# 2026 INSIGHTS REPORT

LONDON
1 OCTOBER 2026

# LEGAL OPS

## SESSION + SOCIAL

The value of legal in the age of AI




CLOC + RSGI

# INTRODUCTION

CLOC + RSGI LONDON

1 October 2026

**Senior legal operations and in-house leaders met in London on 1 October for an afternoon of open exchange.** Law firm and technology guests joined them. The tables asked what legal is worth to the business and how you prove it, from KPIs and outside counsel pricing to the return on AI and self-service. This report shares what they said, grouped by theme.



*Every legal team hears the same question from its CFO: what do we get for this? Legal ops is how we answer it, with evidence the business recognises and numbers it trusts.*

**Oyango Snell, President and CEO, CLOC**



*What legal measures and what the business values are often two different lists. The gap between them is where legal ops does its best work, and where the value conversation should start.*

**Reena SenGupta, Executive Director, RSGI**


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# VALUE STARTS WITH THE BUSINESS

**One team asked its CEO and CFO what they want from legal and measured that.** The mood in the team moved from fear to real interest. Others keep a short set of KPIs that mix hard numbers with qualitative evidence. When AI frees up time, leaders want to know where those hours go. Keeping the business out of court protects value, and teams want better ways to show it.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

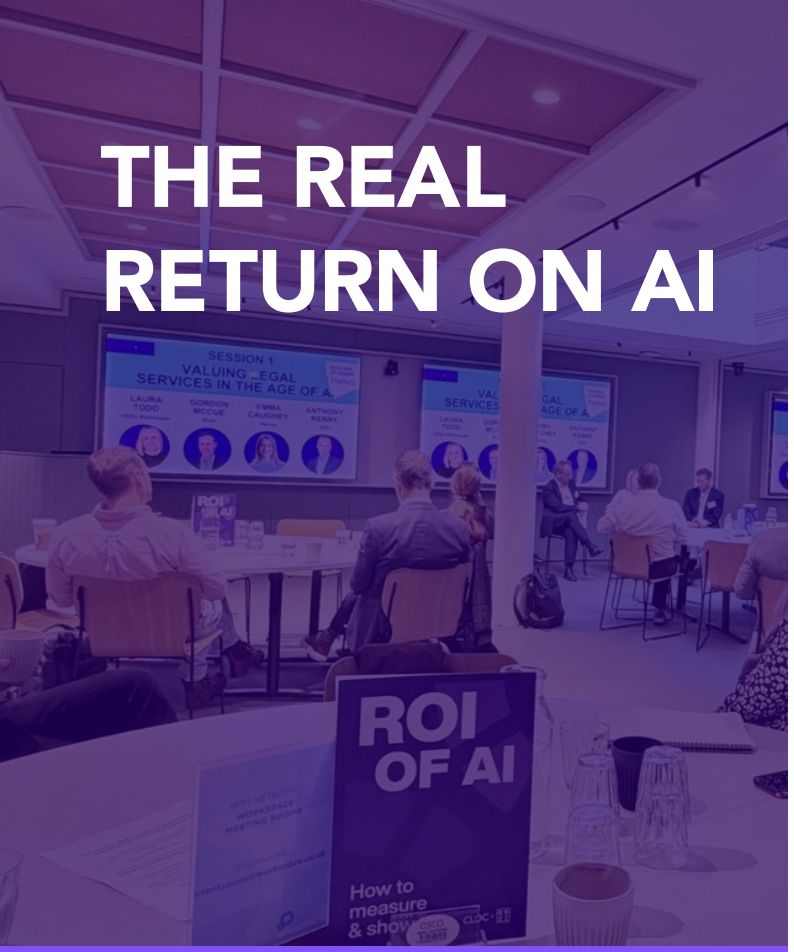
Ask the business what it values first. Then pick a few measures that show legal's contribution in the language your CEO and CFO use.

## WHAT WE HEARD

- Asking the business first changed the conversation inside one team, from what legal costs to where its value sits.
- Teams can show two to three hours saved a week. Showing what people do with that time is harder, and nobody wants to go back to time recording.

> *We started by asking ourselves: 'where does a lawyer's time make the biggest difference to the business?' So now we sort our work by volume vs risk, and deploy AI and automation on the high-volume, low-risk churn. That leaves our lawyers free for the strategic, commercially important work that moves the dial for the business, and that's where our value really shows. Our lawyers act as business partners who know the business, the stakeholders and the risks. In today's AI-driven world, that's where a legal team makes the biggest difference.*
>
> **Laura Todd, Utility Warehouse**

# THE REAL RETURN ON AI




## KEY TAKEAWAY

Build your AI case on the work that moves and what it costs. Treat today's price as temporary and keep an exit plan ready.

**Early AI gains came from everyday churn.** Teams that tested tools with users report four to six hours of lawyer time saved per week. Value grows as teams move from assistants to agents that serve procurement and finance directly. The cost side is less certain. AI pricing today is subsidised, and several teams expect a shift from seat-based to token-based pricing.

