

# Global in-house legal insights 2023

How are in-house legal, across the world, helping their organizations **grow, protect, operate** and **finance**?

# Introduction

Every organization is navigating accelerated change. With the geopolitical landscape at best uncertain, the emergence of disruptive technologies, increased regulatory burdens and the impact of climate change – now is both a dynamic and critical time for in-house legal teams to rise to the moment in a high-stakes environment. While we see plenty of obstacles, we are also presented with a plethora of opportunities providing an exciting and innovative business context for in-house legal teams to demonstrate their value and impact.

Your feedback reveals how important it is for legal teams to be integral to, and aligned with, your business priorities and strategic planning. In the same way, and for the same reasons, it is critical for Dentons to stay close to you and listen to your feedback to ensure we have our fingers on the pulse and can better advise you as you grow, protect, operate and finance your organization.

It is because we have listened to clients that we have built the firm we have today: the largest global law firm in the world with a presence in 80+ countries. Your feedback has driven us to be the first on many fronts, including our recent combination with Link Legal which made us the first global law firm in India. We did this because we listened to you – you told us that your needs are, more than ever before, in India.

Two years ago, we announced the launch of Dentons Global Advisors, an independent, multi-disciplinary strategic advisory firm providing services such as political risk advisory, crisis, dispute and issue management support and more – just another example of Dentons listening to and responding to your complex needs – needs which go beyond the parameters of traditional legal advice.

I also want to take this opportunity to share with you that our Global Board, the highest governing body of the Firm, has reviewed your feedback as it relates to the top actions law firms can take to improve their client service. As a result, we are prioritizing our go-to-market and client experience strategies.

Thank you for taking the time to share your valuable insights with us. As a firm we are focused on remaining closely aligned to your needs so that we are able to provide you with the solutions that will allow you to advance your business goals. Please keep sharing your views with us. In return, we will keep listening, adapting and innovating – for you.



**Elliott Portnoy**



# Methodology and key findings

In this report, you will find data points from over 100 online survey responses diving into questions around how in-house legal/law departments help their organizations grow, protect, operate and finance. In addition, I spoke to legal leaders from across the world to gain their thoughts and reactions to the survey findings and their responses are also included in this report, as well as a number of contributions from my Dentons colleagues.

This report is therefore a collection of helpful data points and a community of perspectives and experiences for everyone to learn from and leverage for success.

We have shared our key findings of this survey below and invite you to explore each section in more detail.



**JoAnne Wakeford**

## Grow

The law department needs to be seen as an enabler of organizational growth. The majority of respondents agreed that aligning your legal department to the organizational goals and priorities at both a corporate and business unit level is critical to meeting this imperative. Aligning resources to meet all the various organizational goals and priorities can be a challenge; the reality is that most teams are stretched too thinly to pivot from 'fire-fighting' mode to being more strategically aligned.

## Protect

Monitoring and adjusting to regulatory change is clearly identified as the greatest risk to an organization yet the majority (71%) of those surveyed are confident or very confident in their ability to identify and manage emerging risks and regulations. Strategic alignment to the business is identified as being core to the law department's ability to manage future risk along with horizon scanning and remaining closely involved in enterprise risk management and internal audit activities.

## Operate

The continuous challenge of finding the time to be strategic while juggling the day-to-day may be what prompted most respondents to indicate that "assessing and optimizing the team's workload" is the most important action legal teams can take to become more efficient. As shared by Dara Redler, Chief Legal Officer at H&R Block, *"I don't like the phrase 'more for less' as it's a no win situation - I prefer to think about it strategically: what will drive value for the business and what we need to stop doing. We need to put all our work through that strategic filter."*

## Finance

The majority of respondents indicated that there will be no new investment in their law department this year or that budgets have decreased. This contrasts with the respondents who have indicated that they anticipate investments in technology within their department and prompts the question: where will this investment come from if budgets are static or decreasing? The jury also appears to still be out with regard to how important technology is to the in-house legal team's performance. Many respondents indicated that technology was not one of the most important actions for the legal team to take to improve operational efficiency.





**Grow**

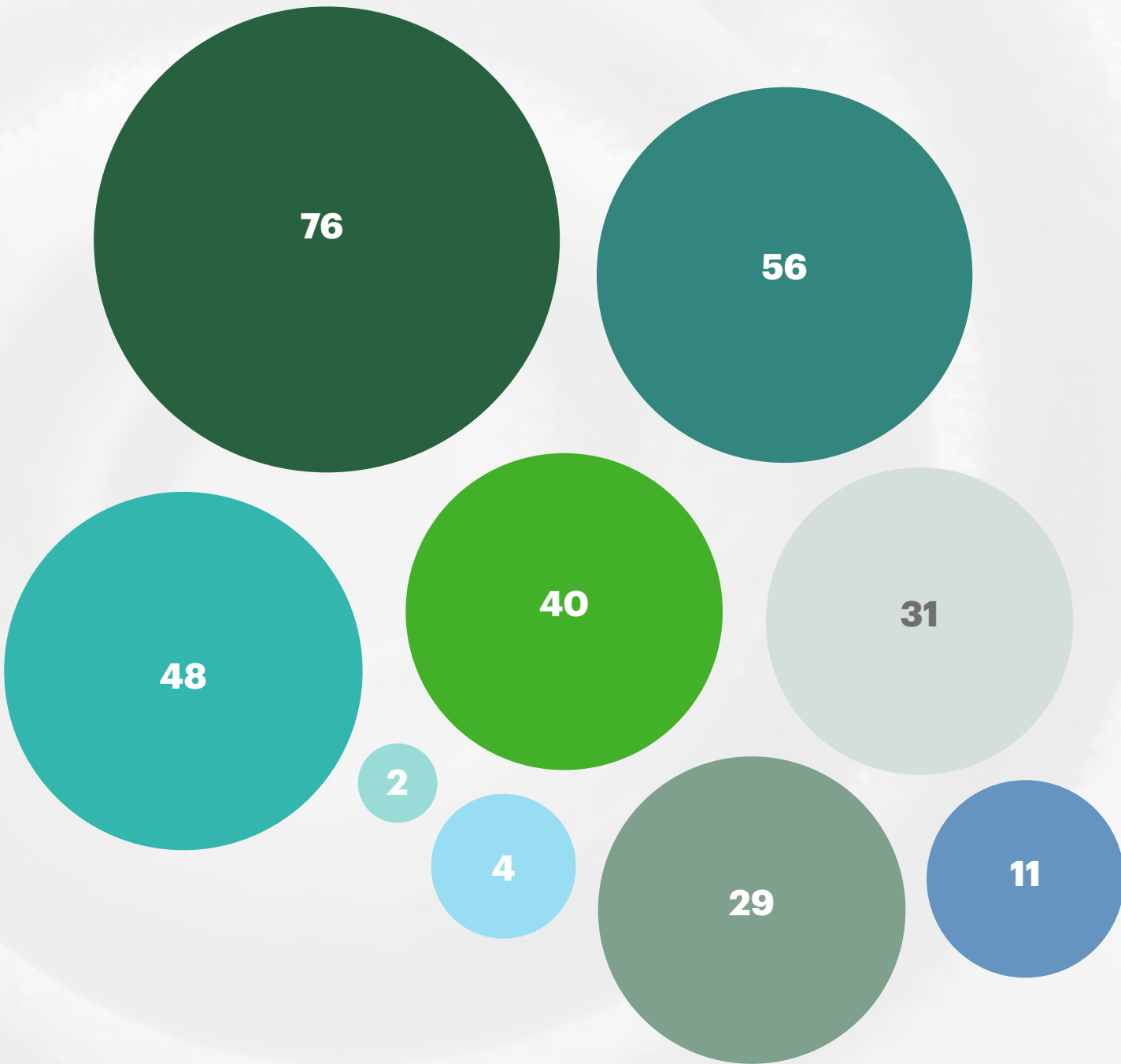


# What are the most important actions that the legal team can take to support organizational revenue growth?

Aligning with the business and participating in all strategic planning discussions at the business unit and corporate level is considered to be the most important action that the legal team can take to support revenue growth.

For some law departments, having a “seat at the table” can be a challenge and it may often depend on factors like culture and leadership, size of company, visibility and perception of the legal function. As one general counsel shared, the experience in a family-run company can present significant challenges, *“They wouldn’t come ask me. It was more like, we’re doing this, can you support us where we need to be. That mindsight was changing but it was a family-led business and I’m not sure that legal would have ever been front of mind.”*

For those who are embedded with the business and seen as a strategic advisor, having a seat at the table enables you to be at the front end of key decisions, spot potential risks while at the same time being able to plan strategically around how you will resource and staff for strategic priorities. It is therefore not a surprise that the second most important action that the legal team can undertake is to strategically align your resources to organizational goals followed by developing legal skills and expertise. As shared by Bernard Liew, Associate General Counsel of Aveva, *“Of course our lawyers are expected to have a certain amount of professional experience and knowledge but we are looking at developing softer skills like how to build commercial awareness, effective negotiation, understanding how people react, teamwork, communications and listening.”*



### Survey results: in order of most popular

- Participation in strategic planning at corporate and business unit level
- Align resources to your organization's strategy/growth goal
- Develop legal team skills and expertise
- Understand regulatory frameworks/requirements in markets targeted for growth
- Optimize contract lifecycle
- Horizon scan to help anticipate and respond to opportunity (e.g. Metaverse, AI, geopolitical analysis, optimization of business models)
- Unlock the value of your IP portfolio
- Keep abreast of tax strategies and incentives
- Other

Survey results represent number of votes made for each selection  
Participants were asked to select up to three responses





### **In-House insights on... having a “seat at the table”**

**“Most teams get us involved early, but it’s a constant education exercise around the role legal plays and how that evolves over time. A number of the senior management team within our legal function sit on various committees and boards within the organization, so we are getting a fairly good view of life through those memberships as well”**

– **Melanie Jane Collishaw**, Associate Director – Legal, Aldar

**“Legal is part of the leadership team which is really important. Our presence on these different business teams allows us to be more proactive and spot issues ahead of time. We have two lawyers actually embedded in the business teams which is great, but can also bring about other challenges such as their scope of work has extended beyond just legal services and they sometimes end up involved in other matters like human resources. So, it’s a balance.”**

