

Legal work inside the organisation

A working note on repeatable legal work, artificial intelligence and explicit responsibility for decisions.

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THE PURPOSE	Begin with the decision or action the work must support. Understand how the organisation works, then identify what may hinder it: a rule, a contract, a fact not yet known, a decision without an owner, or work that cannot be repeated with confidence. The useful response may be legal, organisational or technical. From first principles, legal work is useful when it removes friction now and leaves better judgment behind. The record, the sources, the standard, the checks and the reasons for decisions should remain available to the people who will need them next.
WHAT SHOULD STAY	Some work needs outside counsel: independent judgment, representation or specialist knowledge. The organisation should still retain the record and the learning it will need again. When recurring work is sent out, the result should return with its sources, reasoning and decision history. Activity can be recorded. A more useful measure is whether the next decision will be better, whether recurring work can be done with less friction, and whether the organisation can find and test the reasons for its earlier choices.
WHAT AI CHANGES	AI tools can assist with first-pass reading, extraction and comparison. They can help identify dates, compare drafts, build source-linked chronologies and repeat defined checks. This can make broader review practical and expand what a team can prepare and test for itself. Responsibility remains human. The tools can omit relevant material, misread a source or state more than the evidence supports. A named person must decide what the record means and what the organisation will do. Where the work is legal advice, a lawyer verifies the law and stands behind it. The organisation also decides where its information is processed. Sensitive work may require tools within systems it controls. An external service may be suitable only after access, retention, reuse, transfer and disclosure have been understood. The organisation chooses the system. The model does not.
RECORDS AND PROTECTION	Legal protection depends on the applicable law, the material, its purpose, the people involved and the process. A record is not protected merely because a legal team created, received or holds it. Identify the governing rules and their conditions before deciding how the work will be done and recorded. Before building a system, decide what to record, where to keep it, who may access it, how long to retain it and when independent legal advice is needed. Treat applicable rules on confidentiality, privilege, professional secrecy, compulsory disclosure and cross-border access as design conditions. Map the providers, access routes and locations involved before sensitive material leaves a controlled environment. Labels do not determine protection.

CONTROLS	PURPOSE Name the decision or action the work must support.
	SOURCES Link every material fact and statement of law to its source.
	STATUS Mark what is established, contested, open, computed or withheld.
	LIMITS State what could not be grounded and what was left outside the scope.
	CHANGE Record what changed, when it changed and why.
	OWNERSHIP Keep the record, standard, checks and decision history with the organisation.
	RESPONSIBILITY Name the person who reviews the work and answers for the judgment.
TRANSACTIONS	Measure each draft against the organisation's own standard: the terms it accepts, the departures it will trade and the ones it will not. Show each change, its effect and the decision it requires. What reaches the person who decides should be short. Each negotiation can improve the standard. Record what was accepted, what it cost and why. Over time, the organisation can see where terms are moving, which clauses cause trouble and where its own position should change.
DISPUTES	Understand the record first. Gather the contracts, messages and archives. Log what cannot be read. Build a source-linked chronology. Identify the few findings that change the outcome, the exposure or the next step. Show the matter as a live set of findings, amounts and dates. When a fact is established or a deadline passes, the view changes with it. Keep the reasoning and sources one step below, so each part can be opened and checked.
WORK ON A SCHEDULE	Some work should run without a fresh request: check new drafts against the standard, test a position when a deadline nears, watch the questions the organisation has decided matter. Once tested and assigned, the schedule belongs to the organisation. The team starts from a current view, not from zero.
OUTSIDE JUDGMENT	Independent outside judgment may be needed where there is conflict, contested fact, negotiation, court, state power or a protected right. It can also give the people who decide a needed second view. The division is simple. Keep memory and repeatable work inside. Bring in judgment, representation or challenge when it is needed. A source-linked record lets an outside lawyer begin with the question instead of first learning the organisation.

**A PRACTICAL
START**

1. Choose one recurring task with a clear decision.
2. Gather the sources and write the present standard.
3. Build a check that cites its grounds and states its limits.
4. Test it on earlier work before using it on new work.
5. Give a named person ownership of the process and its review.

A useful first inventory is the organisation's own legal record. Identify the material held by outside lawyers and determine what the organisation is entitled to receive or retain. This shows where its legal memory sits and what should be brought into a controlled record.

Build before the next urgent matter. Use the organisation's own systems, licences and people. The work is complete when the responsible people can run it, test it and improve it.

THE POINT

The aim is not to replace lawyers with tools. It is to put tools where they help, judgment where it belongs and knowledge where the organisation can use it again.

THE AUTHOR

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