

# Survey Report for 2023 SKILLS Strategic Knowledge + Innovation Legal Leaders' Summit

This report analyzes about 300 respondents to our survey in preparation for SKILLS 2023

by Ron Friedmann;  
Reviewed, edited, and enhanced by Lucy Dillon, Nick Pryor, Mary Abraham,  
Oz Benamram, and Tanisha Little  
23 Jan 2023

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Work Done in 2022</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Expected Work in 2023 and Changes from 2022</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Discussion Interests versus 2023 Plans</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Concluding Thoughts</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix - Changes in Survey Tags</b>	<b>7</b>

## Introduction

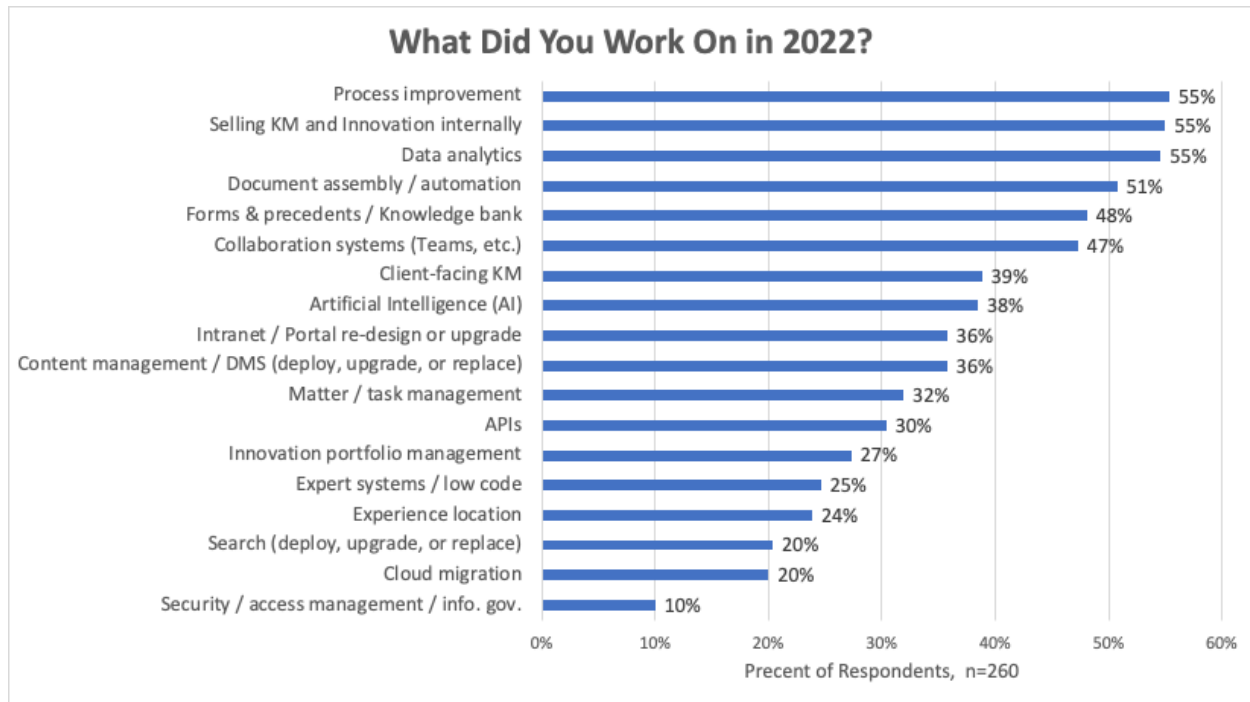
In preparation for the 2023 Strategic Knowledge + Innovation Legal Leaders' Summit, we ran an open survey of knowledge management and innovation professionals in large law firms. About 300 responded, mainly in the common-law jurisdictions and Europe. We focus on three areas each year:

1. Work done in the past year, 2022 ("Focus" or "Did").
2. Priorities for the current year, 2023 ("Priority" or "Should").
3. Topics of interest to discuss during the event ("Discuss" or "Talk").