– **Charmaine Toms**, General Counsel, MNP



### **In-House insights on... aligning resources**

**“For me, the planning process was most importantly about understanding all of the projects that were underway and working out where the demand is coming from and where the organizational needs are going forward. M&A is very high up on my list, so I need to build our infrastructure to support that.”**

– **General Counsel**, Financial Institution

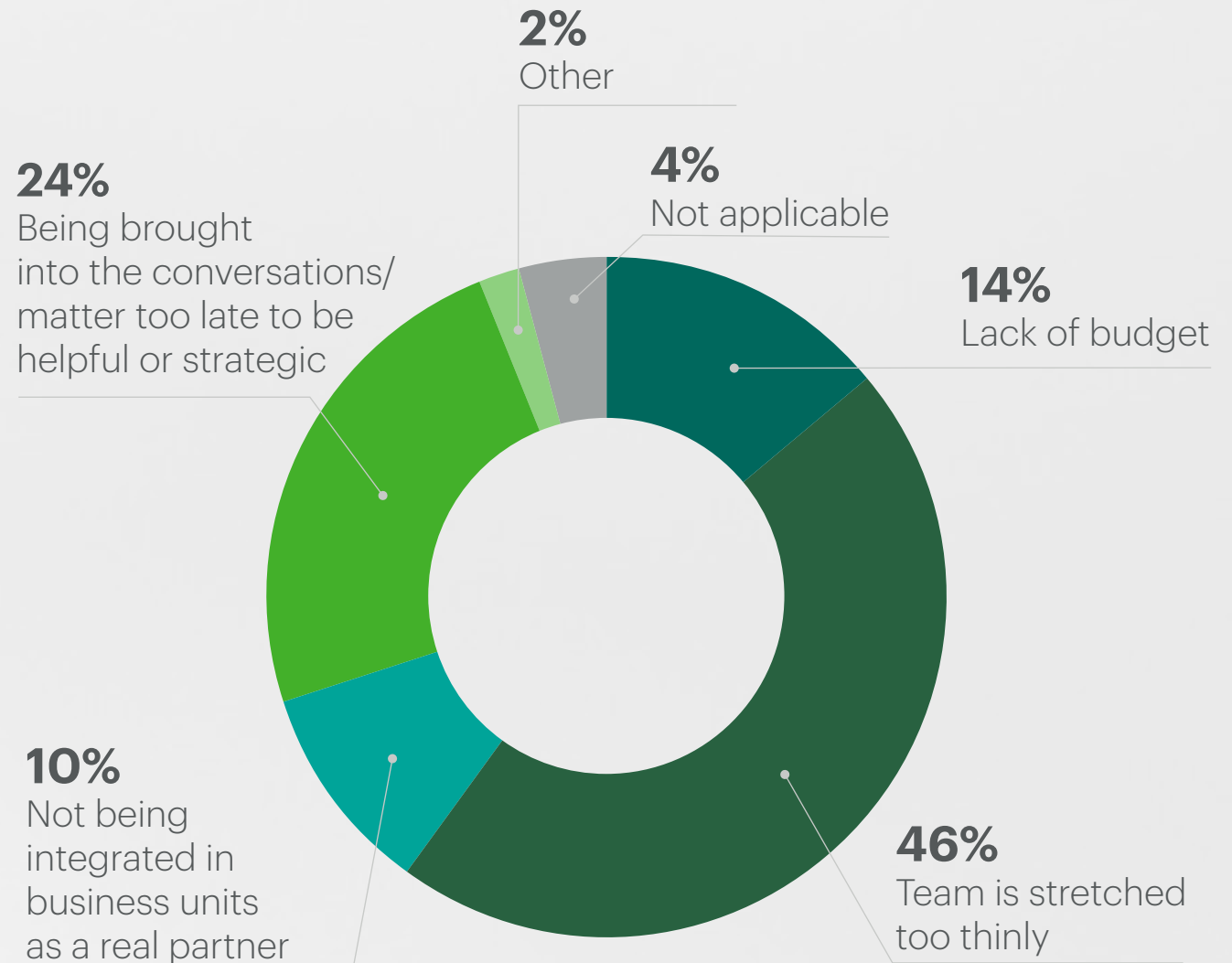
**“We have fewer FTE than we had two years ago and the work load is higher than it was at that point – simply by having new acquisitions in the group. We are trying to optimize the work and focus our time on the strategic and high-risk work and say no to things that just aren’t that important as we just don’t have time for that. We are looking at outsourcing certain functions, like our IP function for example, where they become an extension of our team and we can trust them.”**

– **Alice Mettler**, Group Data Protection Officer & Head of Legal Operations, Landis+Gyr AG



# What is the greatest challenge you face in supporting the organizational revenue imperative?

With heightened organizational revenue imperatives, as well as complex regulatory environments and geopolitical risk to navigate, workloads across legal teams continue to rise as does the speed with which Legal needs to respond. It is therefore not surprising that the vast majority of respondents cite that their teams are simply “stretched too thinly” in order to effectively support organizational revenue growth. As one general counsel shared with us, “I’m working the hardest I’ve ever worked in my career and that includes private practice.”



**“Motivation and individual discipline can keep a lot of people slugging through extreme workloads but that’s not healthy in the long term. So we’ve taken two important steps. In the first instance, we created an operations department that is focused on removing the distracting administrative work from the critical activity that is both revenue generating and satisfying to our lawyers. Our second step was to get better insight into what’s causing pain points and frustrations across the team. We have actually launched a portal for our legal team so they can log in and code some of the challenges that might be preventing them from focusing in on the growth generating activities. They can say they are “overwhelmed” because....of “X”. We then have a team that is targeting in on each one of those responses to understand what’s causing those issues. I think giving people the ability to register their concerns while also making sure we are reporting back on what those issues are and**

**what we are doing about it is key. I think when you show people we are moving the needle on change it motivates and keeps them engaged. Cheerleading only goes so far.”**

– Bill Dodero, General Counsel, Senior Vice President, Bayer U.S. LLC

Throughout the survey the importance of being aligned and embedded within the organization shines through – as it does here with regard to how Legal can best support organizational growth. Ensuring the Legal team is front of mind is critical to this.

*“We are doing everything from training sessions, to spending more time physically situated in certain parts of the business. We’ve also created a legal spotlight on our internal portal, where we can post various insights, tips or even more light-hearted materials just to be more present. We have been applying for a number of legal awards and promoting that through there as well. We are also working on a series of insights and Q&As and redirecting the business to the portal for those frequently asked questions and resources.”*

– Melanie Jane Collishaw, Associate Director – Legal, Aldar





### In-House insights on... thinly stretched resources

**“You hear teams say they are stretched too thinly due to the amount of work and limited resources. Legal is also typically that stable resource of consistent knowledge and therefore the business tends to rely on Legal for work that falls outside what Legal should typically do. I start from a point that we need to ensure we have the time for the work that matters most. The work that we should be doing. I have the team start by looking at the business imperatives and strategic focus areas for the company and how does Legal support that. We then review work that does not support those imperatives to see if there is work we stop doing or is a lower priority.”**

– Dara Redler, Chief Legal Officer, H&R Block



### Top tip

#### The role of Legal

When Legal teams are pulled in too many directions, it can often be a result of workloads and insufficient resources to manage those workloads. It can also be a result of a lack of understanding by the business as to when and how they should or shouldn't use Legal and the importance of engaging the team on a timely basis to avoid last minute requests. Spending some time to educate your internal business unit customers on the role of Legal, through webinars, open houses or FAQs, is key to streamlining your interactions. This can be particularly important for organizations with a higher turnover rate or where the organization is expanding rapidly.



**Protect**





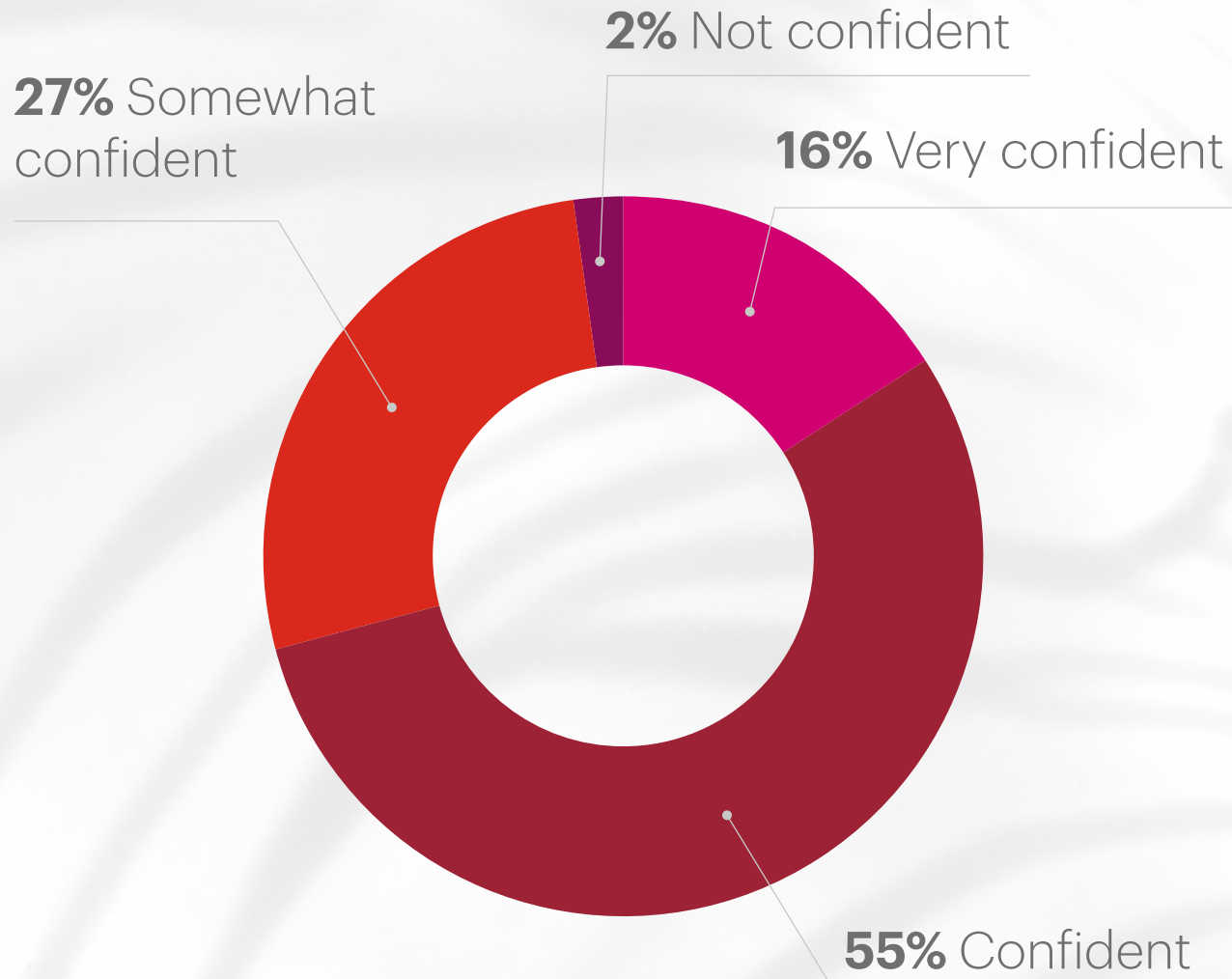
# How confident are you in your legal team's ability to identify and manage emerging risks and regulations?

