

How To Get Attys Excited — Not Scared — About Innovation

By **Steven Lerner**

Law360 (August 14, 2024, 3:33 PM EDT) -- Food and beverage gatherings, demos during meetings and statements from passionate advocates are just some ways law firms are getting attorneys excited about new technologies, a panel of leaders said Tuesday.

A panel session on innovation initiatives was held Tuesday during the International Legal Technology Association Conference, or ILTACON, in Nashville. Leaders from law firms discussed ways to engage attorneys during innovation efforts, including using the right mix of incentives and resources to make the staff enthusiastic about new tools.

According to Stephanie Goutos, a practice innovation attorney for Gunderson Dettmer Stough Villeneuve Franklin & Hachigian LLP, leaders should identify a product champion in the firm who can successfully convince others to use a new tool.

"If you don't have attorneys that believe in it ... it's a lot less likely to succeed," Goutos said during the panel discussion.

Evan Shenkman, the chief knowledge and innovation officer for Fisher Phillips, said the firm takes this a step further by getting product champions to provide quotes about why they enjoy the product and emailing those encouraging statements across the organization.

Even when firms identify product champions, Shenkman said that successful adoption also depends on the quality of the tool.

"If it's not a tool that you've thoroughly vetted ... it's not the right tool for you.," Shenkman said.

Determining the quality of a potential new tool means getting the input of people working in the day-to-day operations instead of firm leadership, because those individuals will better understand pain points, according to Goutos.

Experts agreed that firms should pilot new software with staff across different roles, functions and locations to get broad perspectives. Each practice group will have slightly different tech needs.

Gunderson Dettmer uses food and beverage events to get attorneys interested in new tools. The firm also schedules demos during existing meetings instead of conducting stand-alone events, according to Goutos.

Not all attorneys will be happy with the new technology, but Goutos said that firms should focus on making sure most attorneys favor the tool.

"Not all solutions are aimed at the firm in general," Lisa Worcman, a partner at Mattos Filho, said during the panel.

Mattos Filho launched ATTIX, an open innovation program that allows the firm to partner with tech providers. Worcman said firms should get to know tools because those technologies are evolving.



Steven Lerner covers legal technology for Law360 Pulse

Many firms are focused on getting attorneys excited about the arrival of generative artificial intelligence instead of being fearful about the risks associated with the technology.

Shenkman said it is easy to get attorneys excited about generative AI because most chatbots are easy to use. Fisher Phillips, an early adopter of Casetext's CoCounsel, encouraged its attorneys to ask the chatbots about ways it could help legal professionals, according to Shenkman.

--Editing by Robert Rudinger.

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