
LEGAL SOFTWARE



It would be insincere to offer an aspirational call to action to the legal software industry without an honest self-examination; every organization excels in some areas and needs improvement in others.

To that end, this Legal Software Bill of Rights is a combination of both ambition and cause. It is a guiding philosophy for the legal software industry rather than an edict, and a reference point rather than a sure path. The Legal Software Bill of Rights is, we hope, the start of a market conversation where the ink is still wet, and subject to editing, rather than the final script fit to print.

It is our intent to set a new level of expectations about how legal technology should evolve to work for you—and not the other way around.



As a legal professional, I have the right to:



1 Legal solutions that work the way I do.

The truth about most legal solutions on the market today is that many attorneys are forced to settle for legal technology that's simply a digitized version of older, inefficient systems that have been used for decades. Rather than help them work more efficiently, it simply shifts the same work to a different platform.

Attorneys today are busier than ever, and face increased competition. They don't have time to learn a new approach to an old system, nor do they want a dictionary-sized instruction manual.

What attorneys really want, and require, are tools that are easy to learn and use, that adapt to their way of working, and that easily integrate with other technologies that they choose to use.

Companies that want to survive—and thrive—in the increasingly crowded and competitive legal marketplace will first seek to understand a legal professional's needs, wants and problems, and then build products that will solve for all three.



2 Use my own data to make informed decisions that help me run my business and serve my clients.

Data mining. It's all over the headlines, and many attorneys are actively talking about how the proliferation of it—both in public, and within their own firms—could affect them and their clients. We at LexisNexis believe that data has the power to transform the legal industry by enabling better decisions. It empowers legal professionals to answer the questions, such as:

- **What? (information pulls)** How much revenue do I make from a client or practice area?
- **Why? (interpreting a series of information pulls)** What is my real cost of servicing a client? What is my profitability by practice area, partner, client and billing staff?
- **What is next? (applied analytics)** Where do we have the opportunity to negotiate better rates? Where might we try AFAs? What trends does my data show me, and how can I leverage that information to spur growth? What are industry benchmarks for firms of my size, and how do I measure against them?

Using data to make decisions based on real numbers and not on “gut instincts” isn't just good business sense; it's the way to ensure your firm or legal department maintains maximum financial health.

In addition, the use of so-called “big data” to benchmark against law firms from across the legal industry can help you find insights and answer other business questions that were previously considered out of reach.



3 Access my vendor's expertise—and not just its products—as a strategic partner.

A legal technology vendor should be able to do more than just sell you a product and then move on; they should have the industry awareness, reputation and depth to stick around long after the contract is signed, and help you better understand your business—and how it can improve.

The best vendors don't even see themselves as vendors at all. Rather, they are more like legal industry consultants who are as dedicated to your firm's vision as you are, and who use their vast array of resources and years of industry knowledge to help you get there.



4 **A software provider who's committed to the specific needs of the legal community.**

Did the people who make your legal software see an opportunity in the legal market and then introduce their generic software into the professional legal community? Do they have attorneys on staff or in focus groups that are helping shape their products, or are they relying on best-case scenarios and features that non-legal users enjoy? Most importantly, how long have they been in business—and how long will they potentially be around?

These and related questions are important ones to ask when choosing where and with whom to invest in legal software solutions. Because spending time and money learning a new system, only to have the supplier abandon the market or go out of business a few years from now, is a nightmare scenario that will leave you stranded with technology that never improves, and will be useless to you when it stops working.



5 **Know where my data is stored, and who can see it.**

After your clients, your firm's data is by far its most valuable asset. And four walls and a locking steel filing cabinet are no longer considered best practices for protecting it. Today, the trend is toward the increasing use of and reliance on digital information and storage, for everything ranging from a firm's client and financial data to correspondence records, emails, billing reports, and more. Further, as more firms turn to online or cloud-based storage, increasing attention must also be paid to the data storage, defined policies, and recovery plans of the providers themselves.

The ABA's increasing standards for professional competency include a broader emphasis on technology comprehension. It's a lawyer's duty to ask specifically how their data is kept, who can see it, and who "owns" it when the contract is over. Vendors who "get it" make answers to those and related questions both extremely thorough and easy to find.



6 **Legal technology that can grow as I do.**

Nearly worse than no legal technology solution at all is one that can't scale to your increasingly more sophisticated needs and growing staff—and must be abandoned in order to start over from scratch on something new. Even attorneys that begin their legal career with the idea of remaining a small firm can find themselves growing larger than they ever thought possible. It should be reasonable to expect that the technology you invest in will come along for the ride, and continue to be just as fast, reliable and valuable as it was on day one.



7 **Friendly, knowledgeable customer support.**

Attorneys require support to fully master the tools they need to make the most of their practice and serve their clients. When they finally make a decision to pick up the phone and call for help, it's usually at a time of frustration or near crisis, with heightened stress levels and an increased sense of urgency. The companies with the best support systems realize this, and have not only the ability to explain how their products work, but to do so in a way that relates to how lawyers think and work in these situations, and in their day-to-day legal lives.



8 **Have the tools I need to practice law anytime, anywhere.**

How many attorneys relish the thought of being chained to a desk in order to practice law? None. That's because mobile legal technology and cloud-based solutions are slowly but surely becoming the expectation rather than the anomaly.

From the car to the courthouse, from home or while on holiday, attorneys deserve to have constant, secure access to client files, contracts, affidavits, court dockets, calendars, contacts, supporting documents, or any other things they need to practice law, or run their practice. Always available, and always synced so that they, their staffs and their clients are always on the same page. Not only should it help them stay on top of everything they have—and have to do—but it should also help them be more responsive to their clients, no matter when they call or where they are.



9 **Better software developed through inter-company cooperation.**

"Innovation through collaboration" is making its way into the legal technology sector, and it's a win/win for the software companies themselves, and for the attorneys who use their products.

The concept is this: Whether the goal is to bring a new solution to the market, or add additional functionality to an existing product, work with other companies who've already proven their concept instead of reinventing the wheel. The whole will always be greater than the sum of its parts, especially when the parts aren't normally in a legal software developer's wheelhouse.

The result is simpler, more streamlined solutions that are easier for attorneys to use and understand, because it incorporates the best of already-existing technology that they're familiar with. It solves problems in a new way, adapts to any technology infrastructure, and offers functionality they're already accustomed to.



10 **Customer-driven legal software.**

The days of "if you build it, they will come" legal software are gone, and many companies haven't gotten the memo. In fact, the 2013 ABA Legal Technology Survey shows that "Satisfaction with Features and Functions of Case/Practice Management Software" has declined for the past three years.

Why? The tools attorneys are using haven't been designed to meet their needs, and as a result they may only use five percent of the system's features, making the other 95% completely meaningless to them.

What attorneys deserve is robust but minimal solutions that are focused on which features they actually need. This requires a deep understanding of what those needs are before the product is even built. And it doesn't stop after it hits the market. Listening to user feedback—and doing something about it—should be a never-ending process.

Tell us what you think

Do these rights ring true for the way you see legal technology?

Share your thoughts at lexisnexis.com/Bill-Of-Rights or continue the conversation on Twitter by using #LNBoFR.