

A large, stylized cloud graphic composed of a grid of small blue squares, with a network of blue lines and dots connecting the squares, set against a dark blue background with server racks and circuitry.

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## **From Stagnation to Adaptability: How SaaS Transforms Legal Operations**

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*The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday's logic.*

— Peter Drucker



## About Fulcrum GT

Fulcrum GT provides an innovative end-to-end digital business platform for the Legal and Professional Services markets. Our true cloud SaaS solutions incorporate over 20,000 industry-specific features built on best practices, are ready to use from day one and are deployed in the quickest time-to-value in the industry. We connect the professional services ecosystem through a legal marketplace and business platform that commercializes and digitizes processes and the exchange of data, from source to pay.

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## From Stagnation to Adaptability: How SaaS Transforms Legal Operations

This paper explores how a SaaS practice management platform enables law firms to break free from the inertia of traditional, waterfall-based system upgrades. Instead of waiting years for major change, firms can adopt improvements incrementally, aligning system enhancements with evolving business needs.



### Introduction

Law firms today operate in an environment shaped by rising client expectations, regulatory scrutiny, and intensifying competition. To thrive, legal businesses must continually improve their operational models, not only to enhance efficiency and profitability, but also to respond swiftly to shifting market demands. Yet many firms remain tethered to legacy systems and waterfall-style upgrades, which impede progress and limit adaptability.

This paper examines how moving to a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) practice management platform enables legal operations to transcend stagnation, foster true adaptability, and drive sustained business value.

### Breaking the Cycle of Stagnant System Upgrades

Historically, law firms have relied on major, periodic upgrades to core systems, a process that is disruptive, costly, and slow to deliver

value. This “waterfall” approach has left many firms unable to pivot quickly in the face of new opportunities or risks. According to the PwC Law Firms’ Survey 2024, 52% of the UK’s top 100 firms express concern about the speed of technological change and their ability to respond effectively. Forrester’s 2023 Legal Operations Survey reinforces this, with 58% of legal professionals citing slow technology adoption as a leading barrier to innovation within their firms.



SaaS practice management platforms challenge this paradigm by enabling a continuous improvement model. Rather than waiting years for the next upgrade or performing tactical enhancements, firms receive regular, incremental updates. Gartner predicts that by 2026, nearly 60% of practices will have shifted from periodic, large-scale system overhauls across supporting systems to continuous delivery models, drastically improving their ability to meet evolving business requirements. This approach empowers firms to align their systems with current needs, respond to market changes more rapidly, and free up internal resources for higher-value work.

### **SaaS vs. Cloud: Why SaaS is Superior for Law Firm Operations**

As law firms consider digital transformation, it is critical to distinguish between generic cloud hosting and true Software-as-a-Service. Moving systems to the cloud, commonly via Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), means a third party manages the hardware, servers, and networking, but the law firm retains responsibility for application maintenance, upgrades, integration, and patching. SaaS, by contrast, is a step

beyond. Both infrastructure and substantial parts of the application layer, including security, upgrades, integrations, and compliance and in some cases, enhancements are managed by the provider. This allows firms to access a constantly updated, best-in-class platform without bearing the maintenance burden. Fulcrum takes this a step further by allowing customers to tailor the platform to their needs and nuances without deviating from a clean core. This eliminates the age old “roadmap” excuse for hampering progress. According to Gartner, organisations using SaaS platforms experience up to 50% faster deployment times and a significantly lower TCO than those using cloud-hosted and self-managed applications.

Crucially, SaaS providers deliver security updates and compliance enhancements proactively, addressing regulatory needs without operational disruption. Accenture’s Legal Technology Survey 2024 found that 80% of legal sector leaders identify automatic compliance and security management as key drivers for adopting SaaS over traditional cloud models. Additionally, SaaS platforms facilitate seamless application-layer



innovation, including AI and analytics, by centrally rolling out new features, ensuring all users benefit without complex migrations or manual interventions.