The vast majority of respondents are either "very confident" or "confident" in their organization's ability to identify and manage emerging risks and regulations. This said, for 29% of respondents there is clearly room for improvement and a need for further focus on how to track and manage new risks. Being ready to evolve policies and processes is key to creating a robust and resilient compliance culture so whether teams use technology or third parties to support with this, they will need to craft strategies to ensure they have the bandwidth necessary to respond.

## In-House insights on.... the compliance function

**"I made a recommendation to our Board with respect to our governance a few years ago that "Quality and Compliance" be a separate function outside of the legal department. There is a lot of overlap, obviously, but the specific compliance around quality in areas where we are highly regulated is so significant that having a department dedicated to this is important for us."**

- Charmaine Toms, General Counsel, MNP





# What are the most important actions the legal team should take to support the organization with managing its risk and reputation?

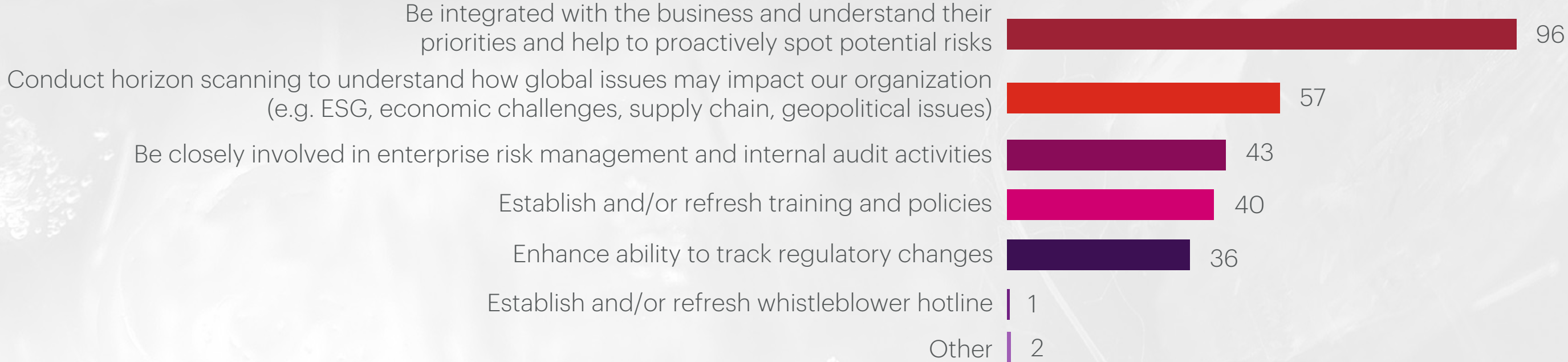
Your organization's ability to quickly identify and mitigate legal risk, monitor and manage legal and regulatory developments and implement necessary changes to ensure compliance is not only prudent risk management but can enhance your competitive advantage and support new growth opportunities.

Being fully integrated with the business and understanding the priorities ahead is quite clearly key to unlocking the legal department's value and mitigating risk. Although as discussed earlier, being recognized as a true business partner can be a challenge for some in-house teams.

The second most important action noted by respondents is to conduct horizon scanning to understand what relevant global issues may potentially impact their organization.

Finding time to look beyond your immediate horizon can be a challenge when existing resources are stretched addressing the issues of 'today'. Also, if your organization is international, tracking global regulatory change may require budget as well as resource.

Survey respondents also noted the importance of creating training and policies to manage risk and reputation. Engaging stakeholders from within the business to help deliver that training is a good way of growing relationships and creating shared ownership around risk and reputation management.



Survey results represent number of votes made for each selection  
Participants were asked to select up to three responses





**In-House insights on...  
identifying and managing risk**

**“We have something called “Legal Outreach” wherein we connect with various business teams to stay in front of their priorities – maintaining a presence and making sure they understand who to connect with and for what. This does bring about an influx of queries (and ultimately extra work!) but these are opportunities for us to get in front of potential issues as well as proactively support the business and their upcoming initiatives.”**

– **Charmaine Toms**, General Counsel, MNP

**“We have a very structured way of talking about risk with the business. It starts with identifying possible types of risk, the potential impact of that risk if it comes to fruition, the likelihood of that risk, and what risk mitigation opportunities exist. It’s through discussion of that risk assessment with our clients that enables them to take an informed business decision. By having this framework, we are providing the guidance and assessment, but whoever is “accountable” according to our RACI framework, is ultimately responsible for the decision. That’s how we avoid “Legal said no”.”**

– **Dara Redler**, Chief Legal Officer, H&R Block

**“We also provide compliance training around code of business conduct and on specific compliance legislation. Many countries in which we operate have specific compliance legislation (antibribery, whistleblowing or human rights due diligence) and it’s important for us to instruct our employees on what to do and when to reach out to the legal department. This needs to be done constantly, particularly when there’s higher turnover. You need to be very visible and constantly reminding the business of the guardrails.”**

– **Emanuela Hernandez**, Legal Director, Foot Locker EMEA.

**“I subscribe to some law firm updates, but I also review professional organization websites such as the ACC which has a group for compliance professionals. I look at what questions my peers are asking to see what are “hot topics” and how folks are handling these matters. It’s great because you can get a sense of risk areas and responses in real time.”**

– **George Thomas**, Legal Services Director & Compliance Counsel, Kent







 | **Top tip**

Horizon scanning is considered a key action that the law department can take to support the organization with identifying and managing risk and reputation. A variety of resources can give you the insight you need. Including:

1. Law firms or external advisors: ask them for their take on your biggest risks and regulatory challenges.
2. Industry associations: groups like the Association of Corporate Counsel and similar organizations can provide insight and peer connection opportunities.
3. Your business: consider who can give you the latest data and insight regarding the direction of travel internally.

**“Lawyers often don’t realize that if you are an hourly worker who has no exposure to how the company is managed, the prospect of calling that hotline number can be terrifying. To address this, we need to conduct training to take the fear out of the process. Whenever I go on site, I make a point of engaging hourly workers and telling them exactly what would happen if one called the hotline. You take some of the mystery out of the process, and hopefully create a willingness to make that call.”**

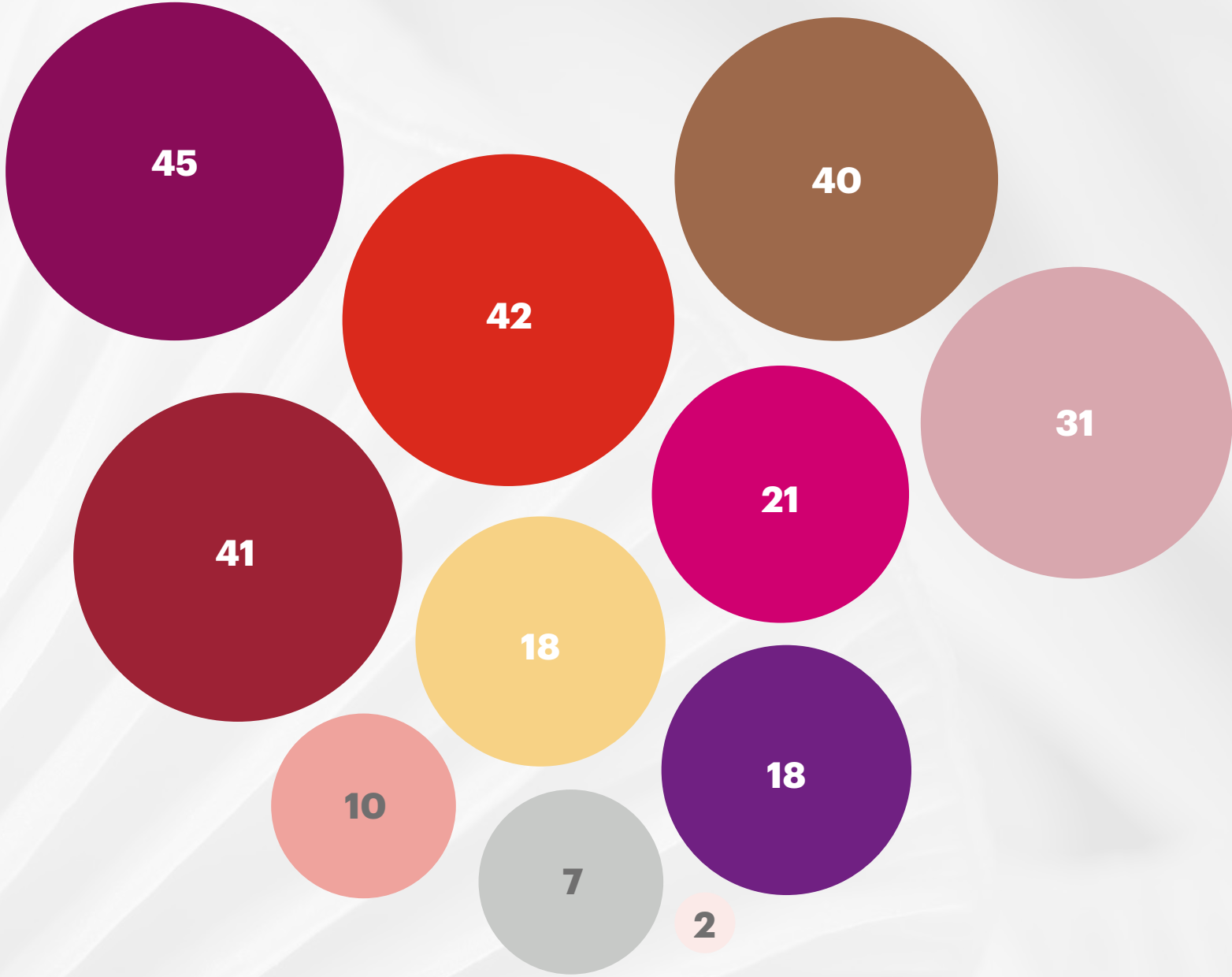
– **George Thomas**, Legal Services Director & Compliance Counsel, Kent



