation steering group is formed of these core roles to ensure each practice area is enabled for automation. They may, during their area's implementation, attend either weekly catch ups, or specific area calls.

Document Owners – (Knowledge Lawyers) For the current document/ practice area, individuals able to provide legal expertise (document, process, and reporting) and output review. Prepares document briefs and liaises with the Authors.

Practice Area Partner – For the current document/ department an individual able to provide sign off on the final agreed template for automation and final output for release to users.

Acceptance Testers – Individuals from practice areas who will provide feedback on outputs for the Authors.

Technical Liaisons – For deployment requirements or integrations provides technical expertise and ensures local action delivery where a practice area has specific requirements.

Solutions Supplier – Roles and Responsibilities

These are roles/expertise that you should look out for at your chosen supplier.

This expertise is required to support a successful implementation.

Account Director – Provides supplier oversight and an escalation point for the law firm around any element of project delivery.

Customer Success Manager – Provides overarching project success and departmental criteria management. Will work with the senior team at the law firm as a point of product and account responsibility. Provides support and best practice in elements of change management and communications planning.

Services Project Manager – A senior service delivery consultant who will project manage, plan and document the automation, configuration and deployment requirements.

Automation Consultants – Team members responsible for delivering automation and any further automation services required, and configuration during the project.

Systems Engineer – Responsible for the deployment and technical guidance around the system and its integrations.

Integration Advisor – Provides initial guidance and ongoing advice to parties developing integrations with the document automation system.

Key implementation milestones

The implementation schedule and stages can vary, depending on the solution provider, size of the firm or organization, and complexity of the document process being automated. With that in mind, we have included a sample HighQ Document Automation implementation timeline. We recommend checking with your shortlisted suppliers to see what implementation guidance they provide.

Project kick off

Key tasks: Document current draft process, business process review, time to complete initial draft, precedent review, template housekeeping and consolidation.

Weeks: 1–4

Stakeholders: Central Project Team

During the project kick off we will work with you to understand the core objectives of your project, the project team involved, and the resources available. We will look to understand the initial practice areas you are looking to target and the documentation you need to automate.

As part of this process we will identify the core project team, timelines for delivery, and perform a risk analysis. This is also the stage to identify and scope any customizations or design features required in the technical implementation and agree best approaches to achieving this. We like to work collaboratively with our clients as each firm is structured differently and has different challenges and objectives to achieve. We view this stage to be one of the most critical to the success of the project overall.

Site configuration

Key tasks: Configuration and workflow design, user access.

Weeks: 5–7

Stakeholders: Project Manager, Senior Technical

This phase will be managed between the solution provider and the law firm or organization's technical teams. The design requirements identified during this phase will be implemented into the system configuration to provide access to the automation software.

Template authoring/training and automation

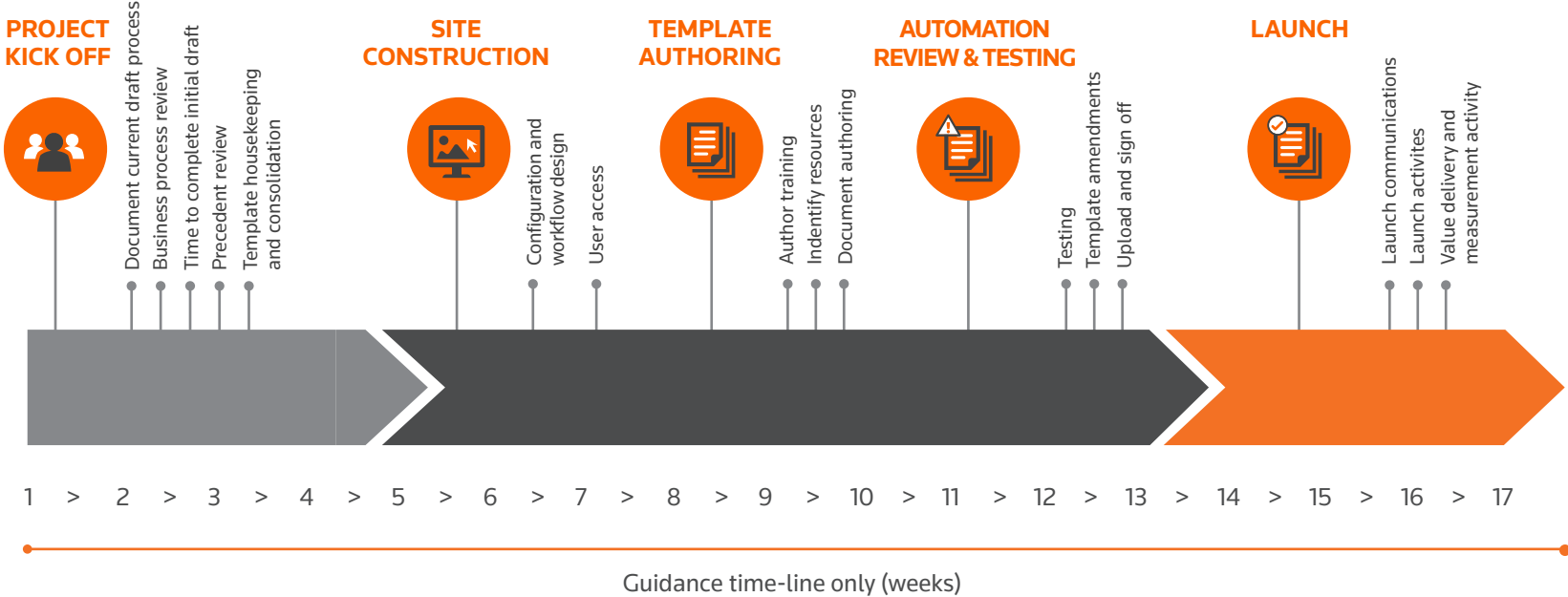**Key tasks:** Identifying resources, author training, document authoring.