We administered the survey between September and November 2022. Respondents answered with free-form text and tagged their answers with a defined vocabulary. These tags serve as the axis labels for the charts below. This year, we significantly changed the tags (details in the Appendix).

# Work Done in 2022

The chart below shows what respondents worked on in 2023.

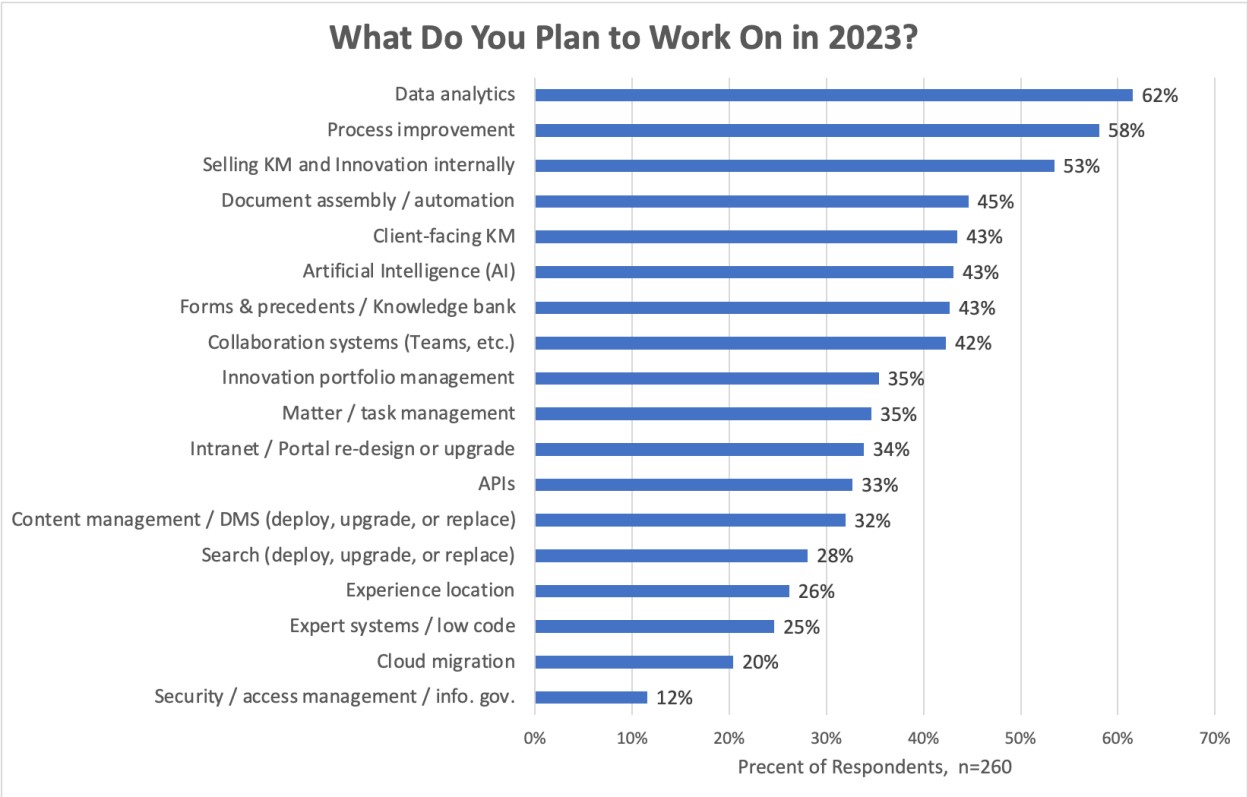


## COMMENTS

- Though our data this year are not directly comparable to prior years, the top two activities (process improvement and selling KM) this year and last year are the same, and at roughly the same percentages.
- AI as a focus remains important with over one-third working on it but is down significantly from a few years ago. This reflects that it has become more of a feature across products than a product in its own right.
- We are somewhat surprised that APIs, a new tag, clocked-in at only 30%. We note that over one-half of respondents are working on data analytics. More sophisticated analytics requires APIs to assemble the requisite data. We offer four possible reasons for this:
  - a. many projects involve internal data only, so a portion of respondents have no need for them;
  - b. a substantial portion of API work rests on the vendor side;
  - c. not all vendors offer APIs yet, so we have not reached “peak API”; and
  - d. the *technical* professionals who actually work on the APIs are not as well represented in this survey as are the *business and practice* professionals.
- Forms, precedents, and document assembly remain high on the list, as they did as a combined tag. Separated, each is this year about 50% down from a combined score of 70%+. This suggests that the professionals working on one are not always working on the other, which is perhaps no surprise.

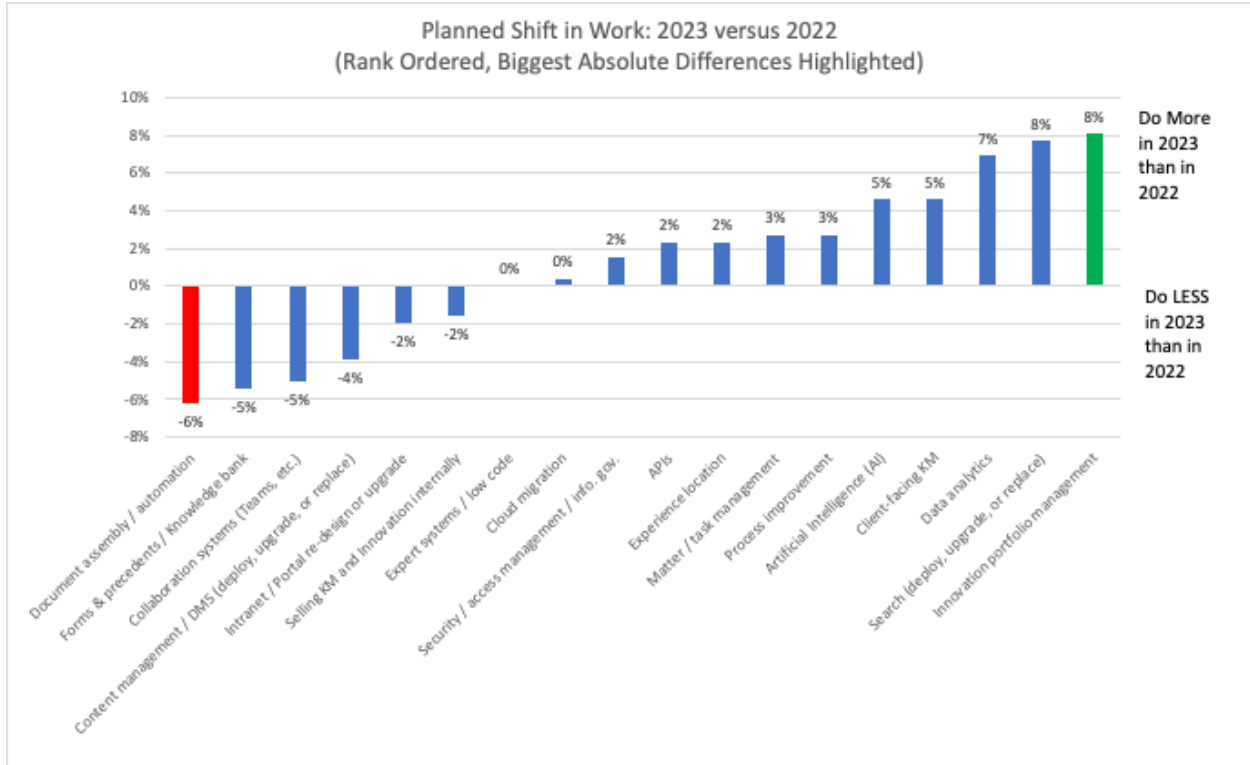
# Expected Work in 2023 and Changes from 2022

The chart below shows the work respondents expect to do in 2023.