# What are the most significant risks facing your organization?

There were four very prominent areas that respondents felt were posing significant risks to the business. The most significant risk identified is related to the business team’s awareness of and focus on potential risks. As Emanuela Hernandez, Legal Director for Foot Locker EMEA noted, *“The best way for us to raise awareness of business risk is to ensure we have a seat at the table at the outset of the project. This allows Legal to mitigate potential risks while also allowing us to strategically advise on specific and relevant trends. It has also proved to be effective in building trust with the business stakeholders who are then more likely to be in touch in case of any challenges. We also have the possibility to monitor in real time to keep the project from heading in a direction that is adverse to the business. Legal spend obviously impacts the P&L of the company so getting us involved earlier will ultimately minimize spend and benefit the company.”*

Monitoring and adjusting to regulatory change and the ability to attract and retain the optimal workforce closely followed along with geopolitical and economic instability.



**Survey results: in order of popularity**

- Business team awareness of/focus on potential risks
- Monitoring, and adjusting to regulatory change
- Ability to attract and retain the optimal workforce
- Geopolitical and economic instability
- Data/cyber-security breaches
- Currently unseen/unmeasured risks
- Reputational risk associated with ESG
- Detecting and preventing misconduct
- Stakeholder activism
- Incentivizing compliant conduct
- Other

Survey results represent number of votes made for each selection  
Participants were asked to select up to three responses





### In-House insights on .... cyber security risks

**“It’s not a question of if you will have a data cyber security breach but when. The most important thing is that Legal gets involved where necessary immediately to ensure that the relevant processes are in place and that they are followed.”**

– **Alice Mettler**, Group Data Protection Officer & Head of Legal Operations, Landis+Gyr AG

**“Cyber security is a big risk but it does link back to geopolitical instability. We have a cyber security team and the statistics they have around attempted attacks that were stopped by the various gates is quite astounding. But all of this goes hand in hand with data privacy and one of the things that I’m working on with the cyber security team is how we work more closely together. The objectives of each team are slightly different so getting everyone focused and agreed on the same outcome is critical.”**

– **Lorraine Lee**, General Counsel, Assistance Services Worldwide, Chief Privacy Officer, International SOS



### In-House insights on... talent retention

**“One thing we get a lot of recognition for and are very proud about is our “Reboot Week”, which means everyone gets a week off at the same time. No emails, no phone calls, no meetings. At first, many of our associates weren’t sure if they could actually take the time off, if the words would match the action. However, we linked arms as a senior leadership team to demonstrate that this is important to us and our organization for their mental and physical wellbeing. It is one of the most appreciated company initiatives. We also do an associate engagement survey once a year and we receive scores by company, function and team and we share those across the company. What I did with my team was to create an “associate engagement team” who look at these scores and make recommendations in terms of what we as a function should focus on that year. This helps to demonstrate our commitment to listening to the feedback in the survey, making meaningful changes and delivering results.”**

– **Dara Redler**, Chief Legal Officer, H&R Block





 | **Top tip**

Attracting and retaining the optimal workforce is an increasing challenge for organizations around the world with the global pandemic altering what motivates and incentivizes employees. When looking at how to engage your own legal team, it's important to start with an understanding of your current state. If you haven't already done so, consider inviting your team to a conversation or even an anonymous survey.

Ask questions like:

- Do you believe you are working on projects that reflect your highest and best use?
- What are the top frustrations in your current day-to-day practice?
- Can you give us a few examples of recent success stories/wins in which you have been involved?

**“We’ve started to look at our legal, patents and compliance function in terms of how we can connect our people to fill gaps and achieve goals which means looking at our department as one team rather than a bunch of individual silos. This has had a monumental impact on the team dynamic but also individual engagement. People are feeling rejuvenated not only in their individual capacity but because they truly feel part of one team and are encouraged to get involved in different areas of our legal function. This can be a challenge when there are organizational constraints such as when costs are allocated to departments and not rolling up to the GC. But we have to stop thinking like this.”**

– **Bill Dodero**, General Counsel, Senior Vice President, Bayer U.S. LLC



**Operate**

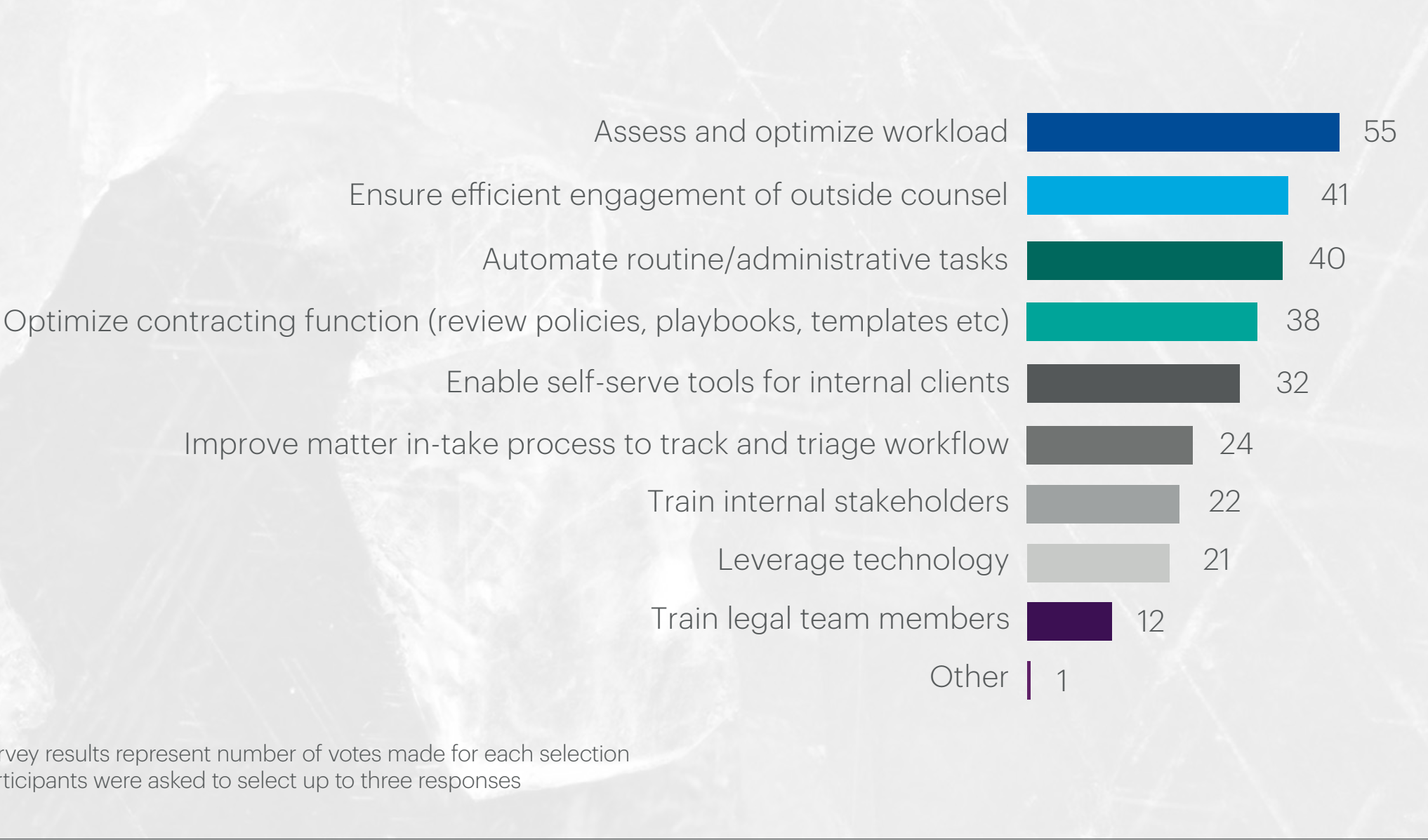




# What top actions are you taking to improve your legal team's operational efficiency?

There is no question that with the increased volume of work flooding a team that is already stretched too thinly, many law department leaders are taking a step back to understand where operational efficiencies may be had in order to alleviate the pressure. The vast majority of respondents indicated that assessing and optimizing workload and understanding whether the work is being done by the right level of resource is key, along with the efficient engagement of outside counsel and implementing automation for routine or administrative tasks.

