doeLEGAL™
A Questel Company

Questel

# Legal Tech Buyers Guide
## Evaluating Legal Ops Solutions
## eBook

## Implementing a proven process drives successful outcomes.

# Introduction

Today's business environment is fraught with hurdles and minefields. Who can you trust to guide your team to the best decision? Corporate legal departments are taking a hard look at advanced LegalTech as a means to meet their increased workload while offering a greater contribution to corporate goals. Legal technology provides the greatest return on the investment, but because legal technology evolves constantly, the evaluation process can seem rather daunting.

Questel and doeLEGAL have created the 7-Step process to generate more winning outcomes for you and to make this evaluation process as easy and efficient as possible. With the infographic below, you can begin using this proven process right away. You can start at the beginning and work through each of the seven steps. You can also use it as a guide for creating your own evaluation plan based on these steps. Or, if you're in mid-process, you can identify areas where to get a second opinion. The process should remain a work-in-progress to gain the most value from it. Take a look at each step and read more about the process to fully understand the benefits each delivers.

## 7 Steps to Successfully Evaluate LegalTech Solutions

**1 Assemble the Team**
Approach leaders in business units that touch yours and consider inviting them on board.

**2 Ask Questions**
Get to the heart of the business issue to identify quantifiable outcomes.

**3 Gauge the Need**
Consider whether the need is significant enough to commit your collective resources.

**4 Set Realistic Goals**
Define quantifiable goals for short-term (through next year) and longer-term (through 3-5 years).

**5 Watch for dealbreakers**
Discuss what could jeopardize a decision.

**6 Gather Evidence**
Collect data from all sources to support your findings.

**7 Sharpen Best Practices**
Check out what other teams consider best practices.

## The Goals of This eBook

**Overarching Goal:** To help Legal teams gain acceptance for new LegalTech solutions. In order for Legal to succeed, they often must provide a holistic solution that addresses their needs and those of other business units. This process identifies solutions that can overcome challenges for the entire business ecosystem.

**Create structure and focus:** To guide the process and make sure everyone is "marching in the same direction," you need to create a plan and strategy to guide it. Begin with **talking points** in defined categories such as people, process, innovation, and technology. These points will create the structure of your evaluation steps.

## 1    Assemble a Team

**Identify champions in different business units that could benefit from the new technology and invite them to the team.**

This diverse group might help redirect the conversation from identifying symptoms to identifying what drives change to identify business issues more clearly. Escalating costs, for example, represent common issues in virtually all industries and departments. If cutting legal spend by 20% is your goal, it flows from the business objective of reducing costs – familiar to any number of teams in your organization.

Knowing who will be involved in making decisions may help steer you to who to include on your evaluation team. Plan your strategy around finding the right champions to drive the best results.

Bringing together diverse teams to deconstruct the challenge and create a way to express it gives everyone a sense of empowerment. With other teams in the conversation, you benefit from their varied expertise, insights, and possibly even some resources

These talking points may help uncover systemic business issues:
- Find relevant data to advance their mission
- Making faster, better decisions
- Improving department/team efficiency
- Mitigating risk

Once defined, talking points become the core of your plan, including how to address these problems when choosing candidates. Each potential member may have their own ideas on the value an organization expects after issues are resolved.

> **Ninja Tip**: **Build your team by broadening the scope of candidates. Make your team cross-functional, multidisciplinary, and more diverse. The result is a stronger foundational team that can visualize the "big picture" of an entire company's needs, not just Legal's. This method of team-building helps ensure buy-in from other department champions.**

## 2    Ask Incisive Questions

**Get to the heart of any business issues to identify and measure the quantifiable outcomes.**

Once the team is assembled, members will need the right questions to guide them through the assessment process. Following are questions that will help you evaluate providers, but let's start with **the most important questions you might not think to ask**:
- What will a successful legal department solution look like?
- How will it function?
- What are the desired outcomes?

Think it over carefully with your team, and you'll be ready to ask ELM and other system vendors exactly how they will help make that success happen.

**Begin with goals and challenges**
Providers must understand your goals and challenges. To uncover this info, these are among the questions you might address to prospective vendors:
- How will your ELM system help my organization be more efficient and productive?
- What makes your software unique?
- How does your platform help us search and report on legal matters?

