

Transforming the legal sector with Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

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Law firms are under increasing pressure to provide their services faster and at a lower cost. The legal sector is one of the longest established professions and has previously been resistant to technological change, [for cultural, competitive, and economic reasons](#), but the sector is starting to catch up.

Legal robots are the perfect technological ally for legal departments and law firms because they can handle repetitive and tedious operational tasks – given that [63% of in-house legal work is repeatable, fact-based decisions](#) that involve no need for human judgement or interpretation. By taking on these tasks, in place of human workers, RPA frees up legal advisors to spend time with clients – creating more billable hours and enabling law firms to become more competitive.

Unlocking the legal benefits of RPA

The main advantage of RPA is the reduction in time and costs, especially when considering that the most common method of charging used by law firms is by the hour. Software robots can complete tasks up to five times faster than human workers – and in light of this, Deloitte Consulting LLP [has joined an alliance to jointly develop and deliver RPA solutions to its clients](#) at a global level while also establishing a more focused and innovative collaboration to [automate legal and compliance](#). The first solution was a robot that can search for information in public records, which is common in due diligence processes – and which takes approximately seven minutes, as opposed to the three and a half hours it takes a person to do the same task. Software robots also reduce errors – which can be very costly to businesses. A mistake in drafting a contract [cost a leading London law firm nearly £2 million](#).

There are many daily time-consuming, repetitive processes that are mandatory, but do not necessarily need to be performed by a lawyer. Considering the trademark registrations or verifications of disputes made by law firms and reviewing and processing high-volume documents as part of a large transaction or due diligence process, are just some of the processes that are suitable for automation. In addition to these processes vast amounts of time are spent reading, understanding, and processing document data, all of which can be handled by RPA, and supported with document understanding powered by AI technologies. By automating these repetitive tasks to software robots, lawyers' time is freed up to focus on what really matters: the complex legal issues that these transactions may raise.

The future of law

Deloitte [forecasts that, by 2025](#), the quickening pace of technological developments, shifts in workforce demographics, and the need to offer clients more value for money, will force a profound transformation of the legal sector. Professionals must keep up with the fast pace of change, and rapidly adapt to the needs of their clients – whilst reducing costs, be they agency, transaction, monitoring, regulatory, or compliance.

In short, legal teams, whether in-house or outside counsel, need to facilitate an [‘automation first’ mindset](#) in both their, and their clients', organisations. This means that firms will need to address business challenges with a hybrid human/software workforce, using software robots to automate daily processes and freeing humans up for more creative, strategic tasks. Now is the time for the legal profession to take this automation first approach, which will provide a clear path forward for organisations to embrace a new dynamic for legal success.

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