As Bill Doderer, General Counsel, Senior Vice President at Bayer U.S. LLC shared with us, the power of automation can be key to eliminating workloads that are really tedious and time consuming. *"We recognized that the act of intaking complaints required numerous touchpoints to get that complaint processed from the time it came in the door, entered and coded into the database, shared with parallel departments that need to be made aware, along with the outside firms who needed to be assigned to the case, to the opening of the matter and the statement of work to the firm. We could never keep up with that manually. It was really tedious work and I even used to authorize temp people who would help with this but we still couldn't catch up. But our legal ops team recognized that there was an automation tool in Office 365 that we already had access to that allowed us to reduce that amount of time from hours to 90 seconds."*





Some of these projects may be easier to implement than others and it will depend on your organization's change readiness, culture and risk appetite. For example, as shared by Julian Ramasamy, Head of Legal Operations, ANZ, *"I'd love to get my hands on some of the cool tech, but that's just not an option for us, because our security posture limits our ability to explore. The most value I can add is to act as an interface to all the other parts of the business that we need to be integrated with, while also exploring projects like our preferred panel program."*

There can be many benefits derived from a preferred law firm panel program that extend beyond cost savings and internal operational efficiencies. Understanding what work should be sent to outside counsel vs. done in-house or perhaps even automated is an important first step to creating your panel strategy. *"There's a really steep learning curve for new lawyers and external counsel because of the complexity of our organization. So I've limited the number of firms that work on our matters because it's simply just more efficient for me and there are obvious spend efficiencies from consolidating our work with fewer firms....I start by understanding the major issues that we are going to be facing as an organization over the next few years. Then my panel will be formed with a couple of top tier law firms who can help us with these kind of bet the farm issues and then we will fold in what other specialties we might need."* – Cameron Loughlin, General Counsel (ANZ), Uber.

Another area in-house teams are looking to optimize is their contracting function.





# What are the top actions law firms can take to improve their service to you?

Our survey shows there is lots law firms can be doing to improve their service to clients across a wide range of activities.

With the continual pressures on budget and resources, maximizing external provider value has been, and likely will continue to be, a key trend. At Dentons, we have seen a rise in the number of proposals around the world, particularly for panel arrangements, and it's very clear that value adds are increasingly becoming an expectation in these relationships.

As evidenced in this question, the majority of respondents indicated that the value adds, such as providing training and development, are a key expectation from law firm relationships. Law firms have access to a great deal of resources and can share insights across topics including personal development, innovation and technology, leadership and strategy as well as legal training. Accessing these resources is a great way for in-house teams to leverage their external counsel relationships.

The second and third most favored actions that law firms can take to support client relationships are focused on helping in-house teams to anticipate change and risk while also providing timely regulatory updates. While most firms publish regular newsletters and updates, some in-house teams are exploring how technology can allow them to be more self-reliant. *"Being proactive and understanding what changes may be ahead is a priority for us. We rely on law firms to provide their updates and bulletins but finding a tool for this is part of our tech roadmap."* – Charmaine Toms, General Counsel, MNP.



Survey results represent number of votes made for each selection  
Participants were asked to select up to five responses





## In-House insights on... law firm service and pricing

**“Our law firm panel members engage heavily with us providing updates and training sessions. We then in turn do training sessions for the business to make sure they are aware of those new developments.”**

– **Melanie Jane Collishaw**, Associate Director – Legal, Aldar

**“For me, the most important thing law firms can do to help at this time is create clearer pricing models. At the end of the day, law firms should know their business well enough to quote what something should cost, at least roughly, and then provide me with modular options based on what I need.”**

– **General Counsel**, organization with global operations

**“I’m increasingly interested in speaking to firms who are looking at fixed fee quotes rather than hourly rates, even for more complex matters like litigation. I think Dentons has been pretty forward looking in this area. I would like to manage my budget better and it helps me to know exactly what I’m paying for a matter.”**

– **Bernard Liew**, Associate General Counsel, Aveva

**“I’m very upfront with law firms at the start. I often tell firms up front what the fees should be. I think also consolidating the work with firms makes this an easier conversation to have. But I appreciate that this is a two-way relationship and you can’t negotiate down so much that they don’t want to work with you. There’s a fine line that has to be drawn to be sure that the firm is finding the relationship sufficiently rewarding but it also has to be reasonable for me.”**

– **Cameron Loughlin**, General Counsel (ANZ), Uber



## Top tip

### Maximizing the value from your external service provider

Be very clear with your law firms what value adds you would like to see as part of your relationship. If that is training and development, ask whether they have expertise on specific topics that will help to close the skill gap in your team and whether they could arrange a bespoke training program. You might also request a horizon scanning workshop to help you anticipate change and spot potential risk. Some law departments will actually attribute a financial value to the value adds they receive from law firms.

*“We attribute a financial value to the value adds we receive from our panel firms. We’ve gone back to our CFO at mid-point review to say, we’ve increased headcount, but we’ve saved X number of dollars through these value adds. But beyond that, when one of our firms has delivered really exceptional value, that should raise some alarm bells for me. We need to ask ourselves, are we rewarding that firm to the extent that we should with work?”*

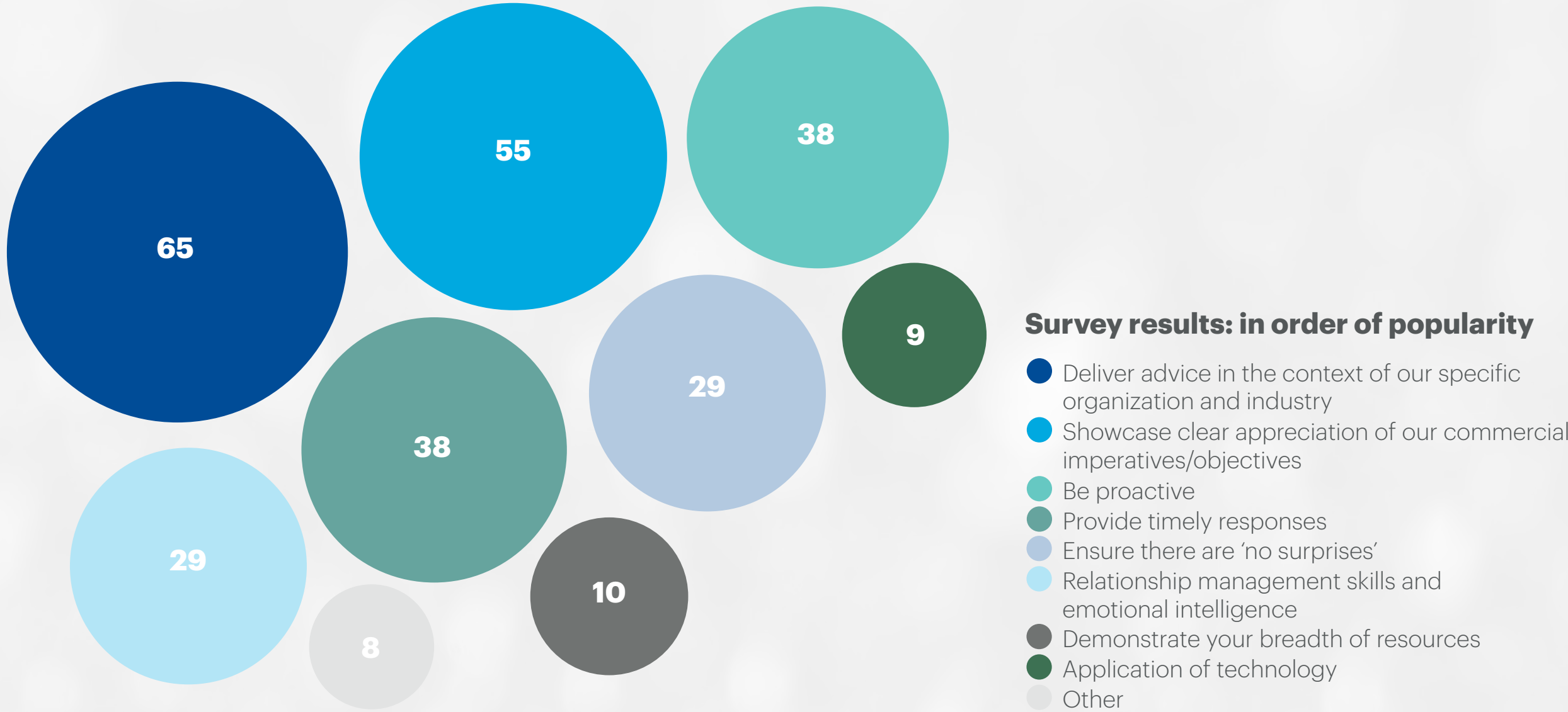
– **Julian Ramasamy**, Head of Legal Operations, ANZ



# What are the top skills that individual lawyers in firms most need to improve?

While the legal industry has evolved significantly over the past few decades, with the advent of legal technology and artificial intelligence changing the way in which we communicate and ultimately deliver legal services, the top skills that clients are expecting from their law firm lawyers still remain very much the same and it has very little to do with technology. Clients are expecting that their law firm lawyers deliver advice in the context of their specific organization and demonstrate a clear understanding of their commercial imperatives and do so proactively and in a timely way.

Responses to the 'other' selection in this question include suggestions that lawyers deliver advice that is pithy, concise, reflects the client's risk appetite while also including operational considerations. Also referenced is the need for lawyers to provide recommendations and advice, not just 'relaying what we already know'. While it may be covered in the survey option 'ensure there are no surprises', other comments refer to the importance of managing against fee quotes and staying within scope.