**Follow the money**
Ask clear questions about costs and potential extra fees, so ask the tough money questions:
- What is the price or price range?
- What does this include?
- What are the typical add-ons?
- What is the total cost of ownership?

**Dive deep into specifics**
Every business is unique, so ask to reveal everything you need to make an informed decision:
- Which reports are included?
- How much extra will it cost for a custom report?
- Can you import our current historical data?
- Are all matter documents accessible on any web-enabled device?
- What are the costs for custom integration with other software we use?

**Explore implementation**
Ask for details on solution implementation and what's included to avoid surprise fees:
- How does your implementation model work?
- Will we need a dedicated consultant?
- Will your ELM system tax the resources of our IT group?
- How long does implementation for our corporation size typically take?

**Address security**
Assume nothing, and probe deeply to understand security and privacy protocols:
- How secure is your SaaS solution?
- Exactly which security measures do you use?
- Is data stored in a physical location or on virtual servers?
- Will our data have its own instance?

**Evaluate support**
Make sure you know how they handle support, how responsive they will be, and who will be your point of contact. Not all outside vendors include support:
- How does your support work?
- Who handles the training of our team and our external vendors?
- Can you show how your client support responds quickly and effectively?

**What to expect**
Ask probing questions about the vendor's solution throughout the business relationship:
- Which capabilities make your ELM system unique?
- Which of your system's features and functions outperform the competition?
- What is the most compelling reason to adopt your solution?

**Go beyond the FAQs**
Besides asking incisive questions, you might try:
- Asking more open-ended, probing questions that invite dialog.
- Focusing on getting to the heart of what will meet your company-wide needs.
- Refining questions to focus on issues most important to your legal department.

> **Ninja Tip:** **Ask questions that cover your expectations and those of the provider. For less stress and more peace of mind, ask probing questions from the start.**

### 3  Evaluate the Need

**Consider whether the need is significant enough to commit your collective resources.**

Before moving forward with any software demonstrations or budget requests, use this step to help justify the resources – time and money to be spent – or not. There's no sense in wasting time and effort if you can't create a business case to justify the costs of proceeding with the evaluation. This third stage may also help garner support for approval later because of your dedication to completing your due diligence first.

Once again, you'll need your evaluation team to assess each division's needs to apply quantifiable numbers to those needs. There's little chance of getting budget approval for any new tools or service vendor relationships without those numbers.

**Identify critical needs**
Now that you've used the questions from the previous step to identify which service providers and solutions are worth considering, your team can identify the most critical needs and link budget numbers to each one:
- Assemble the team that helped develop relevant questions
- Review the answers together and search for common themes
- Create a vital needs list that must be met as a "go/no-go" decision yardstick.

Drawing a clear separation between critical needs and beneficial improvements ensures you focus on what this technology must do and what may be just a bonus.

**Establish the relative importance**
Create a Project Needs Importance Hierarchy and focus on top priorities first. Critical issues rate higher than just "nice to have" items:
- Which needs absolutely must be met for project success?
- Are there "nice-to-have" capabilities? If so, grade their relative importance.
- What criteria will determine whether a solution is on your shortlist to demo?

**Take a hard look at costs**

Prove the need by quantifying the highest project implementation costs, ongoing cost expectations, and total cost of ownership. There will be a cost associated with not doing anything, even if it's not monetary. It could be related to increased hours to accomplish a task, lack of automation requiring manual work, manual errors, or an inability to manage data effectively:

- What are the quantifiable costs of pursuing a solution?
- What are the cost-related benefits (efficiency, time, money saved) of doing so?
- What are the costs of not doing so?

**Recognize realistic outcomes**

After all stakeholders are heard, you'll have a clearer picture of your collective business needs, their importance, and the related costs. From here, it's easier to conclude whether the change is essential or just part of a future wish list.

Be brutally honest about:

- Precisely which resources (people, money, time) will you need to commit?
- Can you extrapolate numbers from a similar evaluation already completed?
- What are your "dealbreaker" issues: "If it can't do/provide ___, it won't work for us?"