Weeks: 8–11

Stakeholders: Author, Administrator

Training is delivered to two main user types, Authors and Administrators.

Key implementation milestones

What to expect when implementing document automation technology: key implementation milestones

PROJECT KICK OFF
- Document current draft process
- Business process review
- Time to complete initial draft
- Precedent review
- Template housekeeping and consolidation

SITE CONSTRUCTION
- Configuration and workflow design
- User access

TEMPLATE AUTHORING
- Author training
- Indentify resources
- Document authoring

AUTOMATION REVIEW & TESTING
- Testing
- Template amendments
- Upload and sign off

LAUNCH
- Launch communications
- Launch activites
- Value delivery and measurement activity

1 > 2 > 3 > 4 > 5 > 6 > 7 > 8 > 9 > 10 > 11 > 12 > 13 > 14 > 15 > 16 > 17

Guidance time-line only (weeks)

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Authors – These are template creators; they design the questionnaire and mark up the documents to turn them into automated templates. Typically, these are small groups of users who are either subject matter experts or have links to the experts that they can use to manage the content. Typically, author training covers basic authoring skills, through to building more advanced functionality.

Administrators – These are the privileged users who manage the system and site at the application level. They can determine what templates are available, create and manage workflows, and decide what users can see and do in the system itself.

Administrator training covers the core elements of templates and site management.

The recommended skill profiles are:

• **Document Knowledge**: Lawyer who has intimate knowledge of the document and how it should work from a legal perspective.

• **Word Knowledge:** Paralegal, PA/Secretary or Word Processor who understands Word and Word styles (including house styles if these are to be used).

Our recommendation for planning this training would be a phased roll out, identifying the key individuals for the stages of project delivery and ensuring that they have the appropriate knowledge at the early stage.

Authoring

Key tasks: Preparing document briefs.

Weeks: 8–11

Stakeholders: Authors, Document Owners, Project Manager

During this phase, the newly trained Authors will be applying their skills to automated precedents which have been identified for initial launch. The duration of this phase will vary depending on the objectives of the launch, the number and the complexity of documents identified for the initial launch.

During this phase the Author will be required to assist the document owners with preparing the document briefs and acting as a point of liaison between the Solutions Supplier and the firm or organization for completion of the automation.

Automation review and testing

Key tasks: Testing, template amendments, upload and sign off.

Weeks: 11–14

Stakeholders: Authors, Document Owners, Acceptance Testers

During this phase, Authors will share the output of their automation with the Acceptance Testers for testing. Users will test both the questionnaire and the output of the document to ensure that it correctly produces the right document for different scenarios. This may result in feedback and improvements to be made by the Author. Timelines and number of rounds of feedback should be agreed to keep the project running to schedule.

Launch

Key tasks: Launch communications, launch activities, value delivery and measurement activities.

Weeks: 15–17

Stakeholders: Central Project Team

After launch, you should schedule regular check-in calls with appropriate stakeholders to monitor progress of the implementation through to agreed acceptance date. Initially these should take place weekly to provide support to the Authors during the template development phase. These calls will reduce in frequency in later stages of the project.