Our analyses in prior years showed few big changes in how respondents expected to spend their time from the current survey year to the next year. That remains true: few respondents selected different tags between 2022 and 2023. In fact, the changes are less than 10 percentage points, which we view as relatively small:

[Intentionally blank area - chart follows]

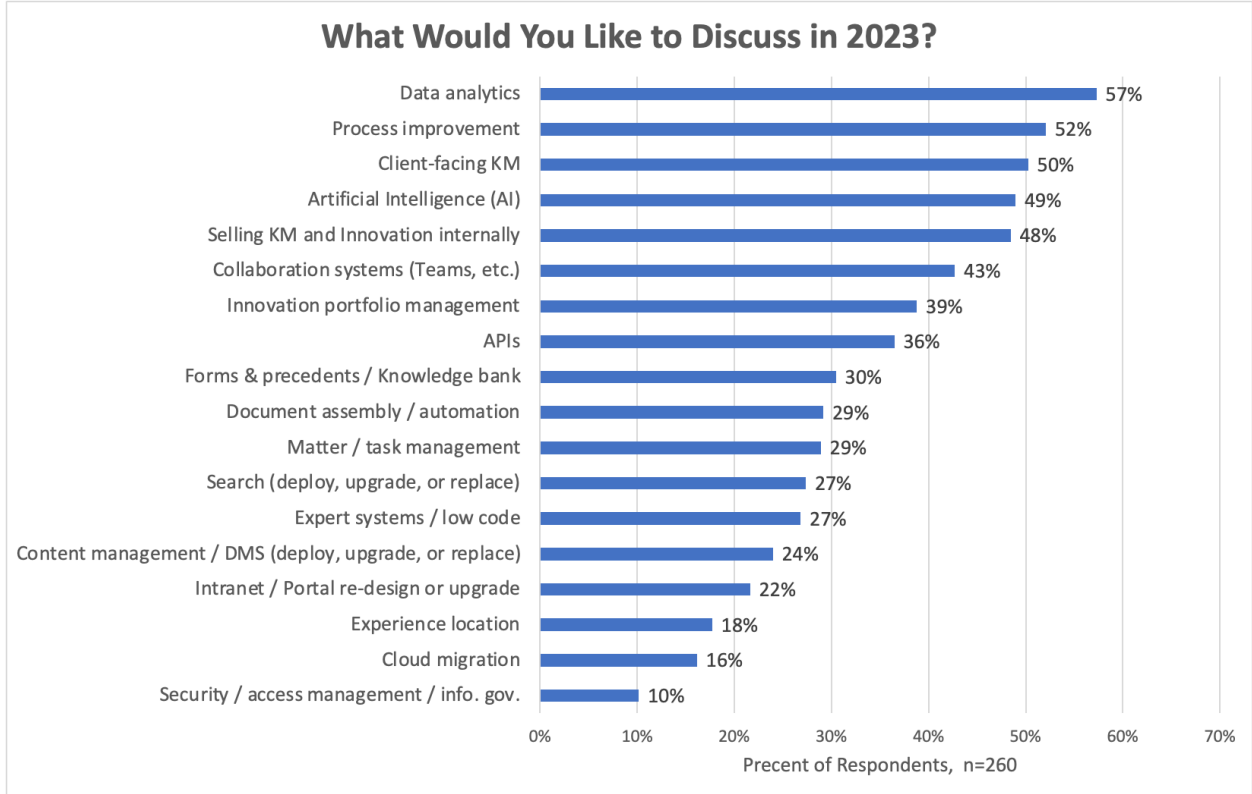


We are not surprised by the small changes: much of what KM and innovation professionals do takes years and requires a combination of content creation/curation, technology work, and substantial change management. Moreover, in many firms both functions are now sizable. Consequently, even if a major new innovation arises - consider, for example, ChatGPT - it likely only changes a small portion of what a team does.