> **Ninja Tip:** Assess the final, realistic savings and costs for each solution, but remember that not everything is about money. Don't forget to add all extrinsic and intrinsic benefits here: added transparency of data, ease of use, and other business-critical factors. Which core issues can it fix, and can the new tech fulfill its promises?

**4**　**Set Clear Goals**

**Define quantifiable goals for short-term (through next year) and longer-term (through 3-5 years).**

**Why set goals?**

Goal-setting is an indispensable part of the evaluation process. Without it, you're "flying blind" with no sure way of knowing if or when you reach your destination.

Clearly defined goals will:

- Make sure teams are clear on expected results and reading from the "same sheet of music."
- Eliminate fear, uncertainty, and doubt
- Ensure activities contribute meaningful results.

One simple method for setting goals is the SMART system, where the letters **SMART** stand for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ctionable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-sensitive:

**Specific** goals are clear and well-defined, such as:

- Creating a new business model for acquisitions that involve Legal, Finance, and Operations.
- Take into account revenue contribution, market share, and go-live schedules that drive in-house team efficiency.

**Measurable** means that the goal must be able to have metrics that are trackable and have relevant numbers associated with them:

- Unmeasurable goal example: Have a more positive impact on public feedback ratings.
- Measurable goal example: Improve public relations ratings 10% by the end of the year.

**Actionable** indicates that our goal will be affected by taking actions directly or driving action in others indirectly. Examples include:

- Leveraging our existing relationships with outside influencers to drive greater attendance to events to hear the value proposition.
- Requiring existing subject matter experts to attend outside sponsorship events, so more prospects hear our value proposition message, see product demos in-person, improve feedback, and boost sales as a result.

**Realistic** relies on real-world probabilities, such as:

- Is the goal attainable with present limitations?
- Does the project allow time to reach the goal?
- Are the resources available to attain the goal?

**Time-sensitive** means establishing a timeframe in which to achieve the goal. Try scheduling milestones in the months to come – mini-steps that keep the team motivated along the way. For example:

- "We will reduce outside vendor costs by 50% in the next six months."
- "Client satisfaction ratings will improve 20% each month by the end of our current FY."

**What does success look like?**
Success can be personal **and** professional. Work as a team to come up with the best outcomes for all. To create your own vision of business success, ask:
- How will these goals drive future business growth?
- Will this project be the foundation for future projects?
- If goals are not met, what are the business and personal repercussions?

You and your team have come together to drive success for your business. Ensure your attitudes and discussions focus on positive **business gains**. Any personal successes (raises, promotions, etc.) will follow naturally.

**Set quantifiable goals for short-term** (now through the first year). First, take small steps:
- Establish short-term goals ("milestones") to keep teams engaged and encouraged.
- Use short-term goals to prove the project in stages, maintain budget funding, and instill confidence that overall goals will be met.

**Set quantifiable goals for long-term** (through the next 3-5 years). Long-term goals help you develop a solid strategy to meet the business goals since:
- They're focused on final outcomes and may include goals that go beyond the project.
- They're usually the results on which the project is ultimately judged.

The internal team created for this project will be a great resource for their individual business unit's desired results. By combining all of these, you'll need to distill these down to the overall business ST & LT goals for evaluating LegalTech solutions.

> **Ninja Tip:** Setting goals early in the project establishes rules and guidelines to keep the evaluation on track and heading in the right direction. Keep it simple; provide visual cues to keep the team laser-focused on the goals. It's as simple as a poster or dry-erase board in the team room.

**5**     **Watch for Dealbreakers**

**Discuss what, if anything, could jeopardize the purchase decision.**

During the evaluation process, dealbreakers are issues that cause failures, and they may change at any point. That's why it's essential to train everyone on the team to watch for obstacles that could threaten the outcome.

**Dealbreakers can be hard to identify**
Keep in mind that:
- They mean different things to different people, so they're harder to pinpoint.
- Beyond mere hurdles, they're issues that can cause project failure.
- These issues may crop up at any time and could remain in constant flux.

**Play the "Devil's Advocate"**
Watch for dealbreakers from different perspectives. This allows an overview of the issue rather than focusing on a symptom. Ask probing questions like:
- "Why is that needed?"
- "What happens if the budget doesn't support what we need to do?"
- "If this helps only Legal and not my department, is it a win for the company?"
- Take a realistic view of all possible or probable issues.
- At each point, ask yourself, "What do we do if this happens?"

