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# *Your clients expect AI. Your firm needs it governed.*

Thomson Reuters surveyed 736 law firm professionals and 203 in-house counsel for its 2026 Future of Professionals Report. The findings are direct: **in-house teams now expect AI-enabled value from outside counsel, and most firms haven't shown it yet.** For a firm handling privileged, high-stakes work, that gap is both a client-retention risk and a confidentiality risk. Here's what the numbers say, and what to do about it.

WHAT THE 2026 DATA SHOWS

**34%**

of law firm professionals are using AI tools their firm never authorized, often with client data

**32%**

of in-house counsel are already reconsidering firms that can't demonstrate AI-enabled value

**77/5**

77% of clients call AI-enabled quality important or essential; just 5% see it from their firms

## What this means for your firm

### Unapproved AI is a confidentiality issue

When a third of professionals use unvetted tools, privileged material can end up in systems the firm never reviewed. The firm carries that exposure either way. Governance closes the gap; banning tools just hides it.

### Your clients are being pushed too

61% of in-house teams face internal pressure to adopt AI faster, and they notice which firms keep pace. Showing a clear, governed AI approach protects the relationships your practice is built on.

### A written strategy pays for itself

Where firms have a defined AI strategy, 64% of professionals say AI meets or beats expectations. Without one, that drops to 29%. The difference isn't the tools. It's the plan.

## The nicwerks® AI governance review

In one focused engagement, we map the AI actually in use at your firm, set a plain-English acceptable-use policy, and deploy approved tools your team will genuinely want to use. You get a clear answer for clients who ask, and one less thing to worry about.

01 Discover what's in use
02 Set the policy
03 Deploy approved tools

Source: Thomson Reuters, Future of Professionals Report 2026 (fieldwork Mar–Apr 2026; 736 law firm respondents across 46 countries; 203 in-house counsel). Figures cited verbatim from the published report.

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