

SKILLS 2024 Survey Report

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This report analyzes 500+ respondents to the [survey](#) conducted in preparation for the Strategic Knowledge and Innovation Legal Leaders' Summit ("SKILLS") 2024.

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Executive Summary

The SKILLS 2024 Survey Report, encompassing responses from over 500 legal professionals focusing on knowledge management and innovation, offers a critical look into the trends and shifts in the legal sector. This report synthesizes the data and insights from the survey to clearly understand how KM, technology, and innovation are being embraced and implemented in legal practice.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Widespread Adoption of Technology:** A dominant trend is the increased integration of technologies such as AI, machine learning, and data analytics into legal workflows, indicating a significant shift towards digital transformation.
2. **Client-Centric Innovations:** The responses highlight a move towards client-centric service models, utilizing technology to enhance client engagement and personalize legal services.

3. **Balancing Opportunities and Challenges:** While technological advancements present opportunities for efficiency and innovation, they pose challenges, including skills development, change management, and data security.
4. **Strategic Use of Data:** There is a growing recognition of data as a strategic asset, with firms investing in data analytics to inform decision-making and drive business strategies.
5. **Progressive Industry Evolution:** Comparative analysis with previous years shows an evolution from exploratory technology adoption to more strategic and integrated implementation.

The SKILLS 2024 Survey underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of the legal profession, with a clear trajectory towards embracing innovation through implementing technology and improving processes.

Introduction

In preparation for the January 18, 2024, Strategic Knowledge and Innovation Legal Leaders' Showcase, we ran an open survey of knowledge management and innovation professionals in large law firms. This annual survey, now in its 20th year, serves as a vital benchmarking tool for understanding how law firms and related organizations navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of legal technology and innovation.

This year's survey garnered responses from over 500 professionals across 301 unique organizations, of which the majority were from Law Firms (49%), followed by Vendors/Suppliers (24%), and Law Company/ALSP (13%). The remainder represented various fields, including venture capital and academia.

Individually, the respondents formed a diverse group encompassing a range of roles, including knowledge managers, innovation officers, IT professionals, and other key stakeholders in the legal profession. These respondents represent a broad spectrum of organizations, from large multinational law firms to boutique practices, as well as consultants and vendors specializing in legal technology solutions. For questions specific to law firms, those not in a firm (e.g., vendors or consultants) were advised not to answer these questions.