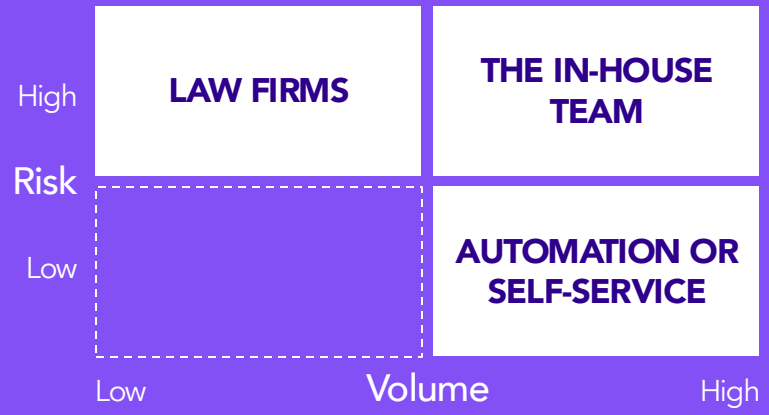
## WHAT WE HEARD

- Some teams have put token-based pricing on their risk register. People use these tools without thinking about how efficiently they use them, and that will show up in the bill.
- Enthusiasm for building agents is high. The work now is governance, so orphaned agents don't end up running in the background with nobody monitoring them.

> *Combining human expertise with institutional knowledge delivers accurate, consistent insights from complex data, documents and contracts, helping identify issues at scale and avoid risk. Trusted, repeatable outputs enable business self-service and automated escalation to legal when needed, freeing legal teams for higher-value strategic work.*
>
> **Sarah-Jane Davies, ArcelorMittal**

# WHO DOES THE WORK NOW?

**In one team's model, high-volume, low-risk work goes to automation or self-service.** The team keeps high-volume, high-risk work and sends low-volume, high-risk matters to law firms. Self-service ranged from a contract AI tool with legal controlling the back end to work legal never touches, such as IP formalities. Teams would never self-serve high-value litigation or M&A.




## WHAT WE HEARD

- Some teams are asking whether lawyers need to redline at all. With a good playbook, a lot of that work can go back to the business.
- A small contract doesn't mean small liability. Users need to trust that the output is consistent and that anything risky reaches legal without anyone chasing it.

> *Self-serve potential will depend on service model, risk appetite, process maturity and volume of the activity, but the further it is from the enterprise strategy, and its material risks the greater the opportunity.*
>
> **Chris Fowler, Rio Tinto**



## WHAT WE HEARD

- One team's AI invoice review flagged about 15% of charges. After lawyers checked the flags, the net reduction was around 5% across a large portfolio.
- One team has chosen to work without a panel. It sets out the service it wants, expects firms to use AI on deals such as M&A, and builds some tools in-house.
- Teams also flagged the risks. Some firms are reluctant to share their AI efficiencies, scope can creep after a fixed fee is agreed, and a low opening bid can lead to fee discussions later.

# THE WORK THAT GOES TO FIRMS

**In-house teams talk about value-based billing, and few have cracked it.** Agreeing on what success looks like is the hard part. Tables shared levers that work today, from e-billing and invoice benchmarking to AI-supported invoice review. Some teams now ask firms to show the cost of a matter with and without AI.




## KEY TAKEAWAY

Sort your work by volume and risk, then give each type the right home. With firms, start with better invoice data and open talk about how they use AI.



# VALUE YOU CAN MEASURE

AI is now part of everyday legal work, and teams can show the time it saves. Fewer departments expect outside counsel spend to rise, and teams shared ways to get more value from their firms.

## 4 to 6 hours

of lawyer time saved each week by teams that measured how their users work with AI.

## 200 hours

saved each month by one team of eight lawyers, which is more than one full-time role.

## 86%

of CLOC members say AI and innovation has a critical or high impact on their daily work.†

## 5%

saved on one team's law firm bills by using AI to review invoices.

## 30 to 40%

discount on law firms' standard rates, negotiated by some teams for complex work.

## 37%

of legal departments expect outside counsel spend to rise, down from 58% a year earlier.*

*The figure marked * comes from the CLOC 2026 State of the Industry Report, based on the 2025 Harbor Law Department Survey.*
*The figure marked † comes from CLOC's recent member survey. All other figures are examples participants shared on the day and have not been verified.*

# THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE VALUE



## KEY TAKEAWAY

Plan your future team now. Add skills such as legal engineering and give juniors real work that builds judgement.

**Cost pressure and AI travel together, even when no one links them out loud.** One team replaced a departing lawyer with a legal ops hire. Leaders expect more legal engineers and data analysts in the years ahead. They also worry about how juniors will build judgement when AI handles the tasks that trained earlier generations.

## WHAT WE HEARD

- Lawyers already need to be commercially aware. Now they need to be AI aware too, and that includes knowing which models run in the background and what they cost.
- Value is also the human relationship. Legal ops builds the bridge to the business, and sometimes the most useful thing you can do is pick up the phone.



*Legal teams are hiring people who have never worked in a legal department before: legal engineers, data scientists, data analysts, product owners, process engineers and knowledge managers. Our team reviewed 155 in-house submissions this year, and more than 45 described working directly with colleagues in IT, data, product, HR, finance or procurement to deliver the work.*[1]

**Tom Saunders, RSGI**

[1] Figures from RSGI's research for FT Innovative Lawyers Europe 2026.



# CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

## CLOC Europe Summit

**4 February 2027 | London**

The CLOC Europe Summit brings legal operations professionals from across Europe together for a day of candid peer exchange. Senior leaders will join strategic discussions developed with RSGI, and those earlier in their careers will build practical skills they can use straight away.

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