### **Operational Flexibility and Real-Time Adaptability**

A unified SaaS platform enables a level of operational flexibility that legacy and even cloud-hosted self-managed solutions cannot match. Frequent, low-disruption updates keep systems current and responsive to changing priorities, turning change management from a disruptive event into a continuous, manageable process. Law firms can adjust workflows, processes, and client services quickly and safely.

The operational benefits are tangible. Accenture’s 2024 survey reports law firms adopting SaaS solutions see up to a 35% improvement in operational efficiency, driven by real-time visibility, workflow integration, and better resource allocation. PwC’s 2024 survey reinforces that improving working capital and enhancing client and account management planning are now top operational priorities for law firms, priorities that are directly supported by SaaS’s integrated, up-to-date analytics.

Gartner research further finds legal departments, as opposed to law firms, using integrated SaaS platforms reduce operational redundancies by as much as 25%, enabling leaner operations and faster

decision-making. This adaptability is increasingly essential as legal clients demand more transparency, quicker reporting, and better service.

### **Leveraging Mature Technologies for Value, Not Hype**

While technologies like AI and automation are mature, their potential in law firms often goes unrealised due to fragmented systems and data silos. PwC’s 2024 survey found that nearly half of top UK firms expect AI to deliver significant productivity gains, but few have published measurable results. Accenture’s 2024 survey similarly reports that 47% of legal executives believe AI initiatives currently underdeliver on strategic value.

Unified SaaS platforms solve these challenges by providing the consistent data and seamless integration required for thoughtful, value-adding use of advanced technologies. Gartner notes that law firms with integrated SaaS environments are twice as likely to achieve tangible value from AI projects compared to those with legacy, cloud-hosted systems. With SaaS, firms can progress beyond basic automation—using

AI for predictive analytics, automated triage, smarter billing, and richer client insight.

### **Building an Adaptive Operational Mindset**

Adopting SaaS is not just a technical upgrade, but a catalyst for broader operational and cultural change. Governance, security, and compliance are more critical than ever. PwC notes that 90% of law firms now rank cyber threats and governance as top concerns. SaaS models address these with continuous security updates, centralised controls, and audit-ready compliance features reducing operational risk and freeing up resources for innovation. Gartner notes that SaaS can reduce security vulnerabilities by nearly 40% over traditional approaches. Accenture found that 80% of legal leaders cite renewed governance as a critical SaaS benefit, highlighting increased confidence in their technology roadmap.

**” law firms adopting SaaS solutions see up to a 35% improvement in operational efficiency**



**A Platform for Thoughtful Innovation**

Most importantly, SaaS platforms create a technology environment where innovation is strategic and value-driven. Continuous delivery and integration enable legal operations to test, refine, and scale new tools like AI and automation in a low-risk, high-impact way. This environment makes it possible for law firms to use AI in a targeted and thoughtful way from streamlining processes to supporting better decision-making and deeper client insight turning innovation into an operational strength.

**Evolving with Purpose**

Ultimately, the SaaS model gives law firms the adaptability required to thrive in a volatile market. By embedding flexibility and continuous improvement into their core systems, firms can anticipate change and proactively shape their futures. Instead of reacting under pressure, they can make data-driven, strategic decisions, applying technologies like AI in value-adding ways and evolving operations with purpose.

Industry research is clear: embracing SaaS is not simply a technical upgrade,

but a transformation in how services are delivered and managed. Law firms that move now will position themselves for long-term competitiveness, resilience, and sustained value creation.

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Neil Butten is Managing Director (UK) at Fulcrum GT, where he leads on product development and specialises in client delivery across the firm's global legal and professional services portfolio. He has successfully overseen two of the largest and most complex implementations in the industry, delivering high-value transformation at scale. Neil's current responsibilities include executive relationship management, pre-sales leadership, and advising clients on business-as-usual strategy and

longer-term operational planning. He is a trusted adviser to clients navigating the delivery and adoption of Fulcrum's innovative finance and billing technologies. Prior to Fulcrum GT, Neil served as Global Business Process Architect for Norton Rose Fulbright, one of the world's largest law firms, and held a senior advisory role in the finance transformation function at Deloitte. He also provides strategic advice to the executive leadership of a children's charity, supporting its development and operational priorities.



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