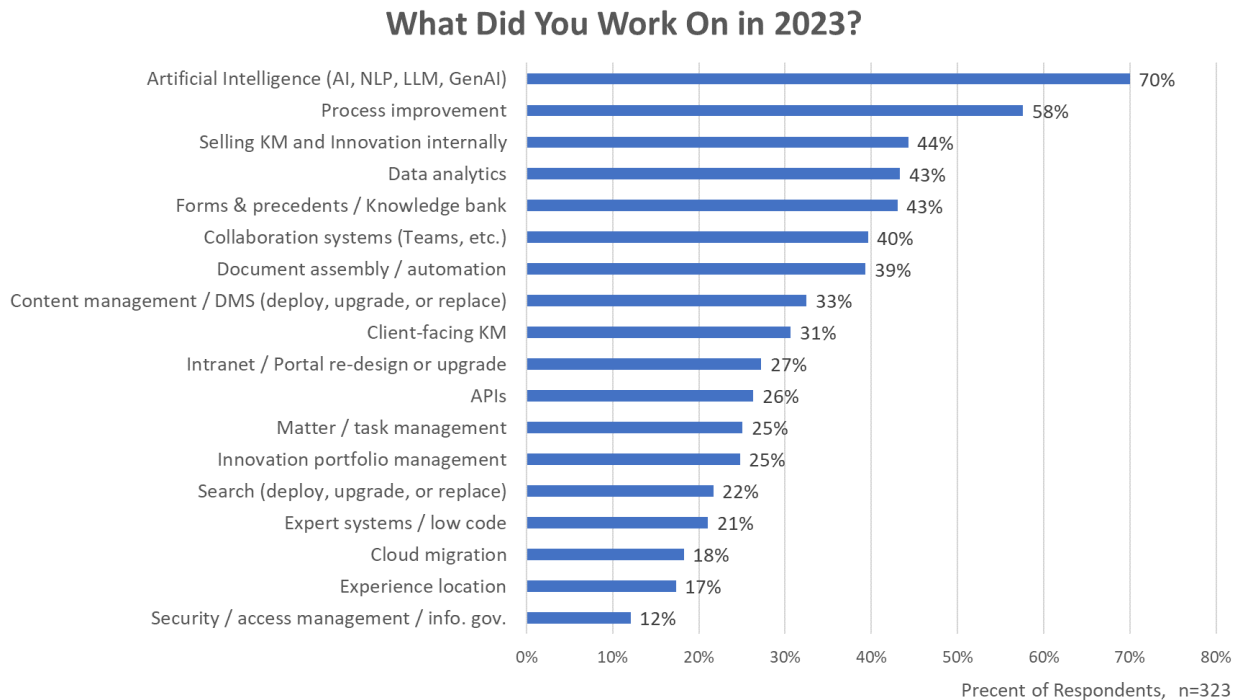
The objective of the 2024 SKILLS Survey was to capture a holistic view of the current trends, challenges, and opportunities in legal knowledge management and innovation. Through this survey, we sought to understand the technological advancements being adopted and the strategic approaches, operational challenges, and cultural shifts occurring within all legal sector entities. The core survey focused on three areas:

1. Work done in the past year ("Did").
2. Priorities for the upcoming year ("Should").
3. Topics to discuss during the event ("Talk").

We administered the survey between September and November 2023. 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.

Work done in 2023

The chart below shows what respondents worked on in 2023.



Commentary

- Unsurprisingly, AI as a focus area saw a significant increase compared to last year, jumping from 38% in 2022 to 70% in 2023. This substantial growth, and the biggest jump in tags we have seen, is consistent with the broader market reaction and aligns with individual responses that indicate diverse and expanding AI applications. The [SKILLS LLM survey report](#) provides a deeper dive into the topic.
- Last year's top three areas - Process Improvement, Selling KM and Innovation Internally, and Data Analytics - remain prominent, moving down one place each to 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, respectively.
 - **Data Analytics:** The attention to data analytics has seen a notable decrease, from 55% to 43%. Given the importance of data-driven decision-making, this drop might suggest that data analytics is becoming integrated into broader roles (e.g., under the AI umbrella) and functions rather than being a standalone focus, or it could reflect a maturing of initial analytics implementations.
 - **Consistent Focus on Process Improvement:** Despite slight fluctuations, process improvement continues to be a major area of focus, with 58% in 2023 (compared with 55% in 2022), reinforcing its critical role in organizational efficiency and competitiveness.