Survey results represent number of votes made for each selection  
Participants were asked to select up to three responses





### **In-House insights on... law firm lawyers**

**“I’ve always maintained the view that your external counsel should be an extension of our team. Understand our business, be commercial, that their interests and advice are aligned with mine. It’s also personable. I feel like I have a close relationship with my team, and good camaraderie and I think the true external counsel that thrive are those that feel naturally part of our team.”**

– **Cameron Loughlin**, General Counsel (ANZ), Uber

**“We make sure to use the language of the business – to provide factual and data-based advice – and I expect the same from my outside counsels. For example, I usually request to provide insights and calculation of financial exposure to the company rather than a lengthy opinion. It has proved to be effective and smooths the process, as well as my communication to the business.”**

– **Emanuela Hernandez**, Legal Director, Foot Locker EMEA

**“Lawyers often get caught up in the detail, which is a critical part of our role, and yet it’s also key to remember the ‘why’ - the commercial context. Getting it right and across the line is more important than getting it perfect.**

**Finally, be authentic. Follow your interest and be the expert in the room. Having a genuine interest in my business will distinguish one adviser from another.”**

– **General Counsel**, organization with global operations







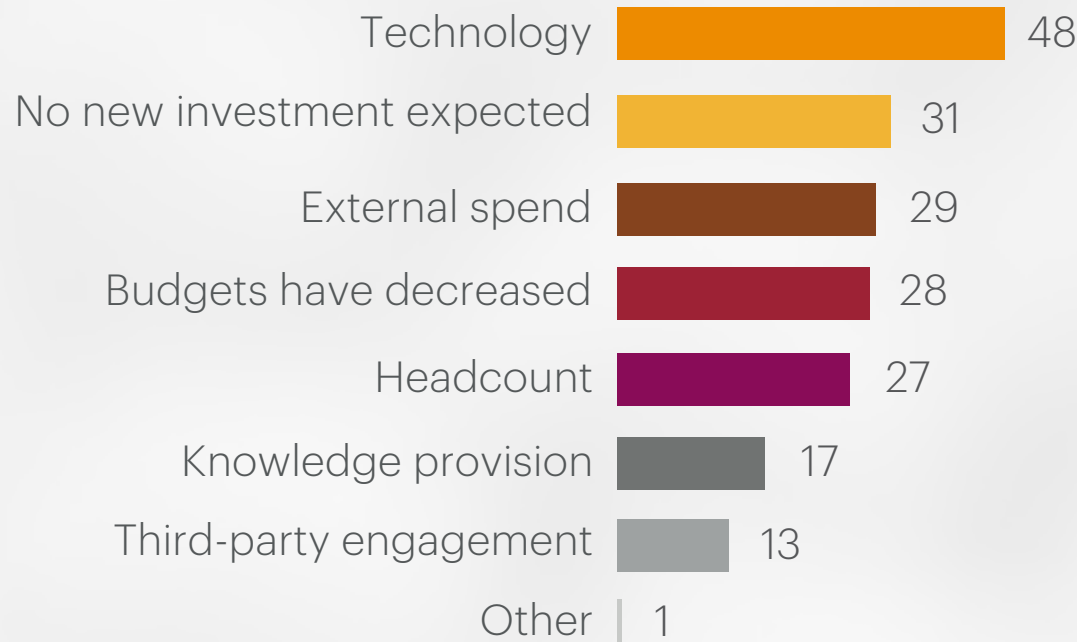
**Finance**



# Do you expect investment in any of the following areas?

With ongoing uncertainty around the economic outlook, many organizations have implemented cost containment measures which are impacting the law department. This is evidenced in the chart below as the majority indicated that their budgets have decreased or they don't anticipate any new investment. That said, as shared by Bernard Liew, Associate General Counsel of Aveva, *"Our budgets have decreased so that means we have to work harder to stay within our available budget and so that would be even more reason to focus on training and developing our team as opposed to investing in technology. I do think that it is important for us as a company to invest in external spend to the extent that it would minimize the risk exposure to our company. We don't compromise on that."*

Interestingly, there is more investment expected in technology than in internal headcount or external spend which is in contrast to where "enabling technology" surfaces as a response in our earlier question on "what top actions are you taking to improve operational efficiency".



Survey results represent number of votes made for each selection  
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

## In-House insights on... technology investment

**"We've decided not to look at anything else from a technology perspective this year given budget restraints but we are implementing a document management system (DMS). We had to put together a full business case to get approval with the help of our technology team. The legal team will be using the DMS on a standalone basis at the moment but it is intended to try to make us more disciplined in terms of how and where we save documents. Some features like auto-filing of emails, the search functionality and integration with comparison tools and e-signature tools were important for us."**

- **Melanie Jane Collishaw**, Associate Director - Legal, Aldar

**"You'll want to work with a technology provider that is well established working with legal teams and law firms already. I think that's really important. Also, I would never go down the road of something that requires two separate license providers to be contingent on one another as you'll never know where those companies might end up."**

- **Lynne English**, General Counsel, Aldar





# Which of the below reflects how the legal team utilizes legal spend data?

Data has become the new gold for law departments around the world yet accessing this information can be a challenge for those teams who don't have systems in place to easily track relevant information around things like legal spend or volume and type of work. There are many ways to crack the code if you don't have easy access to data as shared by one head of legal operations below.

## In-House insights on... data

**“One of my first steps was to eliminate the information gap and get more data around the type of work we are sending out to external counsel and to whom. We created a front door so that firms couldn't act on a matter until they had a matter number and our people could get that matter number from the internal portal. We have 40,000 people who can all instruct the legal panel so this kind of control was critical and ultimately the firms won't get paid unless they have a matter number. Now I'm better able to see who's requesting the work, what type of work it is (practice/sub-type),**

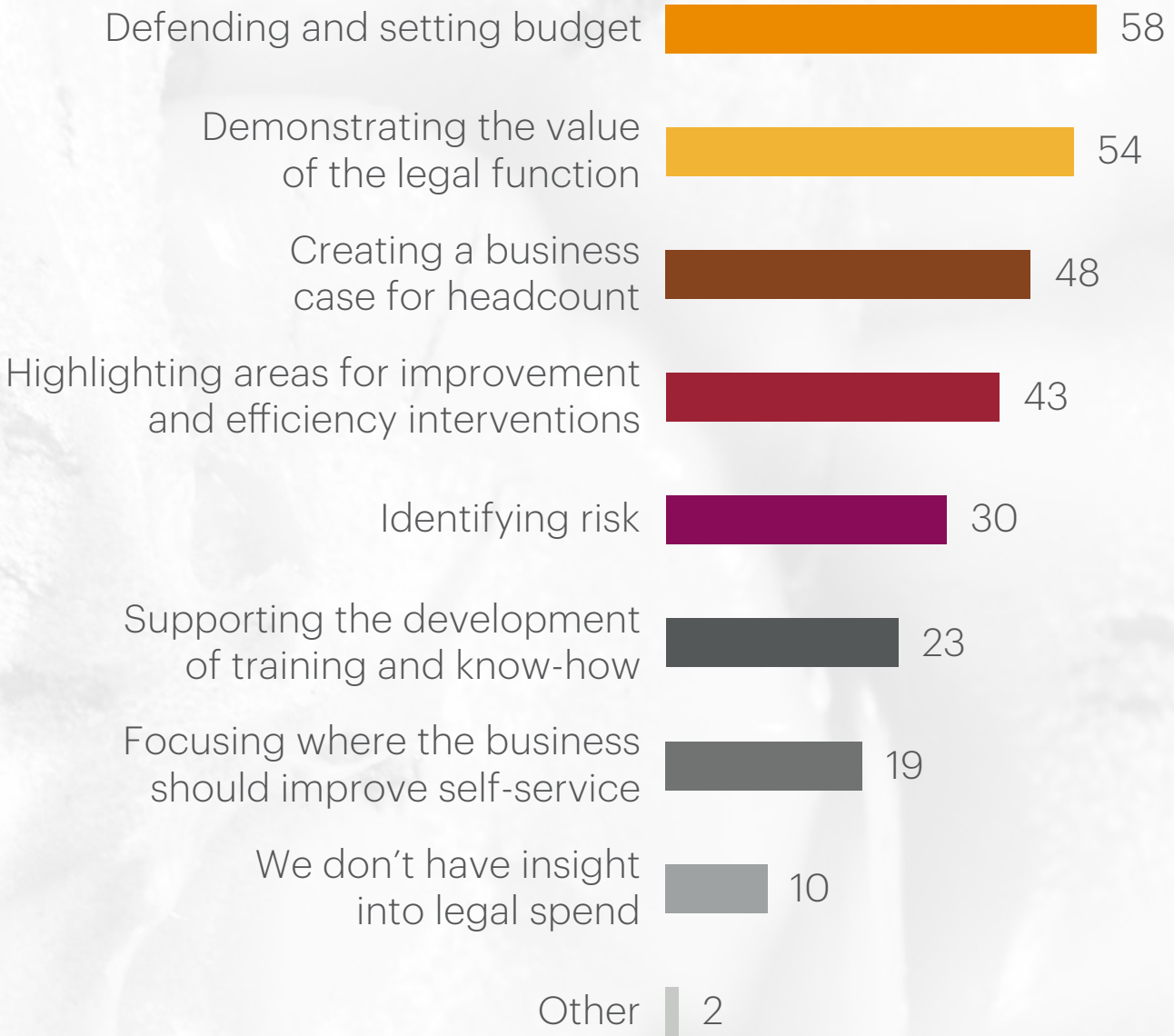
**what is the complexity of that work and why it is being sent out to external counsel (capacity, expertise, policy etc). Now I can report to the CFO, “we sent out x dollars' worth of litigation class action work because we didn't have the internal resources to do it.”**

– Julian Ramasamy, Head of Legal Operations, ANZ

For those who have access to the data, it is being used for the most part to demonstrate the need for additional budget or headcount, to demonstrate the value of the legal function and identify opportunities for efficiencies.