**Remember, dealbreakers can be unpredictable**
Expect the unexpected. Make sure the team is ready to handle budget cuts, unforeseen lack of executive support, competitive challenges, and market changes – even though these may be out of the team's control, including:
- Loss of funding.
- Environmental conditions.
- Personal or professional biases.
- Time constraints.

**Accept the fact that change is inevitable**
Given that change – including competitive and market change – is likely, you can take steps to deal with a change before it becomes a dealbreaker.

Recognize that change is inevitable. Prioritize when possible, deal with whatever happens, and avoid seeing change as a dealbreaker. With the proper perspective, you may be able to add valuable data points to the evaluation or address a need to change the scope to guarantee success:

- Anticipate changes.
- Plan contingencies.
- Be proactive, not reactive.

## Communicate!

Once you've identified any impediment to your success, it's time to stop and share with your legal department team members and others involved in the evaluation process. Evaluate and identify the top challenges to resolve and then communicate that to the team. Inform and interact to:

- Evaluate the underlying issue.
- Make sure it can be overcome.
- Get on top of it quickly.

## Take focused action

Dealbreakers will not necessarily deter you if you act thoughtfully and immediately. When you take action, make sure it's working towards the project goal. Focus on why the dealbreaker happened and take corrective, swift actions.:

- Deploy contingency plans to attack the issue head-on.
- Watch for morale changes – you need champions, not nay-sayers on the team.
- Be honest and encouraging; distrust can spell disaster.



## Get it done!

You've faced it head-on. Now you need to evaluate whether success is possible:

- Bring teams together with the main stakeholders.
- Communicate both the issues and the planned fixes.
- Make sure the cost of success is acceptable to the business.

**Ninja Tip:** Dealbreakers are not all doom and gloom. They can come from anywhere and be based on anything. If possible, simply fix them and move on. If not, record the reasons and what led up to the dealbreaker to learn from experience.

**6** Gather Evidence

## Collect data from all sources to support your findings.

Evidence begins with gathering information, but it goes beyond collecting data. As in a court proceeding, **evidence consists of assembling facts that support a conclusion**. In this case, the conclusion is that your legal department needs a Legal Ops solution that will positively impact all areas of the company.

To offer the most relevant information possible, your team will gather the evidence that either proves the solution will meet the needs or doesn't. Either way, your task will be to collect the best information at your disposal to lead to the most intelligent outcome, even if that means you must move in a different direction.

## Include other departments

Look beyond and involve people outside the legal department – from operations to marketing to finance – to get the information to support the evaluation that will ultimately strengthen your position when requesting a technology solution. Adding more departments means your evidence will cover more of the overall business. This simple step adds depth to the evidence for later review.

**Questel**

### Seek the right answers

Earlier, we covered the critical questions to ask. Ensure your conclusions are based on the best evidence. Provide executive summaries, focusing on evidence that proves your outcome without interpretation. Now is the time to gather the answers that build your case:

- What are the long-term and short-term goals in adding the new technology solution?
- What stands in the way of meeting these goals?
- What evidence can the solution provider add to your use case?
- Categorize the answers you have and provide a clear synopsis for decision-makers. Once they see the clear answer, it's easier for them to make an intelligent decision confidently:
- Do their answers stack the evidence in favor of proceeding?
- Do they address your challenges? (If so, make sure to let everyone know.)

### See the solution in action

No solution evaluation is complete without getting under the hood and seeing the tool at work:

- Assemble your team and walk through the key features
- Contact the technology providers for demonstrations or hands-on trial installations that allow your super-users to test it.

Collect the feedback to determine if it lives up to its promises and your expectations:

- Does it meet your requirements?
- Will it work?
- Will it do what you need it to do?
- If not, cut bait and move on. Don't waste any more time on this solution.

### Make sure your solutions will help others

Ask other departments whether the information you've already collected will help them achieve their goals. If not, what else would they need to move forward? Would having them view the demonstration help them identify the value? Inviting others to the hands-on demo adds additional evidence that supports the purchase. Not only will it guide you in making your case for a new legal department solution, but it will also show your genuine support for the entire business.