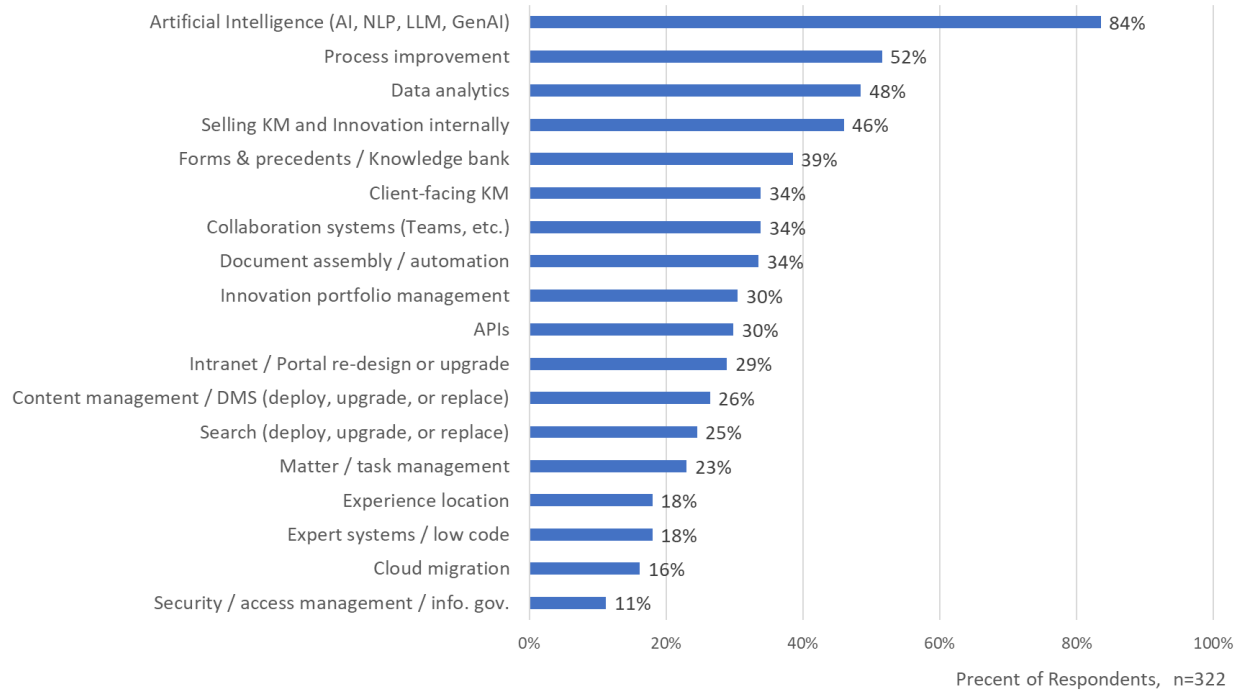
- **KM and Innovation Promotion:** The slight decrease in promoting KM and innovation internally, from 55% to 43%, indicates a maturation stage. Responses show a move towards practical integration, with firms developing "new KM capabilities" and leveraging "Digital Virtual Assistant" technology for knowledge management purposes, as well as respondents sharing the formation of new innovation departments. This suggests a pivot from advocacy to actualization as new initiatives are launched and integrated into practice.

- **Forms and Precedents/Knowledge Bank:** There's been a decrease in work on forms and precedents/knowledge bank, from 48% to 40%. This might be due to the cyclical nature of knowledge management initiatives where significant efforts in previous years are now yielding sustainable systems, reducing the need for new projects in this area.
- **Collaboration Systems:** The decrease in focus on collaboration systems from 47% to 39% might indicate an increased familiarization with these systems, as firms report utilizing MS Teams and other tools, suggesting a consolidation and deepening of collaborative platforms.
- **Automation and Document Assembly:** The focus on document assembly and automation has decreased significantly, from 51% to 39%. This could indicate a level of saturation or maturity in automation tools within firms or a potential pivot towards enhancing these tools with more advanced technologies such as AI integration.
- **Client-Facing KM:** The slight increase in client-facing KM, from 36% to 33%, points towards ongoing efforts to use knowledge management to enhance client engagement and service delivery.

Expected Work in 2024 and Changes from 2023

The chart below shows the work respondents expect to do in 2024. Non-blank responses only.

