



Report: The burden of legal documentation

Challenges and priorities for
the legal sector in 2021/22

Contents

- 1 Exploring challenges, priorities, and tech strategies in the legal industry
- 2 The survey
- 3 Our findings
 1. Productivity, service, and tech top the agenda
 2. Law professionals spend more than a third of their day typing
 3. More than three-quarters have experienced burnout due to stress—and admin workloads are a major contributor
 4. Digital tools simplify admin—but not for everyone
 5. Speech recognition is common, but firms are still spending their budget on typists
- 9 Alleviate the burden with a tailor-made speech recognition tool
 - Simple operation, simple management
- 10 Speech recognition matches the legal industry's agenda

Exploring challenges, priorities, and tech strategies in the legal industry

We recently surveyed more than 100 legal professionals in various roles to ask them about their strategies for the next year. We're particularly interested in investigating the documentation burden they're facing, how they plan to approach it over the coming months.

In this report, we'll share five key findings and some recommendations for UK law firms as they work towards their goals in 2022.

The survey

It's no secret that the legal sector is documentation-heavy. As part of our survey, we wanted to understand the real impact of admin and documentation requirements on legal professionals—and how factors such as typing habits and working environments are affecting that admin burden.

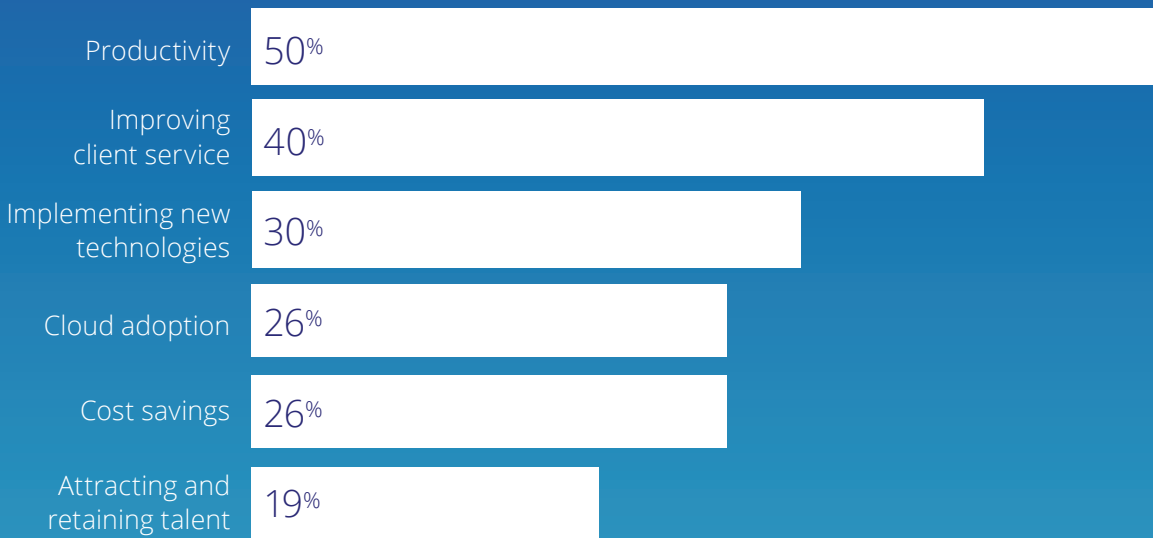
To better understand how decisions are being made for law firms and legal teams—and assess which solutions could help—we started with some questions around business priorities for the next year. We also asked about the technologies people are using to make their working lives easier, such as case management tools, speech recognition, and industry-wide systems such as the Common Platform.

In the following sections, we'll outline our key findings, and reflect on how law firms, legal teams, and individual professionals can address some of the issues and take advantage of the opportunities presented.

1. Productivity, service, and tech top the agenda

We asked our respondents to pick their top three priorities for 2022 from an extensive list of options. And though they have a diverse mix of goals, the most popular aims are focused on boosting productivity and the standard of client service. The third and fourth most popular priorities suggest that they'll be adopting new, cloud-based tools to meet these goals.