**“I targeted an area where I could see potential legal risk and then focused on hiring in those areas. I would then also look at outside counsel fees and use that as a business case.”**

– General Counsel, Financial Institution



Survey results represent number of votes made for each selection Respondents were asked to select all that apply





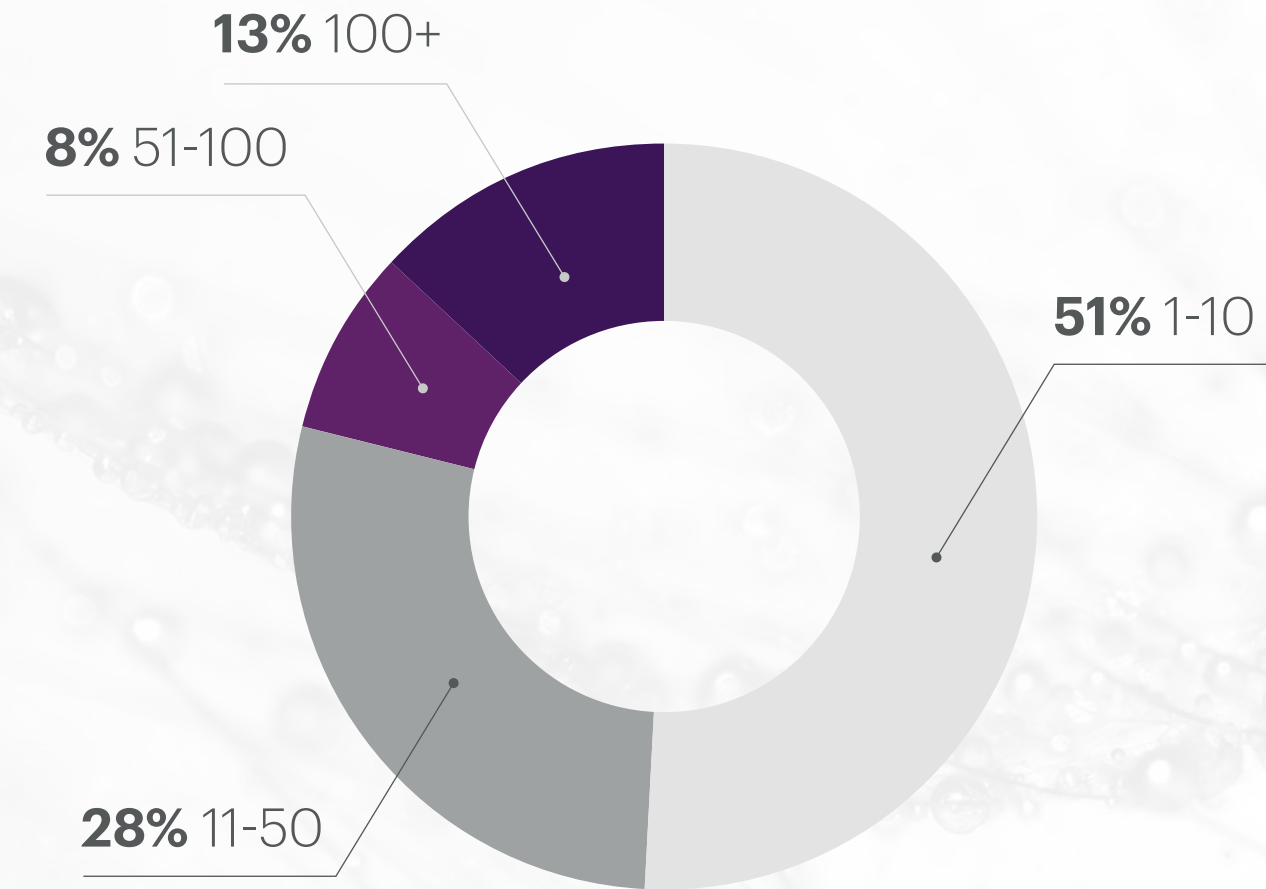
# **Participant profile**



# Survey respondents: location and size of legal team

This global survey is based on the responses of 101 individuals from teams of various sizes and sectors. Our sample was also geographically diverse, with respondents coming from a total of 27 countries. The majority of respondents were from small to medium sized law departments.

## Size of legal team

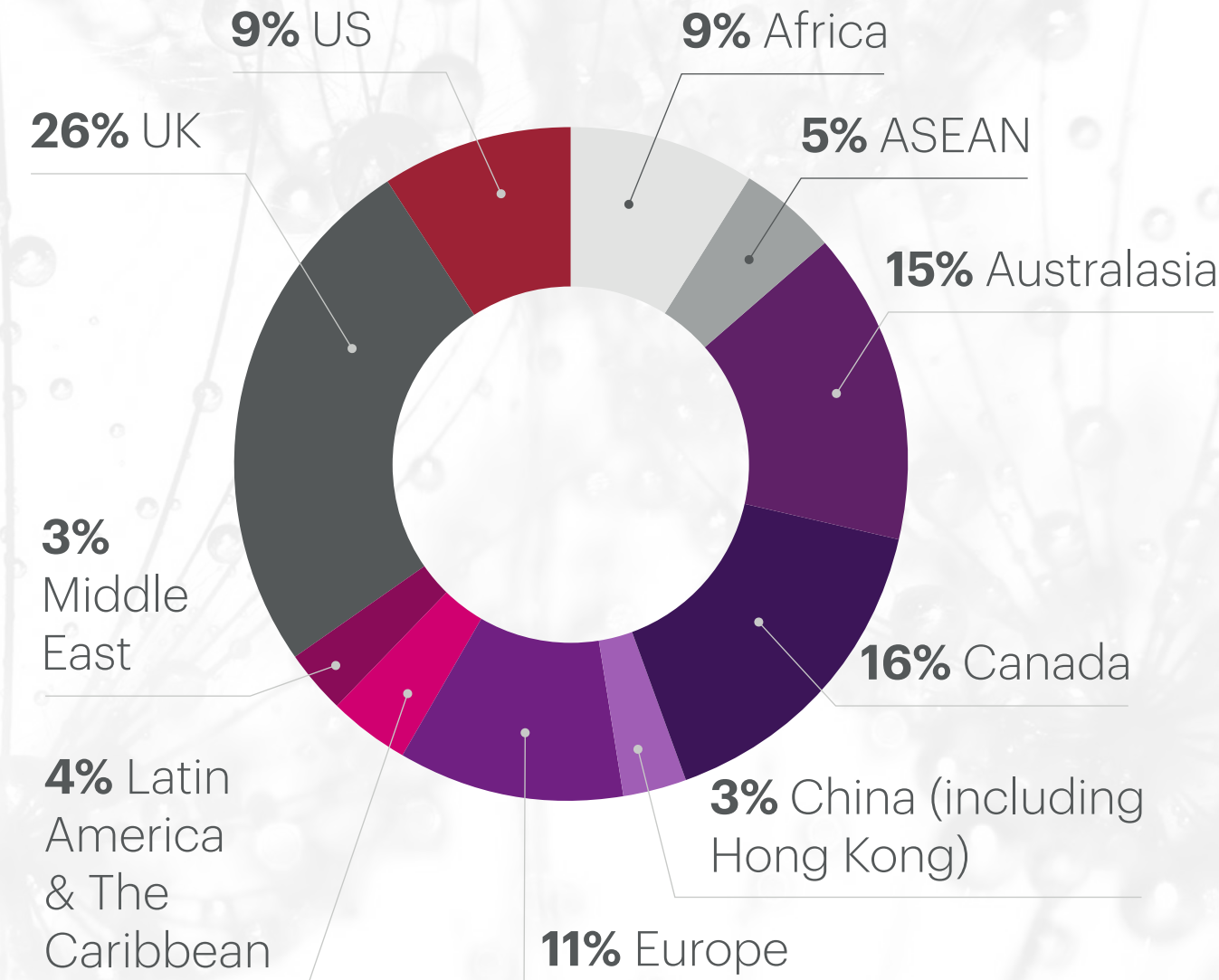


## In-House insights... on legal team size

**“How do you know if you have a department that’s not too big, but also not too lean in the event that it would lead to a single point of failure if there were a resignation, for example? So we do have team members who are “double hatting” and take on an extra role so that risks are covered, particularly in the areas where there is a slight increase in risk but there isn’t enough stability in the growth in that area to warrant a full time person.”**

- **Lorraine Lee**, General Counsel, Assistance Services Worldwide, Chief Privacy Officer, International SOS