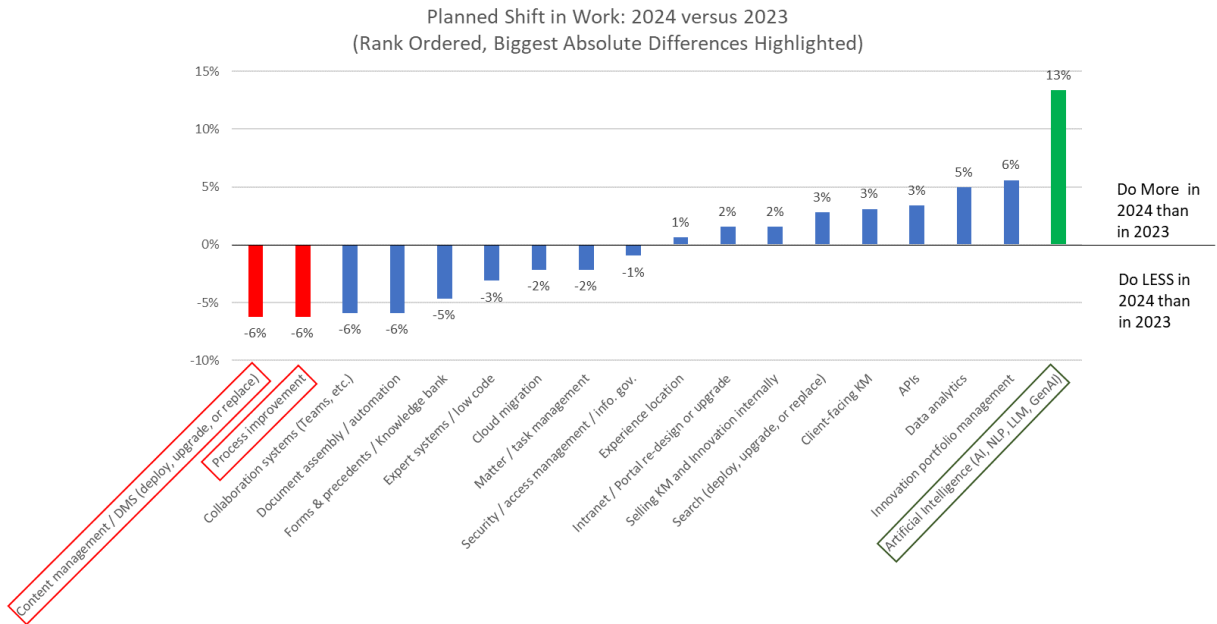
What Do You Plan to Work On in 2024?



As with previous years, the analysis showed mostly small changes (with the exception of AI) in how respondents expected to spend their time from this year to the next. Changes less than ± 10 percentage points are considered small.

When examining the plans to work on in 2024 compared to 2023¹, unsurprisingly, the largest increase is the emphasis on artificial intelligence, which has almost doubled from 43% to 84%. This dramatic increase highlights that AI has moved beyond the exploratory phase and is now a central focus, which is a remarkable shift in priority within just one year.

¹Please note that although we have made all possible efforts to provide an accurate year-on-year comparison, it is important to keep in mind that the survey size, changing roles of the respondents, and fluctuations in the number of respondents may impact the results. Thus, while the results provide a directional indicator, they do not necessarily represent a statistically significant outcome.