According to our respondents, their organisations' top priorities in the next year include:



The most popular aims are focused on boosting productivity and the standard of client service.

2. Law professionals spend more than a third of their day typing

Our survey results show that legal professionals spend a staggering number of hours at a physical or digital keyboard every day. 80% of legal professionals spend at least four hours a day typing for work, with 69% spending at least another hour typing for personal reasons once they've shut down their work computer.



8 hours and 36 minutes

The average time a legal professional spends typing every day.

Most legal professionals say they're fast typists, but 34% rate themselves as average—working at around 40 words per minute. And even though all our respondents say they type at an average rate or above, 44% of them still agree that their typing speed makes documentation tasks more difficult and time-consuming to complete.

But the answer to productivity challenges isn't simply 'type faster'; legal firms need to find ways to simplify the processes that rely on typing to help their teams work more effectively. With most of their day spent communicating with clients and colleagues, re-examining how legal professionals use email, Microsoft Teams, Slack, and other communication tools could be an effective place to start.

Our respondents ranked drafting contracts and agreements as one of their most common typing tasks. Accelerating those processes is more difficult; it's highly technical work that can't be rushed or delegated. For many legal firms, the solution is for lawyers to dictate and typists to transcribe. Nearly three-quarters of our respondents said they outsource to typists, which inevitably adds further time and cost to the equation.

Legal professionals' top five typing tasks are:



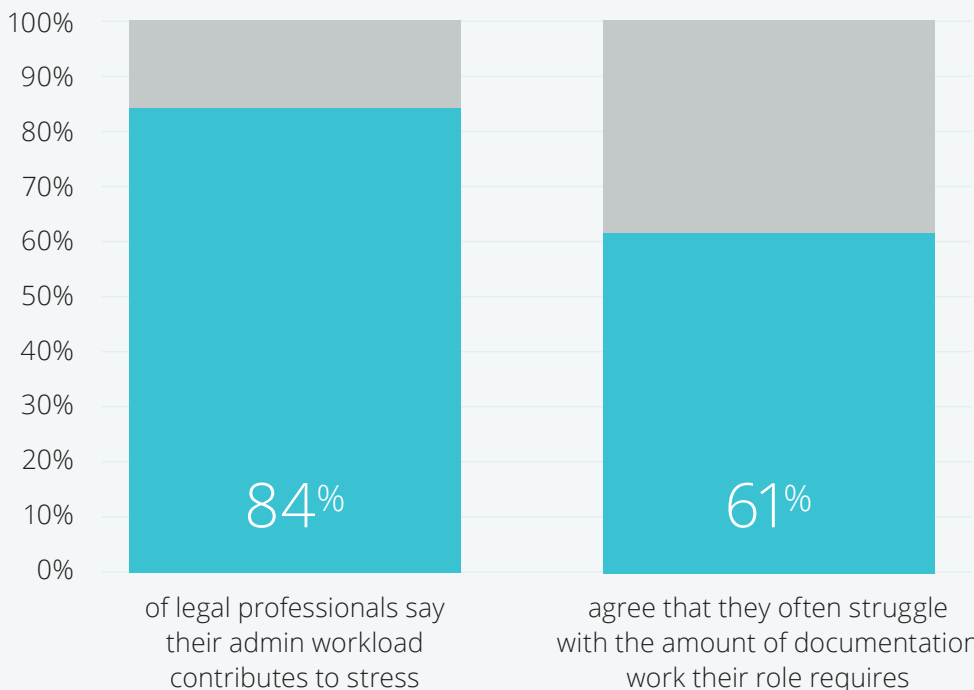
3. More than three quarters have experienced burnout due to stress—and admin workloads are a major contributor

Our respondents are no strangers to workplace stress or the ongoing impact of that stress. Over three quarters of legal professionals say they've experienced stress-related burnout. Some lawyers are also finding that working from home during the pandemic is adding extra pressure, especially for trainees, who are working with less support.¹

This should be a real cause for concern among the many law firms and legal team leaders who have made productivity and client service their top objectives for next year—and risk losing talented professionals to long-term sickness or less stressful careers.