## Survey respondents by location



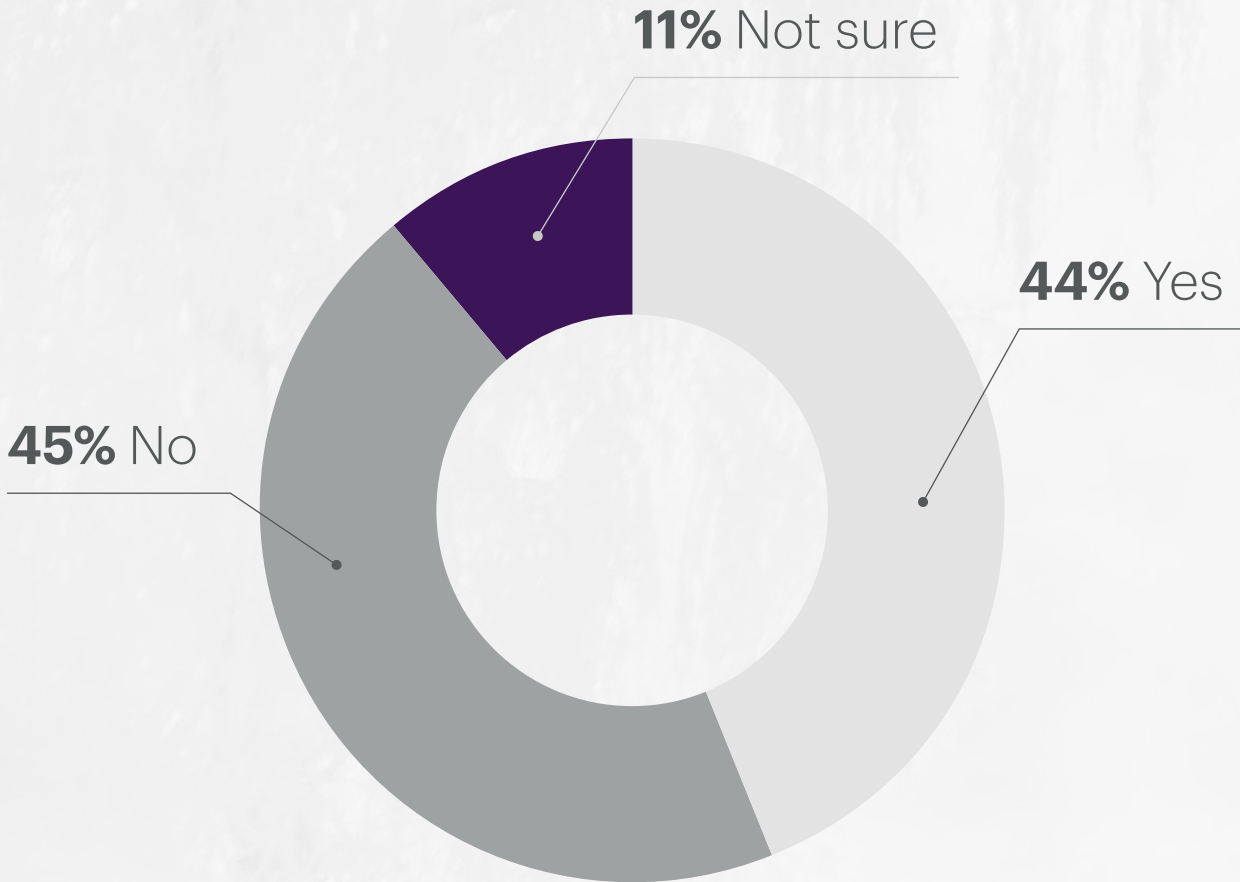


# Legal operations

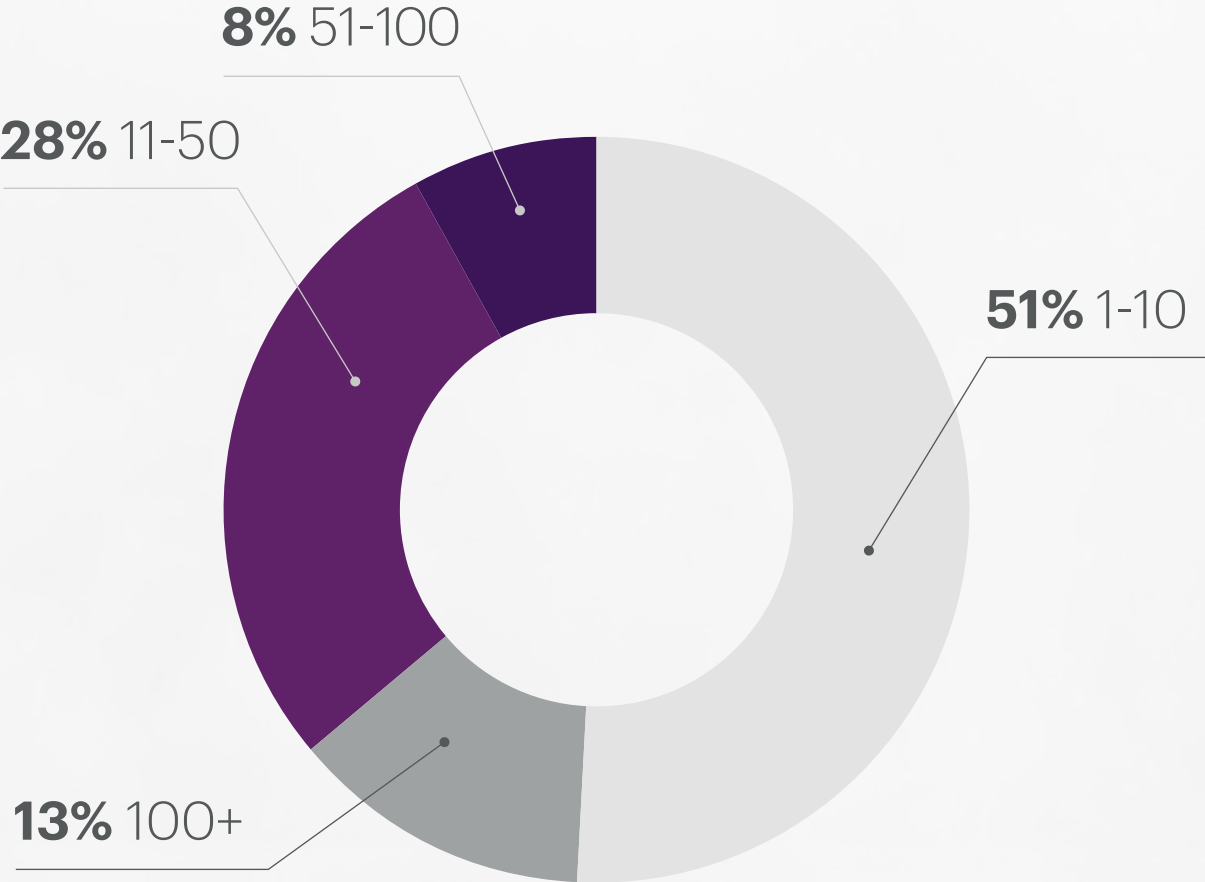
The legal operations discipline has expanded significantly over the past few years and interestingly, our survey indicates that it is the smaller legal teams that have most embraced a legal operations function.

This is likely due to the imperative with a small team to maximise efficiencies and streamline processes as much as possible. Legal operational professionals can substantially impact how the legal function is perceived in an organization and help drive through the collection of data, optimized processes, technology solutions and change management. It is surprising to see that this function is not more prevalent amongst larger in-house legal teams.

## Do you have a legal operations function within your law department?



## In-house team size and % that have legal operations function





 | **Top tip**

If you are looking to recruit a legal operations professional, your first hire should likely be someone with a legal background/a basic understanding of the work types and how to manage cultural change. You can have all of the technology, data analytics or project management wisdom in the world, but without the emotional intelligence to communicate effectively with key stakeholders, operational efficiency goals will not be fully realized. You can always supplement skills that are needed with additional hires down the road or perhaps borrowing expertise from across the organization or even your law firms.

**In-House insights on... legal operations**

**“Our legal operations professional is focused on looking at how we can enable technology across the department, along with other operational efficiencies, but she’s also looking at how to engage and support our people. Making sure that our people are engaged and being utilized to their highest and best use and that workloads are equitable across the team is key and she provides me with the data – through our recently launched matter management system – to deliver insights into that.”**

– **Charmaine Toms**, General Counsel, MNP

**“Our greatest value as a legal ops team is doing all of the things for the legal team that aren’t direct legal advice. Essentially, we are here to grease the wheels through the big machine. When I started this role, the first thing I looked at was our internal/external spend. We were spending significantly more on external counsel and we tackled this first on the basis that it was where we could make the greatest financial contribution. We did a panel refresh, renegotiated the terms and value adds and restructured the panel itself.”**

– **Julian Ramasamy**, Head of Legal Operations, ANZ





**Conclusion**



# Alignment with the business is key to empowering legal teams

While many key themes were presented throughout this survey, there is one common thread that weaves throughout all of the “grow, protect, operate and finance” elements and that is how critically important it is for the legal department to align with corporate priorities and to remain closely connected to the business.

Doing so allows you to:

- participate in the strategic planning discussions for the organization and contribute on the front end to revenue growth;
- proactively spot potential issues or risks;
- understand what priorities are ahead enabling you to structure your team and deploy resources where necessary; and
- reinforce the value that the law department brings by demonstrating how the legal department contributes to corporate priorities.

If you're not already regularly meeting with your internal stakeholders, a first step can simply be to spend some time in a one-to-one meeting to understand what might be coming ahead. Asking questions like:

- What do you see as your top priorities for the next 3, 6 and 12 months?
- What impediments do you foresee in accomplishing these goals?
- What can the legal department do to support you in accomplishing these goals?

Priorities shift and change and the best way to demonstrate alignment and support effective collaboration with the business is to have these conversations regularly. While this is not necessarily a panacea for all of the complexities involved with leading a law department, spending more time in front of your internal stakeholders and colleagues can be a huge step in the right direction.

**“Being truly aligned to the business can be a game changer for the law department. I recall in one of my previous general counsel roles, we weren’t aligned with the business as much as we needed to be so I created a matrix and essentially assigned members of my team to each business unit. I said to my business unit peers, ‘here’s your lawyer – please bring them to strategic meetings and include them in the conversation.’ I remember at one of our regular management meetings, one of the VPs said to a member of my team ‘I’d like you to join me on a trip out of the country to visit one of our properties.’**

**That moment was so empowering for my lawyer, but it also completely changed the dynamic between our team and the business. If you aren’t already part of these discussions, you need to invite yourself to them. As a law department leader, you need to create the match – you can’t just wait for it to happen. Once you align, and I mean truly align, you not only shift the perception, but you begin to create additional value for your organization.”**



— **Mary Ann Hynes**, Senior Counsel, Dentons

Known for her many firsts in the industry, Mary Ann was the first female general counsel for a Fortune 500 company while at CCH Inc., she was also the first female officer of Sundstrand Corporation, the first female member of the North Shore General Counsel Association and the first female officer of the Chicago Crime Commission.



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Whether you have been hit by a law enforcement raid far from your headquarters, need to enhance your compliance systems to address the new waves of ESG regulations, or have received anonymous allegations of wrongdoing, Dentons' integrated, multi-practice team is right where you need them with the skills you require. Our Global Compliance and Investigations (GCI) team provides you with local insight into culture and law that only a person deeply rooted in the community can give you, while having the global experience and breadth of expertise that only the world's largest law firm can provide.



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## Dentons Global Advisors

Dentons Global Advisors is an expert-led advisory firm that provides integrated solutions for our clients in an increasingly complex, regulated and interconnected business environment. We help clients engage with governments and regulatory bodies, navigate public disclosures and transactions within the private and capital markets, and manage their reputations through critical moments of change, challenge or opportunity.



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## Dentons Helix

Bringing the best of a managed legal service and private practice, Dentons Helix delivers high-quality legal services through a dedicated legal team, providing data to support strategic business decisions and enabling technology and process efficiencies to position the legal department as a strategic advisor and business-enabler.



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## Dentons In-House Solutions

Dentons In-House Solutions is a strategic law department management and legal operations consultancy leveraging powerful hands-on in-house perspectives and experiences to enable better business outcomes through the optimization of in-house legal service delivery. Our experience extends across all dimensions of the management of a law department, from strategic planning and technology roadmaps to metrics reporting, resource optimization, organization design and contract lifecycle optimization.



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# About Dentons

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