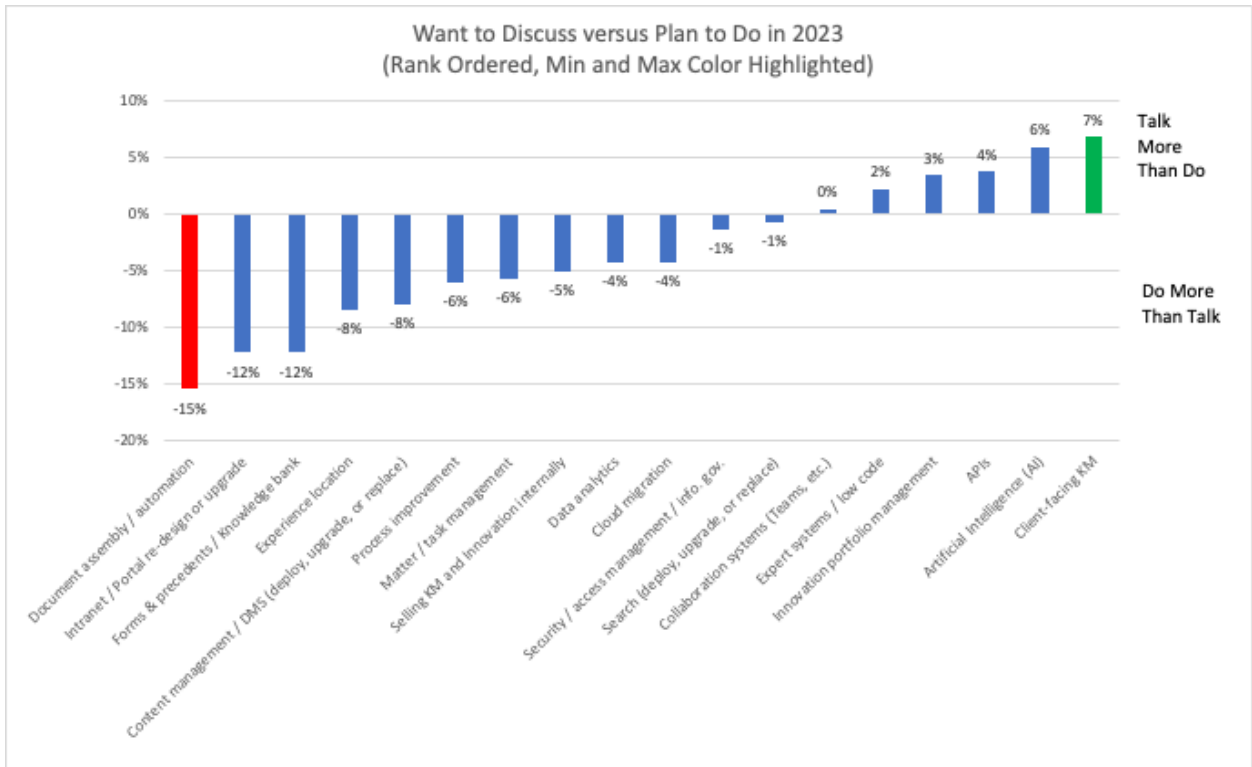
## Discussion Interests versus 2023 Plans

The chart below shows what respondents want to discuss in 2023.

[Intentionally blank area - chart follows]



We compare what respondents say they will work on with what they want to discuss:



As in years past, the variances are fairly small. And, as in past surveys, there is less interest in discussing forms + precedents and document assembly than plans to do it. We continue to believe that is because it is a mature element of KM that requires doing, but not discussion. The data suggest that Intranet redesign falls into the same category. This makes sense given the multiple generations of redesigns.

Interestingly, the high and low values in this chart may connect. "Client Facing KM" is a topic many want to discuss and, in practice, it often involves contract/form automation. We think that perhaps there is less interest in hearing about the well-understood elements ("how to do it" or "the internal value proposition of it") but more interest in "how do we more effectively make KM client-facing without complicating our primary business model?"