### Eliminate conflicts of interest

Identifying potential dealbreakers will uncover any facts and opinions that might develop into conflicts of interest between your objectives and those of other departments. Once you have the evidence in hand, more may have surfaced. It's time to ask the key stakeholders about their concerns. If there are other conflicts, ask the provider if the solution can overcome these. Are there workable results?

### Put it all together, in context

A business decision only makes sense when its rationale makes sense. Each decision-maker may have unique criteria, so make sure the evidence presents in a way that supports each desired outcome.

In the light of day, your combined goals should be the storyline you use when gathering your supporting information. **Assemble the story in a manageable and easy-to-read format** with each aspect of evidence clearly outlined and summarized. The best proof loses its impact if it is hard to understand or uses information that isn't relevant to the reader.

### Show it off for stakeholders

Just as courtroom evidence has no value until presented to a jury, your evaluation evidence has no impact until it rests in front of the executive decision-makers who can sign the contract. The evidence should be:

- Concise
- Persuasive
- Problem-solving.

Since the final decision is not up to you or your team, your role is to deliver the most factual and insightful evidence that builds a case to approve the purchase or not. The evidence will provide the facts that you did your homework for the betterment of the **entire company**.

> **Ninja Tip:** The evidentiary step helps save time and effort that might have been wasted on an unworkable solution. Let the evidence point to what you found in a clear and concise way. Personalize reports for each decision-maker in the way that makes the most sense to them.

## 7  Sharpen Best Practices

**Check out what other teams consider their best processes and learn from your own.**

At this stage in the process, your best practices need to be repeatable, consistent, and reliable when looking at bringing in other LegalTech tools.

You began this process believing that your Legal team needed help managing their evolving workload, increasing efficiency, and reducing expenses. And you were right: According to a recent Thomson Reuters survey, in-house teams are increasingly focusing on areas like digital document storage and knowledge management, resulting in far less time spent searching for previously buried organizational knowledge, forms, and templates.



They are also trying to maximize their productive work so that they can contribute more effectively to the department's bottom line. LegalTech solutions often enhance performance to meet the need by helping teams to manage day-to-day tasks better.

While deploying technology is a proven way to accomplish many of your goals, choosing the best solution continues to be a stumbling block. What's more, reports and surveys indicate Legal's responsibilities will continue to escalate due to the impact of the pandemic.

> **Ninja Tip:** Tighter budgets, reduced staff, and a critical need for solutions that manage the increasing workload require a time-tested process to make the right decision on Legal Tech solutions. Ensure your team performs at its peak by measuring that value by taking a hard look at the results to sharpen your best practices.

**Look inward: How did your team perform?**
The first step is to scrutinize the results to date objectively, quantifiably, and honestly. Taking in these dispassionate measurements will give a non-biased vision of your work. Ask for opinions from your team members to grasp the team's overall performance. Other internal stakeholder teams can give unbiased assessments of your performance during the process:
- How well did your team perform versus expectations?
- Which changes would you make to the team for the next round?
- What conflicts arose that delayed moving forward?

**Did you get your answers?**
If you felt there were not enough answers obtained during the process, you should explore how to address it in the next project. Record the plan adjustment for the next round.
- Did any step not provide enough answer value to keep it?
- Were your questions unanswered, or did you receive negative feedback?
- Did the answers you received provide a clear direction at each stage?

If, for whatever reason, the answers weren't readily available, would the process have benefited from waiting for those answers before proceeding? Make sure to make a note of the results.

**Were you able to identify a clear business need?**
The business need is the issue that must be addressed and resolved by bringing in a different solution. A clear need is a driving reason for the change. There simply isn't enough pain to drive a significant change without a demand. If the benefits of bringing in a solution can meet or exceed the need, even budgetary restrictions can be overcome.

Other questions to address:
- Were there any obstacles to identifying enough need to continue?
- Would your business benefit from regular meetings to identify needs before starting the next evaluation?

