



WHITE PAPER



Two Challenges, One Solution:

API Integrations in Legal Technology

It's no secret that law firms are under increasing financial pressure, fighting for market share against alternative legal service providers and tightening their budgets in recognition of the increased efficiencies afforded by technological advances such as artificial intelligence (AI). In this ever-more-competitive marketplace, firms grapple with an intense push to do more with less.

But the proliferation of technology—and technological solutions—has created two challenges that work against law firms. First, with the need to constantly switch between myriad different applications, programs, and platforms—not to mention devices and locations—lawyers are finding their workflows disrupted. Second, IT departments and CIOs must either continually invest in new technology, requiring corresponding financial expenditures, or risk falling behind the innovation curve.

Fortunately, there's a solution to both of these challenges: developing an integrated workflow that connects different programs using application programming interfaces (APIs). Because API integrations allow multiple programs to communicate with each other, they offer a way to consolidate attorney workflows while allowing IT departments to spend less on technology and better leverage their existing tools.



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The Challenge for Lawyers: Missing Functions and Disrupted Workflows

While technology promises to solve many common problems that lawyers face, its implementation isn't always smooth. Today, with an explosion in new products, services, applications, platforms, and devices, lawyers may find themselves fighting against their technology more than working with it. This challenge takes two different, yet related, forms.

First, while firms have invested in sophisticated tools to store and process data, and attorneys have gained tools that make distinct tasks easier, these functions are often only available within a discrete program or platform. This renders those tools less useful, since they don't span the entire workflow. For example, while using a collaboration platform or email app on a mobile device, attorneys may not be able to access their standard document proofreading software or clean their files' metadata. When an attorney queries an AI platform or identifies and summarizes legal research in a research tool, those solutions don't return results directly into the document that the attorney is drafting. Similarly, while drafting a document, an attorney may not be able to easily access existing content or identify the firm's most used clauses, which are stored in a separate document-management system.

The effect is that attorney workflows are continually disrupted, due to the unavailability of critical tools across different applications. Over and over, attorneys must switch programs to complete all their tasks. Under the relentless time pressure that often defines legal work, this repeated interruption can lead attorneys to resist new tools or technologies, viewing them as yet another task to manage rather than a time and effort-saving solution.

Second, attorneys may only be able to access certain capabilities from specific locations or devices. This is at odds with the way attorneys work—in the office, at home, during a commute, or on-site. Whether it's due to the switch between a work laptop and a personal device, or the inaccessibility of the firm's intranet from off-site locations, attorneys often cannot make productive use of their time outside the office.

The combined effect is that lawyers cannot readily access the full panoply of services they have in a single cohesive workflow that functions equally well wherever they may be and whatever device they may be using. Rather than an intuitive, smooth, seamless experience, lawyers must repeatedly remember and take the time to switch tasks, disrupting their workflow and introducing unnecessary drag and delay. This can have the undesirable side effect of discouraging attorneys from adding new technologies or solutions.

And these disruptions do not exclusively impact the attorneys in a firm.

The Challenge for IT and CIOs: Optimizing Tech Budgets

CIOs and IT departments also need to maximize their return on investment, getting the full value from each technological upgrade. If a solution isn't consistently driving value, or if it only works on one device or platform, its adoption rate is likely to lag, rendering its cost per use prohibitive. And it's simply inefficient to spend money on a single-point solution when the capability it offers already exists elsewhere. Leveraging existing tools in additional settings is obviously more cost-effective than buying several tools to solve the same problem in different locations.

In addition, IT teams may not have the resources they need to keep up with the full range of systems, interactions, and devices that each attorney uses, particularly when it comes to personal devices that IT lacks administrative access to. With multiple disparate systems and tools, it can be prohibitively difficult to streamline the IT infrastructure and create a flexible and secure ecosystem that supports attorneys' dynamic workflows.

But firms can't just step back from the problem and ignore new tools and technologies. Investing in cutting-edge technologies demonstrates the firm's commitment to long-term growth, customer satisfaction, and innovation. Clients want to hear that firms are employing automation and smart technology to save their own money. Firms therefore must create a competitive growth strategy that aligns with their investments in technology.

Fortunately, both of these problems can be solved with the power of API integrations.

The Solution: Integrating Applications Through APIs

APIs essentially act as a go-between that allows an application to communicate and interact with another application. They set forth protocols that establish how those interactions occur, allowing for creative relationships between different programs and functions. With nearly 21,000 APIs available, you're already using one every day and might not even realize it*.

For example, Facebook and Instagram leverage an API to sync your social accounts, and task management platforms like Asana connect with Google Drive or your calendar to link documents and dates directly with associated tasks.

Instead of using dozens of limited point solutions, each solving a tiny problem but producing another drag on the system (and another line item on the budget), APIs allow programs to interact with one another, so their functions are available where and when they're needed. That way, firms can focus on supporting the major technological solutions they need—those tools that their attorneys already know and love.

* ProgrammableWeb API directory

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The Results: Better Workflows and Better Business Management

With API integrations, lawyers can enjoy access to their favorite tools and functions in any location and with the application they're working with. Content from a document repository is available when and where the attorney needs it, whether that involves drafting a document in Microsoft Word or writing an email. Proofreading and metadata-cleaning or document-repair functions are accessible not only in Word but also in collaboration platforms such as Dropbox. The most sophisticated AI tools can be used across different programs rather than only within their own constrained silo.

By integrating multiple assets, this device and platform-agnostic access smooths out the bumps between different tasks, eliminating workflow disruptions and task- and program-switching. What's more, attorneys can seamlessly work from remote locations without sacrificing access to their essential tools.

Again, this integration benefits more than just attorneys. IT departments can reduce their support needs and their budgets, as they're better able to leverage shared resources. This increase in product usage drives up the return on investment, making it easier to justify tech spending without exceeding limited budgets. Integrating within secure platforms with managed access controls also improves overall data security and simplifies updating and ongoing product management.

Last but not far from least, a firm that uses API integrations to streamline its workflows gains a considerable competitive advantage. By fully leveraging and coordinating its technological resources, the firm lowers its clients' costs while giving clients the benefit of all the firm's advanced technology at every turn. Plus, creating an integrated

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workflow demonstrates that the firm is forward-thinking and willing to innovate, thus ensuring clients that it will navigate future disruptions with agility.

In sum, API integrations allow attorneys to use their familiar tools and workflows smoothly and without interruption, while providing the benefit of those tools across more applications and on different devices. This helps attorneys deliver better client service for less money, while the firm reduces its spending on unnecessary or duplicative technology and product support. IT departments can simplify their services and infrastructure while mitigating security risks.

In some cases, APIs may be available at no added cost. Many programs have built APIs that are accessible to customers, who can either request an integration with a specific solution or build their own.

Litera supports attorneys in achieving flexible workflows and supports IT departments and CIOs in better controlling their technology and spend. Contact us to learn more about how our open APIs can help you create, check, and collaborate on better documents no matter where you are or what you're working on.



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