## Concluding Thoughts

This year's survey results confirm our conclusion from last year: that the pandemic was a temporary interruption that did not significantly alter the longer-term trends of KM and innovation. Judging by the growing interest in the SKILLS Showcase, including the large number of participants, both are thriving. We also note the anecdotal evidence of the growing number of PSL / KM Lawyers in the USA is a sign of increasing KM / innovation investment.

To hold ourselves accountable, we revisit one prediction from last year. We surveyed job titles and span of reporting and those 2022 results which led us to ask an organizational question: Will firms move to a new staff structure that replaces the COO with two co-equal Chiefs reporting to the managing partner or chair, one for operations and finance, and one for practice support/legal service delivery? We did not ask questions to test this but, so far, we are not seeing that change.

Our analysis of tags does not do full justice to the range of work our respondents do. Reading the free-form text answers, we are impressed. Our take is that the level of sophistication of KM, innovation, data foundations, and approaches to adoption is significantly up from 5 or 10 years ago. To be sure, many respondents continue their fundamental "blocking and tackling work", which we view as always required. But many are doing sophisticated work with data, analytics, and AI. We think that growing resources within firms, better access to internal and external data, the rise of APIs, the growing standards movement, and better legal tech products have combined to allow firms to improve their approaches to KM and innovation.

## Appendix - Changes in Survey Tags

With changes in the market and activities at large law firms, we decided to update our tags. This provides a better view of respondents' work but creates a discontinuity with the results of prior years. That is not a big sacrifice given that prior analyses did not find significant year-over-year changes.

We added the following tags:

- APIs
- Cloud migration
- Innovation portfolio management

We removed the following tags:

- AFA / Budget / LPM
- eDiscovery / litigation support

We also renamed and split a few tags. The table below, in alphabetic order, indicates the changes we made, the disposition of the prior tags, and the reason for changes.

New Tag	Change Type	Original Tag	Reason for Change
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	No Change	Artificial intelligence (AI)	NA
NA	Deleted	AFA / Budget / LPM	A dozen years ago, as that discipline grew rapidly, many KM professionals worked on it. It has matured sufficiently that, in most firms, separate teams now lead this function.
APIs	New		Many BigLaw firms are actively and heavily investing in data strategies for which APIs are an important enabler.
Client-facing KM	No Change	Client-Facing KM	NA
Cloud migration	New		BigLaw cloud views have shifted, with more moving to the cloud – a big undertaking when it occurs.
Collaboration systems (Teams, etc.)	Name Adjusted	Collaboration / Internal Social Media	The time for internal social media experiments has come and gone, and Teams is ascending.
Content management / DMS (deploy,	Name Adjusted	Content management / DMS	Expanded name clarifies types of DMS projects included.

upgrade, or replace)			
Data analytics	No Change	Data analytics	NA
Document assembly / automation	Separated		With a very high percentage reporting work on the old tag, this provides more granularity.
	Deleted	eDiscovery / litigation support	Under 5% of respondents report working on this.
Expert systems / low code	Name Adjusted	Expert systems	Recognizes changing market terminology.
Experience location	No Change	Experience location	NA
Forms & precedents / Knowledge bank	Separated	Forms, precedents & doc assembly	With a very high percentage reporting work on the old tag, this provides more granularity.
Innovation portfolio management	New		Many professionals who previously only oversaw KM now have innovation in their portfolio; also, there are now many Chief Innovation Officers.
Intranet / Portal re-design or upgrade	Name Adjusted	Portal re-design or upgrade	Recognizes changing market terminology.
Matter / task management	Name Adjusted	Matter management	Some firms now have more of a focus on task management than in the past.
Process improvement	No change	Process improvement	NA
Security / access management / info. gov.	Name Adjusted	Security / info. gov.	Recognizes changing market terminology.
Search (deploy, upgrade, or replace)	Name Adjusted	Search (install, upgrade, or improve)	Recognizes changing market dynamics.
Selling KM and Innovation internally	Name Adjusted	Selling / marketing KM internally	Recognizes growth of innovation roles and work.