Questel

**Were your business goals attainable?**

No goal is worth pursuing if it has no chance of being met. Take a hard look at what you thought were your goals. In hindsight, were they truly attainable? If not, keep track of **why** you set that goal. Often, teams change the goal mid-stream to adjust to the reality of the process. Facts tend to cause us to adjust for the next round. It is essential to stay accurate and genuine in appraising your success here.

- Were you able to achieve each goal identified for the project?
- Were you able to measure the progress toward reaching that goal?
- Would you change the goal structure to ensure better achievement?

**Were dealbreakers addressed and overcome?**

Dealbreakers can be the most challenging part to assess in hindsight. Each project is different, and most business issues present their own set of challenges. Evaluate your team's ability to communicate effectively and honestly, as well as their ability to anticipate challenges:

- How effective was your team at identifying dealbreakers?
- How quickly were they addressed?
- Did this derail the process in any way?

Dealbreakers test a team's willingness to seek answers, identify problems quickly, and find a majority resolution to any dealbreakers. Keep members that help you solve these issues.

**Did each step provide enough value?**

No process is perfect for every situation. The idea is to build a method that works for you and your organization. Use the track record to define and refine your process to ensure the best results. This checklist provides a guide to work from when evaluating new solutions:

- Did each step deliver enough value for you to keep it in the next round?
- Which steps should you maintain for the next round?
- Did any stage provide so little value to the decision that it should be eliminated?

> **Ninja Tip: The value you receive isn't a subjective measurement: It's strictly determined by whether the information moved the project forward. If not, remove it now.**

**Were you effective in gathering evidence?**

Evidence is the backing your team needed to prove their case. The ability to present the evidence also needs to be measured. The team's effectiveness in collecting, analyzing, and presenting the evidence clearly and concisely is a key performance indicator.

- Was your information received well by all stakeholders?
- Did the decision-makers trust your data?
- What was the outcome of the presentation of evidence?

The best evidence presented poorly can derail and obscure even the best project results. Be honest about what your team could uncover and whether the evidence created a truly data-driven decision.

**Evaluate your evaluation process by taking a "big picture" look at the process itself**

The only way to improve is to measure, evaluate, and adjust your process. Keep what works and lose (or alter) what didn't. This stage requires team input, so involve every member. They lived the entire process together. Their input and feedback are vital to maintaining a working process with the best outcomes.

- What worked well and what did not?
- Would more steps benefit the project?
- If you found issues, could they have been handled more effectively?
- If your team knocked it out of the park, why mess with success?

**Now, look outward: What are best practices for other business unit teams?**

Since the objective of best practices is to help your internal Legal Ops team run more efficiently and make better decisions, the place to start is to look at how other teams in your organization approach best practices.

Ask what they did to reach their outcomes. Legal conferences can also offer a valuable way to learn from others. First, ask colleagues on other internal legal ops teams about their process guidelines, what complexity they encounter, and how they support their corporate goals. And finally, **does the LegalTech solution benefit the entire company?** If so, you have a winning solutions.

**Questel**

# Conclusion

## The road ahead is paved by your colleagues' success.

The goal of this eBook series was that by the time you've completed your checklist, you'll be ready to evaluate software firms on how effectively they can provide the solution that meets your business needs. We put all of the blogs together here for you to expedite your evaluations.

> **Ninja Tip:** Keep asking questions, stay curious, and use the standard news writing model: who, what, when, where, and why to keep sharpening your best practices.

Corporate legal departments rely on LegalTech more these days, like Enterprise Legal Management (ELM) technology solutions. Advanced technology like this constantly evolves, making the evaluation process appear more daunting, but you now know the path leading to success, proven by others for you. Your next evaluation will benefit you and your decisions makers, making the selection easier.

doeLEGAL, A Questel Company, offers this 7-point checklist to help you develop your own path forward. Make your plans for successful evaluations and call on doeLEGAL and Questel to guide you through with insight and professional expertise.

<div align="center">

**TALK TO AN EXPERT**

</div>

Ascent ELM™ is the award-winning Enterprise Legal Management solution. Our experts are ready to help show your team the proper evaluations for ELM solutions. A customized demo for your organization will walk you through the benefits attainable by leveraging LegalTech solutions.

<div align="center">

doeLEGAL™
A **Questel** Company
**www.doelegal.com**

**Questel**
**www.questel.com**

</div>