Admin is a major cause of workplace stress; 84% of our respondents said their workload has contributed to their stress levels, and 61% agree that they often struggle with the amount of documentation work their role requires.

With so many prioritising new technologies and cloud adoption in 2022, especially as firms assess the benefits of long-term homeworking versus central offices, leaders have the perfect opportunity to select tools that ease some of this documentation burden through faster, simpler processes. Some have already started this push, but, as we'll explore in the next section, technology doesn't always make working life simpler for legal professionals.



¹ [ft.com/content/6e44c500-74db-11ea-90ce-5fb6c07a27f2](https://www.ft.com/content/6e44c500-74db-11ea-90ce-5fb6c07a27f2)

4. Digital tools simplify admin— but not for everyone

In the past few years, digital tools for legal teams have become more popular, especially as the government has launched industry-wide systems such as Common Platform. However, introducing new tools or processes can sometimes create more complexity, rather than simplifying workflows.

Let's take digital case management tools for example: 58% of our respondents said that they've simplified their admin workload. But 10% said these tools have actually added to their admin burden.

As leaders select and implement new technologies, it's vital that the solutions they choose don't exacerbate the issues their teams are facing. It's best to choose tools that have been developed specifically for the legal industry, as they're more likely to integrate with existing processes and offer meaningful improvements. Adjusting to new tools will always be difficult for some members of staff, especially those who have less experience with technology—but there's always scope to simplify the transition. For example, by offering training sessions, or ensuring new systems are tightly integrated with existing tools.



5. Speech recognition is common, but firms are still spending their budget on typists

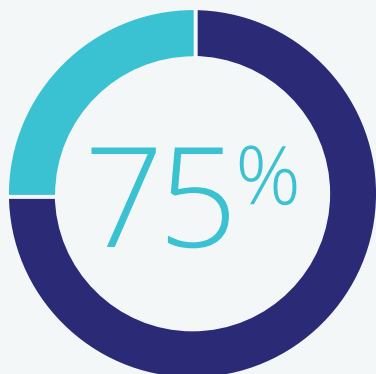
As we mentioned, almost three quarters of firms regularly outsource to typists. We were interested in understanding their views on speech recognition, and whether they saw it as a viable alternative to typing or outsourcing. We found that over half of our survey respondents already use speech recognition, with 36% reporting that they use the technology occasionally, and 19% using it frequently.



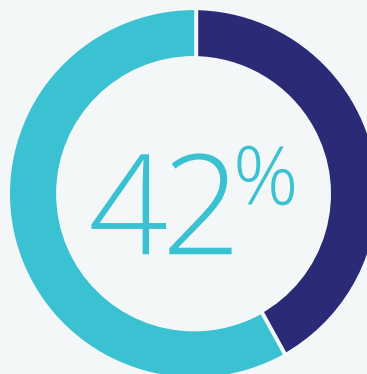
It can also help improve client service, as clients receive faster responses. For example, their lawyers can send a fully drafted agreement within hours of a meeting, instead of waiting days for a typist to transcribe an audio file and checking their work before it's sent on.

However, our respondents did give us an indication of why speech recognition hasn't seen more widespread use in the legal industry. It's true that many speech recognition engines aren't suited to the rigours of legal documentation. Built-in tools and freeware rarely have a professional-grade backend to support them. But that doesn't mean legal professionals can't take advantage of speech-to-text—it's all about finding the right solution.

Nearly two thirds said that the speech recognition tools they've used struggle to recognise specialist legal terminology. In fact, it's the main barrier to adoption, with 42% believing that speech recognition isn't accurate enough for their purposes.



