

## LEGAL TECH ADOPTION—SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST?

With the hope of stronger collaboration between vendor and customer, and ultimately increased lawyer adoption of emerging legal technologies, Goodwin's Anne Stemplar and Debbie Ting gives their advice to vendors vying for their attention.

BY ANNE STEMLAR AND DEBBIE TING, GOODWIN

The legal technology market is booming! Investments in legal technology, by some estimates, were valued at over one billion dollars in both 2018 and 2019, resulting in an explosion of new legal technology products. In our roles as legal technologists, evaluators of legal technologies and ultimately, purchasers of legal technology, we have seen hundreds of new and emerging legal products that promise “digital transformation.”

In this crowded and competitive field, the primary sign of success of a product is its rapid use and adoption. However, something so obvious as lawyer adoption remains elusive and is a popular topic of debate amongst law firms and vendors alike. One recent [article](#) suggests law firms still struggle with adoption of its existing tools let alone new ones.

Typically, lack of adoption is commonly attributed to lawyers who are loath to change their traditional ways of working and reluctant to adopt new technology. Is it that lawyers are hesitant to adopt new technologies? Or, is it the proliferation of so many, new, constantly changing, and overly complex products that makes broad adoption by attorneys a remote possibility?

With the hope of stronger collaboration between vendor and customer, and ultimately increased lawyer adoption of emerging legal technologies, the following is our advice to vendors who are vying for our attention:

**Spark joy in lawyers:** Borrowing from [Marie Kondo](#), does your product spark joy in lawyers to want to use it again? Are they delighted to share with others what they like about it? A product that sparks joy in an associate increases the greater likelihood of adoption. We have an artificial intelligence (AI) contract proofreading software that associates rave about to other associates. Why? Because it delights them by solving a routine, time-consuming task, and they want to share this knowledge to help their peers. Our associates have told us peer recommendations rank high in their willingness to use a software. Delight them, and not only will they be hooked, they will recruit others to use your product.

**Design an intuitive user interface for better UI/UX:** A user interface (UI) that overwhelms the user with too many features ruins the user experience (UX), makes it impossible for a user to navigate within the product and will stymie broad adoption. We have



seen rapid consolidation of competing products resulting in new, complicated UI/UX, even when the legacy products offered more simple solutions. Good design requires a lot of planning and empathy for the users, not simply developers building how they think it should work, or keeping all historical features from newly consolidated products. We need the BEST way to complete a discrete task, not “every possible way” to do the same task. As a result of feature overload, lawyers have told us they prefer their current manual process over a product that is too confusing and overwhelming to use. To avoid this fate, curate and prioritize only those features that enhance the product. This ease of use is key to enterprise adoption.

**Deliver innovative training at time of need:** Training should be succinct, task based and on-demand at the time of

need. Training sessions that last several hours or require multiple sessions over time suggest your product is over-designed, and overly complex. While intuitive design minimizes the need for training, guided tutorials or short video's embedded within the product are most helpful while the lawyer is completing a task. Avoid stand-alone help portals; portals can overwhelm and forces lawyers to leave the product and take them out of their groove. And, lastly, similar to feature overload, show only the "BEST" way to do something when you train, not EVERY possible way to do the same thing. Offer super-users advanced training, for most attorney training, stick to the basics.

**Include meaningful data analytics and dashboards:** Often ignored or underdeveloped are detailed data analytics on how lawyers are using the product. Making this data readily available via a dashboard can help lawyers better understand the work they are doing in the aggregate and help admins understand how the product is being used or underutilized to lead to better adoption. Bonus points for making data collected easily available for use in other systems.

**Provide error free technical upgrades:** We are seeing increased and more complex technical issues with products in which we have made significant investments. Major legal research vendors—we include you in this category! We attribute this to the increased use of "agile development" and internal cost control pressure from new investors rushing new features into production. Hold on! Legal technologies are not iPhones! We routinely see small software tweaks for the sake of pushing out flashy new features that are not needed at our business. More seriously, we see these

tweaks impacting (or "breaking") our established business processes forcing us to reengineer those processes and requiring attorneys to re-learn how to use your software. Products with frequent upgrades that regularly disrupt our internal business processes will be considered unreliable by our attorneys and adoption will suffer. Please be thoughtful about the new features you are adding to your product, invest in quality control and test updates before pushing them to the market. Our time is too valuable to identify bugs in your software and continuous service interruptions create a risk to our business.

**Offer flexible pricing:** Vendors and customers need to share the risk of introducing a new legal technology into a law firm by offering introductory pricing that empowers law firms to "scale up" and buy more as adoption grows. Broad enterprise licensing doesn't work out of the gate. More problematic, is an increase in "value-based" or "benefit based" pricing where we are asked to supply our total "deal-flow revenue for certain types of transactions" or we are asked to estimate the "hours saved" by using the product and only then are we given a pricing proposal. Nothing concerns us more than having to pay more for a product because we have significant deal-flow or because we will actually use that product. This is like asking a new car purchaser "How many miles do you think you will drive this?" and then the larger the estimate, the higher the price. Flexible pricing will help us: (1) take on the risk of purchasing a new product, (2) introduce it to a diverse group of users to promote experimentation within our organization and (3) increase the likelihood of broad adoption.

**Don't over promise:** Vendors are still over-promising the benefits and digital transformation that comes from purchasing and using their products. This is especially true with products powered by AI. AI software does not replace humans. Enough said.

### Conclusion

The reality is that lawyers are being asked to be technologically proficient in a growing exponential number of legal technologies; this is on top of their regular billable work, with little or no time available for training. As the legal technology market continues to evolve, law firms will need to be more judicious in which products they invest and will be picking the winners and losers. Only the strongest and fittest products and those that we can quickly scale-up adoption will survive and thrive in this competitive market.

*Anne Stemlar serves as Goodwin's Managing Director of Knowledge Management and Research. She leads a global team of information professionals, legal technologists and professional support lawyers, and is responsible for the strategic direction of the firm's knowledge management and research functions, focusing on innovation and emerging legal technologies, including data analytics and artificial intelligence.*

*Debbie Ting is Goodwin's Senior Manager of Knowledge Management Transactional Technologies. She focuses on knowledge management and practice innovation to enable the firm's Business Law lawyers to deliver high value legal services to its clients and supports the use and adoption of legal technologies to enhance attorney workflows and processes.*