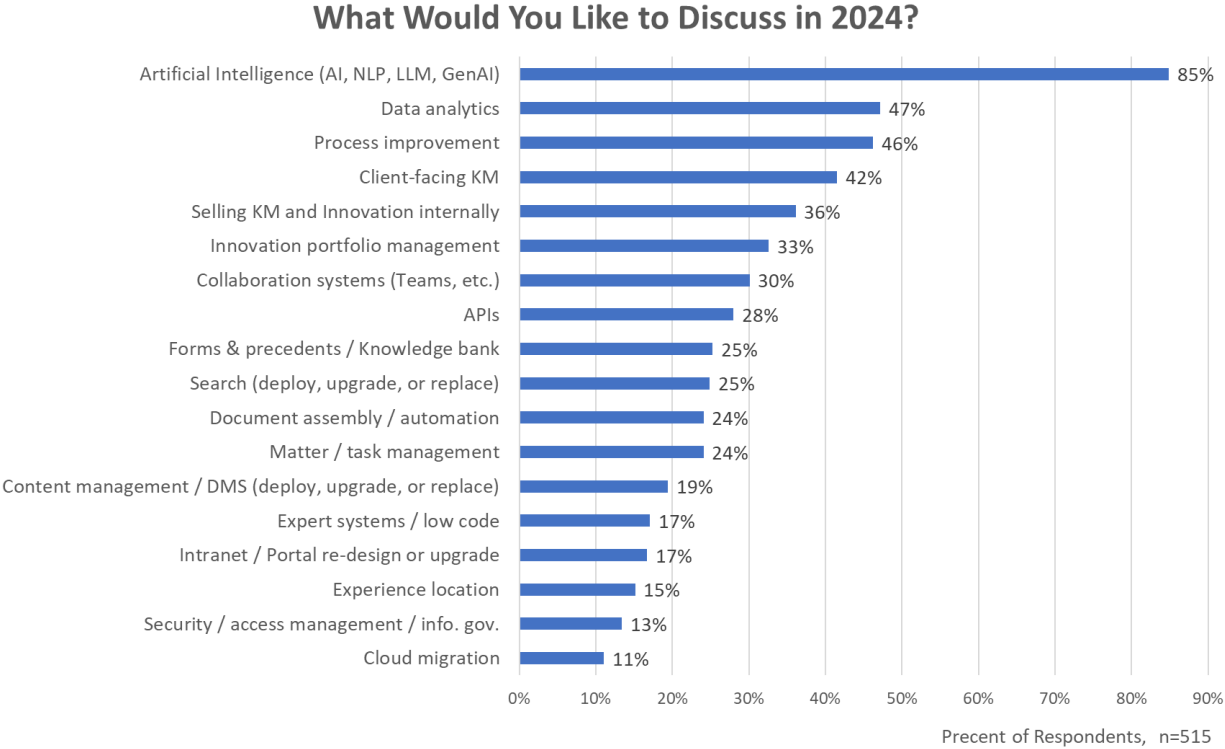
Last year, we said that *“even if a major new innovation arises - consider, for example, ChatGPT - it likely only changes a small portion of what a team does,”* no one could have guessed the Pandora’s box the release in November 2022 would open. That notwithstanding, the planned shift in work - which looks at the delta between what individuals voted as should and did work on - was relatively small at 13%. The small delta is driven by the interest in LLMs and the rapid deployment of applications/experiments.

Another interesting insight is the relatively stable interest in Data Analytics, Process Improvement, and Selling KM and Innovation Internally, with only minor percentage fluctuations. Given the substantial leap in AI focus, one might have expected these areas to experience a more notable decline as resources and attention pivot towards AI initiatives. However, the data suggests that while AI is becoming a centerpiece of innovation, it has not eclipsed the value placed on continuous improvement and knowledge management.