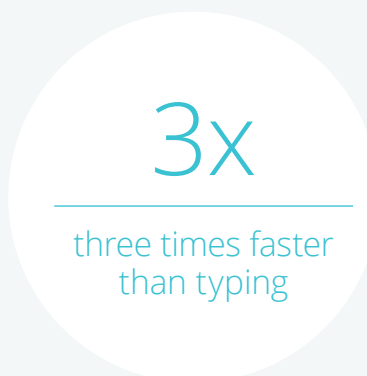
75% of our respondents said the speech recognition tools they've used struggle to recognise specialist legal terminology



42% believe that speech recognition isn't accurate enough for their purposes

We recognised the challenges legal professionals have with many speech recognition tools. So we built a specific tool: Dragon Legal Anywhere. It's tailored for the industry and based on decades of research and development working alongside our legal sector clients.

Dragon's professional-grade speech recognition engine handles up to 160 words per minute—more than three times faster than the average typing speed. It's also twice as fast as many professional typists, making it an economical alternative to outsourcing, without putting extra pressure on individual staff.



Alleviate the burden with a tailor-made speech recognition tool

Using AI and machine learning, we trained Dragon Legal Anywhere's recognition engine using real legal documents to ensure it could accurately recognise even the most complicated terminology. It's up to 99% accurate out of the box, and improves even further with regular use, adapting to individual users' voices and preferences.

Its customisable dictionary means legal professionals can add their own shortcuts to work more efficiently. For example, users could say "QBD", which automatically translates to "Queen's Bench Division", or say "add my signature" to quickly sign off a letter with their information.

Simple operation, simple management

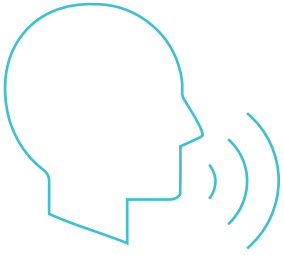
Dragon Legal Anywhere is cloud-based, delivering powerful, secure speech recognition via 256-bit encryption from its Microsoft Azure backend to help law firms and legal professionals maintain compliance.

With a single-click installation, Dragon simply sits on top of the applications that legal teams use all day, every day, such as Microsoft Office. As well as allowing legal professionals to dictate directly into these apps—and into digital forms—it lets them use voice commands to navigate between windows, send emails, and even search in browsers.

Did you know? Dragon Legal Anywhere provides different dictionaries for England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland—and they're all completely customisable, so users can add their own terms and phrases.



Dragon Legal Anywhere was built in line with the OSCOLA reference guide



Speech recognition could be the right solution to help your people work more efficiently—and Dragon Legal Anywhere could be the perfect tool.

Speech recognition matches the legal industry's agenda

Our research revealed that legal professionals are dedicating many hours of their day to admin and documentation—time that could be spent working directly with colleagues and clients.

With productivity and improving client service at the top of the agenda for 2022, tackling that documentation burden and reducing the time legal professionals spend typing will be key to success. If more legal professionals switch to speech recognition tools for their admin and documentation work, they could dramatically improve productivity and help their firms reduce costs.

If you recognise any of the challenges our respondents shared, speech recognition could be the right solution to help your people work more efficiently—and Dragon Legal Anywhere could be the perfect tool.

Major UK law firms such as OGR Stock Denton, Hatchers Solicitors LLP, Hugh James, Maples Teesdale, Newtons Solicitors, PGS Law, and Progression Solicitors all use Dragon speech-to-text solutions to simplify documentation and deliver faster, stronger client service.

To explore how your firm could benefit from advanced, legal-specific speech recognition, get in touch today—we'd love to show you what Dragon Legal Anywhere can do.

LEARN MORE

Talk to us today about Dragon

nuance.com/dragon/business-solutions/dragon-legal-anywhere



About Nuance Communications, Inc.

[Nuance Communications](#) (Nuance) is a technology pioneer with market leadership in conversational AI and ambient intelligence. A full-service partner trusted by 77 percent of U.S. hospitals and 85 percent of the Fortune 100 across the globe, we create intuitive solutions that amplify people's ability to help others.

© 2021 Nuance Communications Ireland, Ltd. All rights reserved.
DG_5053_01_B, September 23, 2021_EN_UK