# ILTACON 2022: The Legal Tech Conference Roars Back

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**More Than 3000 Live Attendees**

Not since the pandemic began have we seen a live legal tech conference with more than 3000 people onsite, the third largest ILTACON ever. There was no virtual option. So back they came in droves, clearly pumped up at the thought of seeing one another in person. There were also over 160 exhibitors, a good number of them first time exhibitors.

**How Was This ILTACON Different?**

Overwhelmingly, attendees were talking about the pandemic and how it forced law firm IT departments to support working from home and major changes to workflows. According to ILTA's 2022 Technology Survey, cloud adoption was essential to facilitate collaboration for lawyers and staff working remotely. We had the same experience, with virtually all our clients moving to the cloud if they weren't already there.

And what a triumph the survey revealed for Microsoft Teams. Only 4% of survey respondents were using it in 2020 – that number jumped to 42% in 2022 for unified communications alone. For use in meetings, collaboration and chat, it was even higher. One of the ILTACON sessions had a standing room only crowd attend a panel discussion on Teams, including all that it can do to provide engaging and powerful workspaces while maintaining data security.

The survey also showed that cloud computing is the technology/trend that will create the most significant change in legal tech, followed closely by artificial intelligence.

**Legal Tech Issues That Plague Us**

Law firms have so much data and so many applications, but they seem clueless about how to compile that data and extract useful lessons with which to develop better ways to run their law firm. There are a lot of vendors in this space, lawyers do not seem to understand what they are buying and many intended implementations never truly get off the ground.

There are so many apps and so many integrations that seem to befuddle law firms. Integration in the cloud may present it own set of problems.

And, after all these years, with storage so cheap, we endlessly store data, much of which is "dark data" which we don't know we have. There's a lot of danger in hanging on to that kind of data, but we certainly haven't solved the problem.

How cheap is it to store data? An Amazon study found that, in 2000, the cost of storing 1 terabyte of data was approximately $17,000 compared to $2.00 in 2020. No wonder we have all become hoarders.

One more issue is training. We don't know how to utilize fully the technology we have but we bring in new technology all the time. We are lucky if we master 10% of any given technology. We figure out what we MUST do to perform our duties. The value of trainers is vastly underestimated. Yes, they cost money, but it costs firms more if their attorneys and staff don't know how to use their technology effectively.

**Why is Change so Hard for Law Firms?**

For starters, lawyers are not keen on change. Many are content to do things as they have always done them. The time to master technology is scant in a lawyer's life. Managing partners are often not enamored of change, whether due to risks and monies involved – or simply because they dig their heels down whenever change is suggested.

Change involves disruption and it may cost billable hours. The authors can attest to the truth of what some ILTA attendees noted – that a proposal for change is often met by the words "But we've always done it this way."

Even where there is a willingness to change, lawyers are apt to be sucked in by the representations of salespeople as to what their products will do. Vetting vendors is still a challenge for many lawyers. Our own advice is to seek advice from trusted colleagues who are using the technologies that you are evaluating. Certainly don't go to the references provided by vendors – they are not going to list as a reference an unhappy law firm!

**What Were the Buzzwords at ILTACON?**

Opinions differed, but the word "mature" came up frequently. Vendors appeared more confident in the products they were offering attendees. Integration (of course) was a constant source of conversation.

APIs (Application Program Interfaces) were a constant buzzword. Because APIs are poorly understood by many lawyers, an API is a software intermediary that allows two applications to talk to each other. You may not know the definition, but you use APIs every day! Many vendors are using APIs to work with other vendors – so you get more bang for the buck and enhance productivity.

As several attendees noted, lawyers are suffering from platform fatigue, having to constantly switch from one app or window to another. *Tech Radar* describes platform fatigue this way: "*In order to get work done, accurately and punctually, you need to divide your time and attention between different windows, screens, data sources, files, alerts, monitors, programs, etc. There are just too many places to go and too many windows to check, a situation that practically guarantees you are going to miss something.*" "Missing something" is a constant worry for lawyers!

So what's the answer to the problem? Many say "platformization" which fundamentally means building a tech ecosystem, having multiple applications within a single platform. This makes

workflow integration easier. APIs, as you can imagine, also address the problem of platform fatigue.

**Final Thought**

We read a lot of comments by ILTA attendees, but this one, from Edge Marketing CEO Amy Juer caught the flavor of the ILTACON 2022: "During my whirlwind week at ILTACON22, three main themes struck out: Camaraderie cannot be fully duplicated virtually, automation (for big and small tasks) may be overtaking AI as the latest buzzword, and everyone is still struggling with talent retention and hiring."

Congratulations to the ILTACON 2022 organizers for doing a splendid job – we have rarely seen a conference evoke so much enthusiasm!

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