A date tracker should be created to ensure that key milestone dates and objectives are met within the initial implementation period. This information can be used to create project review reports and to evaluate a best practice approach going forward.

Post-launch communications plan

In addition, we recommend you develop a strong launch communications plan to drive positive adoption and design evaluation and feedback mechanisms to ensure ongoing success post launch.

3

Getting started

Successful change management within law firms

Key implementation milestones

Changing how a law firm creates contracts means a huge shift in mindset for some lawyers, and getting this right is crucial for document automation to succeed. Change like this doesn't just happen; it needs a strategic approach and buy-in from stakeholders.

Change management consultants identify four principles as essential for success:

1. Employees who see the point of the change, and agree with it, are more likely to get on board
Change starts with the individual — not management, the department, or the team. If the individual doesn't believe in the overall purpose of the change, the mismatch in their beliefs and actions will lead to conflict and inertia.

Make goals explicit, reinforce them, and help people understand the role they play in achieving change.

2. Accompany the new behavior with recognition and reward systems
You need both the carrot and the stick. The latter is no problem for law firms to implement, but the former takes work. Make the rewards and personal benefits of the change explicit to individuals — such as new skills, opportunities for advancement, and participation in strategic goals — will make that change more likely to happen.

3. Prioritize the skills employees need to adapt to the change
The law firm must invest time and resources into training employees in the right skills to adapt to the change. Without the skills required to maintain the new way of working, employees will inevitably default to what they did before.

4. Role models within the organization also need to display the new behavior
Change champions are a must at every level: employees who 'walk the talk' must act as role models for the rest of the firm, visibly tying adoption to success. If employees see colleagues at their peer level achieving relatable success with the new tool or system, they're much more likely to adopt too.

Law firms need to focus on all these aspects to make a success of a transition to document automation. One client, Mishcon de Reya made sure they had buy-in at the top level, and then trained specialists in the information services team to work with professional support lawyers in automating the templates. Kate Higgins, Legal Director at Mishcon de Reya, instituted a change program that involved fee earners in early testing to make sure that key stakeholders had sight of the end goal at an individual level. She also advised focusing on easy wins to start with, to show the benefits to those yet to adopt, and worked on a one-to-one basis with those less willing; but ultimately her advice was to "jump in and keep the faith".

Similarly, Pinsent Masons was one of the first UK firms to implement document automation. Sarah Wilson, a manager in legal knowledge engineering at the firm, found that "best way of introducing change is to let the fee earners see the product in action (live demos rather than slides) and to ensure that there is involvement from the lawyers in developing and tweaking the product.

Ensuring that there is buy-in at a very senior level is also very important so that a clear message can be delivered as to the objectives of the firm and how the new tool will meet those objectives." She also encouraged the use of commercial language — talking about the new solution in terms of time saved and gross margin — to make sure that users see the commercial value of the change.

Key change management takeaways

Change management is understood to be a critical success factor in any software implementation. Many firms and organizations may face challenges in implementing a solution, particularly where business areas perceive it will result in an increased workload.

We recommend investment in a proactive plan for communicating change and managing stakeholders throughout the firm or organization. In addition to defining and ensuring adoption of new processes, positive messaging and support will be critical to cultural acceptance of the new solution.

Core activities that are key to ensuring delivery

Identifying and mapping stakeholders:
Assess the nature of each stakeholder's influence and importance.

Define internal value proposition:
Map business strategy and objectives to strong, meaningful internal value propositions.

Guiding change leaders:
Identify key sponsors and compile a sponsor toolkit.

Champion program:
Best practice guidance and structures for implementing business champion program.

Communications delivery plan:
Map the best resources and available channels (case studies, emails, etc.) to a detailed delivery plan with assigned responsibility and ownership.

Victim panics

Bystander ignores changes

Communicate the threat of not changing

Ease uncertainty

Key change management takeaways

Critic opposes changes

Navigator empowered by changing

Top tips to help become navigators

Keep explaining the reasons for changes

Involve everyone in decision making

Celebrate success

Conclusion

As you now know, legal document automation helps you automate the creation of complex legal documents, dramatically reducing the effort, time, and costs involved with drafting — improving consistency, reducing risk, and allowing lawyers to focus on higher priority tasks. Legal document automation is no longer only for the exclusive few, it's now a crucial tool for both in-house and private practice, no matter their size.

With this guide, we hope that we've demystified document automation and provided valuable information, tools, and guidance to help you along your document automation journey, from understanding the benefits and jargon through to purchasing and implementing a document automation solution.

For more information on Thomson Reuters document automation solutions, visit tr.com/highq

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