

PRESS RELEASE

**New *Future Ready Lawyer* Survey from Wolters Kluwer
Finds Trends and Technology Accelerating as Legal Sector Moves Beyond the Pandemic**

June 15, 2021 – The global pandemic has accelerated the ongoing transformation of the legal profession, with trends and priorities gaining new ground across the board over the past year, according to the findings of a new report from Wolters Kluwer – the [2021 Future Ready Lawyer: Moving Beyond the Pandemic](#).

The ability to use technology to optimize performance is more important than ever, with 80% of lawyers reporting that their needs for technology solutions have increased as a result of the pandemic. The survey confirms that a majority of legal professionals see digital transformation and technology as key drivers of improved performance, efficiency and productivity ahead as they project increased use of and investment in technology solutions. Yet, the survey found gaps in how well-prepared legal professionals are for what is fast becoming the new normal.

The *2021 Wolters Kluwer Future Ready Lawyer Survey: Moving Beyond the Pandemic*, including insights from 700 legal professionals across the U.S. and nine European countries, examines trends and how well-prepared organizations are to drive higher performance, post-pandemic. The independent survey, issued in March 2021, offers a unique perspective from legal professionals emerging from the pandemic with a better understanding of its impact and implications for the future. The report also includes 2020-2021 comparative data featuring professionals' insights in the weeks before the pandemic took hold, as compared to their views today.

Findings of the *2021 Wolters Kluwer Future Ready Lawyer Survey* are [available in this report](#), which also includes legal industry leaders' analysis of the pandemic's impact on the legal sector and what's ahead.

"The *2021 Future Ready Lawyer Survey* findings show clearly that the transformation of the legal profession has been accelerated by the pandemic," said Martin O'Malley, Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory Executive Vice President and Managing Director. "Trends such as the importance of legal technology, the volume and complexity of information, changing client expectations, the need for improved performance and productivity, and new ways of working all gained momentum in the past year. Increasingly, professionals see digital transformation and technology at the center of their success moving forward."

Key Survey Findings

Overall Trends

Following an exceptionally challenging year, lawyers expect the trends they've already been facing to accelerate across the board. The top trends expected to have the most impact are:

- Increasing Importance of Legal Technology – 77%
- Coping with Increased Volume and Complexity of Information – 77%
- Meeting Changing Client/Leadership Expectations – 76%
- Ability to Acquire and Retain Talent – 76%
- Emphasis on Improved Efficiency/Productivity – 75%.

Across all trends, however, there is a significant gap between trends and readiness to address them: 36% or fewer lawyers say their organization is very prepared to keep pace with these trends.

Client-Firm Relationships

Faced with the need to improve productivity, corporate legal departments are more aggressively turning to technology solutions and they are pressuring law firms to do the same:

- Within three years, 91% of legal departments will ask prospective firms about their technology use – a 10-point increase over 2020.
- An increasing number of corporate legal departments expect that the law firms they work with:
 - Use Technology to Deliver Best Service Possible – 78%
 - Use Technology to Drive Productivity/Efficiency – 76%.

The *Future Ready Lawyer Survey* also revealed significant gaps between legal departments' expectations and law firms' ability to deliver on them. The disconnect may be impacting client satisfaction: only 30% of corporate legal departments are very satisfied with their law firms, and an increasing number plan to switch firms: 24% say they are very likely to switch firms compared to just 13% in 2020.

Corporate Legal Departments

The pandemic intensified pressures on legal departments, as they simultaneously tackled bigger workloads and smaller budgets. Legal departments participating in the *2021 Future Ready Lawyer Survey* say their top challenges are:

- Automating Routine Tasks and Leveraging Technology in Work Processes
- Reducing/Controlling Outside Legal Costs
- Managing the Growing Demands on the Corporate Legal Department.

To help overcome these challenges, 57% of legal departments report they plan to increase their investment in technology over the next three years, while 84% say they will make Greater Use of Technology to Improve Productivity moving forward.

Faced with both cost-cutting and growing demands, legal departments report that they are making changes to how work gets done, and who does it. The majority of legal departments are planning to make Greater Use of: Third-party or Outsourced Resources (77%); Insourcing of Legal Work (76%); Contract Staff (75%); Alternative Legal Service Providers (73%); and Non-legal Staff (70%). Each of these areas showed increases over 2020 levels.

Yet, with change comes challenge. Just 28% of corporate lawyers believe their organization is very prepared to Effectively Implement Change Management Processes, and only 27% say they are very prepared to Implement Transformational Technology.

Law Firms

Law firms also report accelerated changes as they move ahead. They are responding to heightened client expectations, investing and innovating at higher levels to drive efficiency and deliver value.

According to the *Future Ready Lawyer Survey*, the areas where most law firms anticipate change in how they deliver services over the next three years include:

- 82% expect Greater Specialization of Legal Services Offered by Firms
- 81% expect Greater Use of Technology to Improve Productivity
- 78% expect Increased Emphasis on Innovation
- 78% expect Greater Collaboration and Transparency Between Firms and Clients.

Overall, 63% of law firms say they will increase their technology investment, and as firms focus on clients' changing expectations 74% report they are Investing in New Technology to Support Firm Operations and Client Work. However, there's still progress to be made as today only 32% are very prepared to Use Technology to Be More Productive and just 28% are very prepared to Use Technology to Improve Client Services.

Like corporate legal departments, law firms are also looking at new ways of working. Compared to 2020, more law firms now anticipate Greater Use of Non-legal Staff (69%); More Self-service by Clients (68%); Greater Use of Third-party or Outsourced Resources (68%); and Greater Use of Contract Staff (65%).

The full report, which also includes special sections on the impact of the pandemic, the performance of technology leaders and insights from legal industry luminaries can be downloaded at [2021 Wolters Kluwer Future Ready Lawyer Survey: Moving Beyond the Pandemic](#).

About the 2021 Wolters Kluwer Future Ready Lawyer Survey

The *2021 Future Ready Lawyer Survey: Moving Beyond the Pandemic* from Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory included quantitative interviews with 700 lawyers in law firms, legal departments and business services firms across the U.S. and nine European countries – the United Kingdom, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, France, Spain, Poland, Belgium and Hungary – to examine how client expectations, technology and other factors are affecting the future of law and how legal organizations are prepared to address them. The survey was conducted online for Wolters Kluwer by a leading international research organization from March 4 to 18, 2021.

Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory

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