The Operational Readiness Gap

How AI Is Creating New Bottlenecks in Legal Support

ALA® Association of Legal Administrators

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Meet Your Host



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What You'll Leave With

- A maturity lens
- Five pressure points to watch
- One owned next step



2026 BigHand Legal Workflow
Leadership Report

Scan to download
the full research

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AI is not simply reducing pressure. It is redistributing it.

Pressure is showing up in new places across legal support.

35%
report increased reliance on lawyers for administrative tasks

46%
say additional supervision is needed for AI-generated outputs

Only **27%**
are redesigning roles to support AI

AI adoption is outpacing **operational redesign**.

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Where is your firm today?

Assessing AI readiness through a maturity lens

01

REACTIVE

AI added to existing ways of working

- Roles largely unchanged
- Ownership remains informal informal
- Success measured by adoption adoption
- Limited visibility of demand demand and performance

02

TRANSITIONAL

Operating model is beginning to adapt

- Tasks and workflows being reviewed
- Ownership and supervision becoming clearer
- Gaps in visibility and measurement remain
- Impact is inconsistent

03

ADVANCED

Work is designed to flow around AI

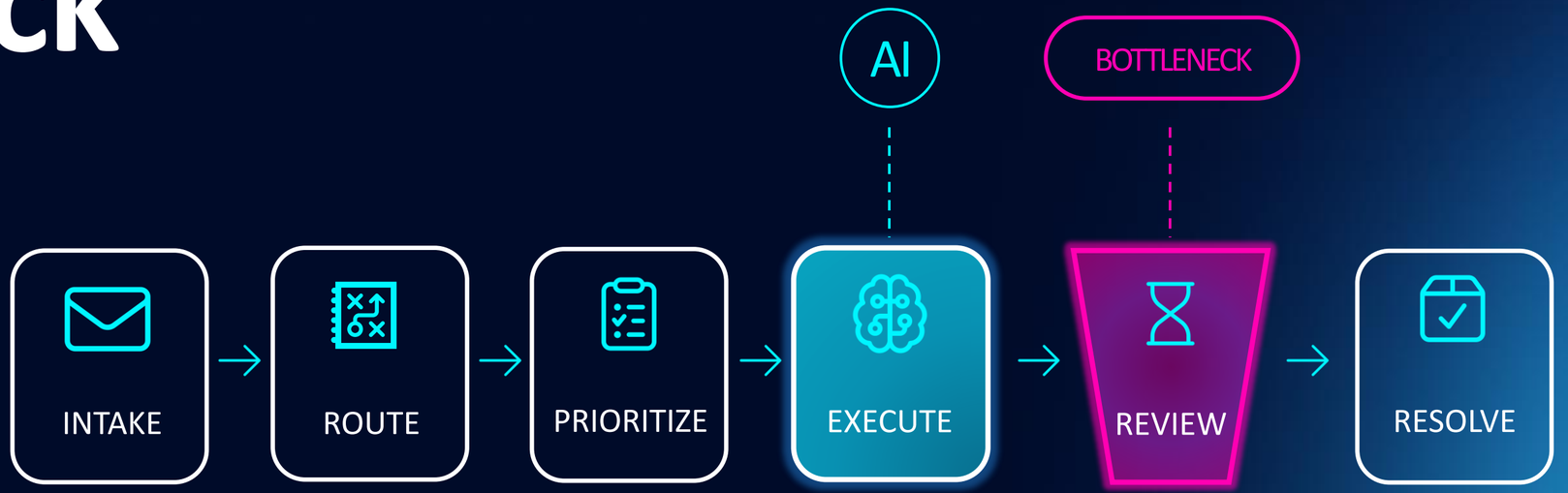
- Work routed to the right resource
- Quality ownership is defined defined
- Demand, capacity, and bottlenecks are visible
- Support teams can scale with with confidence

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The Bottleneck Principle

AI can accelerate a task without accelerating the system.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The same is true of workflows.



More output
= more review

Faster completion
= more downstream pressure

Greater automation
= more exceptions to manage

Remove one constraint, and another becomes the limiting factor.

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Where are bottlenecks likely to occur?

Pressure points exposed or intensified by AI

Fragmented Demand
Unstructured entry points

Quality Control
More output to review

Harder to Scale
Reliance on key people

INTAKE

OWNERSHIP

SUPERVISION

VISIBILITY

WORKFORCE

GOVERNANCE

Unclear Responsibility
Who owns the work?

Limited Oversight
Leaders can’t see workflows

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How operationally ready is your firm?

Use the scorecard link in the chat – or scan the QR code here.

Can your firm clearly answer…

- Does work enter through a consistent process?
- Does every task have a clearly defined owner?
- Is quality control for AI-assisted work clearly resourced?
- Can leaders see demand, capacity, and turnaround?
- Can support scale without relying on key individuals?

AI Operational Readiness Scorecard

Scan to download

0-3
Early Stage
Firefighting is default

4-7
Developing
Some structure, gaps remain

8-10
Advanced
Primed to scale AI value

Which single indicator, if fixed first, would have the biggest impact on your readiness?

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Redesign the flow, not just the task

Spot the bottlenecks. Remove the friction.



Structured intake



Clear ownership



Visible demand



Measurable outcomes



Scalable support

A practical place to start?

Email intake.

The front door to legal support.

Questions?

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