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# 2023 Legal Professionals Survey: How speech recognition can make flat-rate work profitable

[Nuance Communications](#)

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In recent years, legal firms have adapted business practices to offer their professionals remote or hybrid working. But, at the same time, some firms have found themselves under pressure to offer flat-rate prices for routine legal services to take advantage of this revenue stream. So, how can firms offer this work without placing an additional admin burden on already hard-working junior associates? We surveyed 100 legal professionals to find out if the latest speech recognition technology might be the solution.

Many potential clients now compare legal services in the same way consumers do when purchasing insurance or choosing an energy provider. Knowing what firms charge, and reading feedback from existing clients, can help new clients find the best service at the right price.

For more routine legal work such as wills and tenancy agreements, there's even the option to use pre-approved forms and self-service tools at a fraction of the cost of a solicitor's time. This puts legal firms under pressure to find a way to offer flat-rate services that bring consistent revenue or focus their efforts on higher-value client work that's less reliable.

At the same time, firms are adjusting to offer their legal professionals the flexibility of remote or hybrid working that most employees now expect.

To explore this area in more detail, Nuance partnered with Censuswide to survey 100 legal professionals about the benefits of hybrid working, how they manage the ever-growing pile of admin work, and how technology can help them with routine documentation tasks.

## Legal professionals are torn between hybrid and office working

For many, working remotely is a chance to improve the balance between their personal and professional lives. But workers in the legal sector seem less likely to take advantage of it than those in other industries.

The results of our survey suggest that around half (51%) of legal professionals still work in the office full-time. However, more C-level executives (63%) are back in the office than junior associates in entry-level roles (47%).

While many legal professionals are fully office-based, hybrid working is almost as popular—42% of all respondents currently work that way. Only 7% of survey respondents work fully remotely.

The flexibility to work from practically anywhere unlocks a range of benefits. Of those remote workers we surveyed:

- 52% manage their days better
- 46% are more productive
- 41% spend more time with their families

But even with the advantages of modern technology to keep legal teams and their clients connected, remote working can present challenges:

- 45% struggle with not being able to speak to their teams in person
- 39% have more interruptions at home
- 36% don't have all the tools that are available in the office

Despite these challenges, legal professionals enjoy the greater convenience of working from home—but it hasn't made the burden of admin tasks, such as completing documentation, any easier.

## Legal professionals are busy, and more admin only adds to the burden

According to our survey, respondents spend an average of four hours every day on typing tasks, and 28% of them type for more than six hours. All this time using a keyboard is taking a physical toll on a lot of professionals: more than a third said their hands hurt at the end of the day.

But time spent on admin is also preventing professionals from doing work that adds value. Most legal professionals say typing takes time away from adding value for their clients (62%) and would enjoy their job more if admin took less time (68%).

Although just over half (55%) of respondents said their organisation had yet to address the issue of admin, some firms are taking action to try and reduce this burden. An expensive option is to employ internal or outsourced typists—but could speech recognition offer a more efficient and cost-effective solution?

## Legal professionals would rather talk than type

Many of the legal professionals we surveyed find it much easier to talk compared to typing for everyday tasks.

- 53% find it easier to explain concepts, thoughts, and responses by speaking
- 49% say their thoughts are more comprehensive when spoken out loud
- 49% miss more key details when typing instead of speaking

Given these advantages, it's unsurprising that 93% of respondents believe their business will use speech recognition technology in the future.

Around a fifth (21%) of legal professionals say their firms are already empowering staff with speech recognition to capture meeting notes, fill out forms, and communicate with clients more effectively. A large majority (90%) of the professionals who are using it have seen a reduction in their admin burden as

a result—and shared how the time savings are helping them:

- 48% spend more time with clients and improving relationships
- 44% focus on proactive ideas which have benefited colleagues
- 32% spend more time on their career development

All these activities can add significant value to your legal firm, foster loyal clients, and increase employee satisfaction. But the efficiency of speech recognition can do something else: it can also make flat-rate work profitable.

## Speech recognition helps firms assign work to the right legal professional

Flat-rate services offer a consistent revenue stream and help to build a loyal client base. However, this type of work often only becomes economically viable when it's carried out by junior associates, freeing up more experienced associates to focus on higher-value client work.

But, given the amount of time that legal professionals already spend on admin and documentation, how can they fit this extra work in without extending the working day? And, as our survey revealed that nearly half of legal professionals aren't in the office every day, any new technology needs to be both mobile and secure.

[Dragon Legal Anywhere](#) is Nuance's professional-grade speech recognition solution specifically designed for law firms looking to improve efficiency, productivity, and client service.

The solution has an extensive "built-in" legal vocabulary to recognise complex legal terminology and acronyms automatically. But users can also add verbal shortcuts to insert common phrases, boilerplate text, or signatures meaning that routine documentation can be done as quickly as possible.

And, when Dragon is used in combination with other cloud-based software—like Microsoft 365—users can begin work in one location and complete it in another, and all data is fully encrypted.

Our survey highlighted how much admin work legal professionals have—and how they sometimes struggle to fit it into the working day. But, because Dragon helps legal professionals complete documentation as efficiently as possible, firms taking on flat-rate work can ensure that it won't add to their admin burden.

For further analysis of the 2023 Censuswide survey [watch this short video](#) or [download the report](#) for the full results.

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