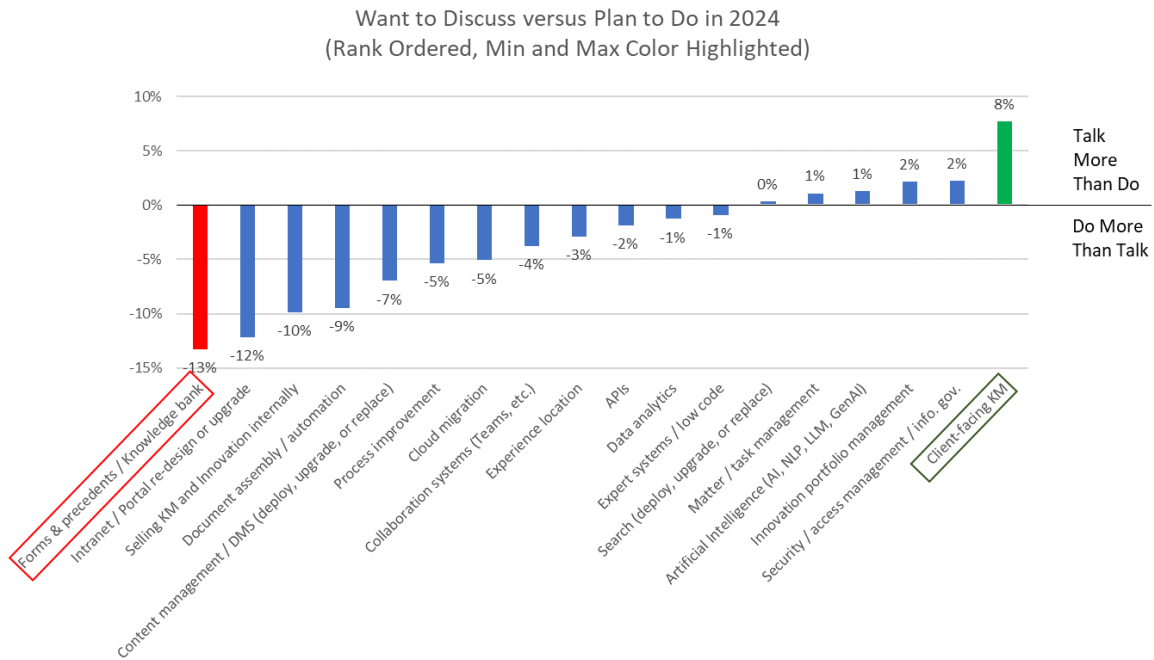
The data also reveals a decreased focus on Security/Access Management/Info. Gov. from 12% to 11%, which is unexpected given the growing concerns around data privacy and cyber threats. A heightened focus on security would typically be anticipated, and the slight decrease is counterintuitive. Still, it could signal that more new technologies have security certifications or these tasks increasingly fall on other specialized functions such as IT, Risk, Cybersecurity, or Information Governance teams.

Discussion Interests versus 2023 Plans

The chart below shows what the respondents would like to discuss at SKILLS. Non-blank responses only.



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



In a notable shift for 2023, SKILLS survey respondents express a heightened interest in discussing Artificial Intelligence (AI), with a remarkable 85% eager to engage in conversations around AI at the SKILLS conference, outpacing its already significant planned work increase. This pivot to AI discussions points to a community ready to dive deep into the implications and integration of AI with the broader legal tech ecosystem.

Contrast this with the continued reduced interest in discussing Forms & Precedents/Knowledge Bank, suggesting these topics are now routine and require maintenance rather than additional discussion. Security/Access Management/Info. Gov. also sees a dip in discussion interest, reflecting confidence in established systems or a shift towards specialized governance roles.

Conclusion

The concluding message for 2024 SKILLS is clear: AI is no longer just on the horizon—it's here, commanding the attention of over 84% of legal professionals ready to roll up their sleeves and harness its potential. This leap in AI focus from last year isn't just about adoption; it's about integration and exploration, as seen in the vibrant discussions around AI's role in evolving legal practices.

The enthusiasm for AI is complemented by a practical focus on foundational aspects like process improvement and knowledge management—areas that continue to be vital despite the

allure of newer tech. Several respondents commented on work done so far, and will continue into the new year in developing client-facing KM solutions. For many, the individuals pulled to AI projects will likely be the same individuals whose expertise will be required to develop and deploy client-facing KM systems. We look forward to the survey next year to examine the results in this area.

The comments from the survey reveal a community that's actively experimenting and innovating. From introducing new innovation departments to the strategic deployment of generative AI tools and client portals, there's a sense of excitement and a drive to push boundaries. Even traditionally staid areas like forms and precedents are being reimagined with AI, reflecting a broader trend of technology not just supporting but actively shaping legal services.

In this climate of change, one prediction stands firm: even as new innovations like the proliferation of large language models emerge, the core of a team's work remains steady, underpinned by a desire to improve, streamline, and innovate responsibly.