



The 2025 Contracting Efficiency Benchmarking Report



Foreword

Every business outcome starts with a contract. Revenue, partnerships, vendor relationships, compliance—all depend on how efficiently your organization manages its contracting processes. Yet after working with hundreds of legal teams over the years, we've watched the same painful scenario play out repeatedly.

A General Counsel frantically searches through email threads for the latest version of a critical customer agreement. Three floors down, procurement manually tracks renewals in a spreadsheet, while high-value agreements expire unnoticed. Meanwhile, competitors close deals in days while your team is still routing contracts for approvals.

This isn't just operational friction—it's strategic suffocation. Legal teams that should be driving business growth instead find themselves drowning in administrative chaos.

That's why we created this benchmarking study. We needed to understand not just what's broken, but what actually works. After surveying legal leaders—nearly half of them General Counsels and CLOs with real decision-making authority—the findings are both sobering and inspiring.

The sobering news? The performance gap between high-performing and struggling legal teams isn't narrowing. It's widening. Some organizations complete standard contracts in a single day while others take weeks. That's ineffective in the long run.

The inspiring news? The path to excellence isn't about expensive technology or massive teams. The highest performers share common characteristics that any organization can implement: clear processes, strategic stakeholder boundaries, measurement-driven improvement, and relentless focus on business enablement.

This report provides your roadmap. Whether your team is drowning in manual work or ready for advanced automation, you'll discover exactly where you stand today and the specific steps to reach the next level of contracting excellence.

The transformation is happening now. The only question is whether you'll lead it or be left behind by.



Akshay Verma

COO, SpotDraft

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Key Findings

56%

of legal teams can't execute standard contracts within a week

80%

of legal teams have a high willingness to automate

49%

of teams still manage contracts with email and shared folders

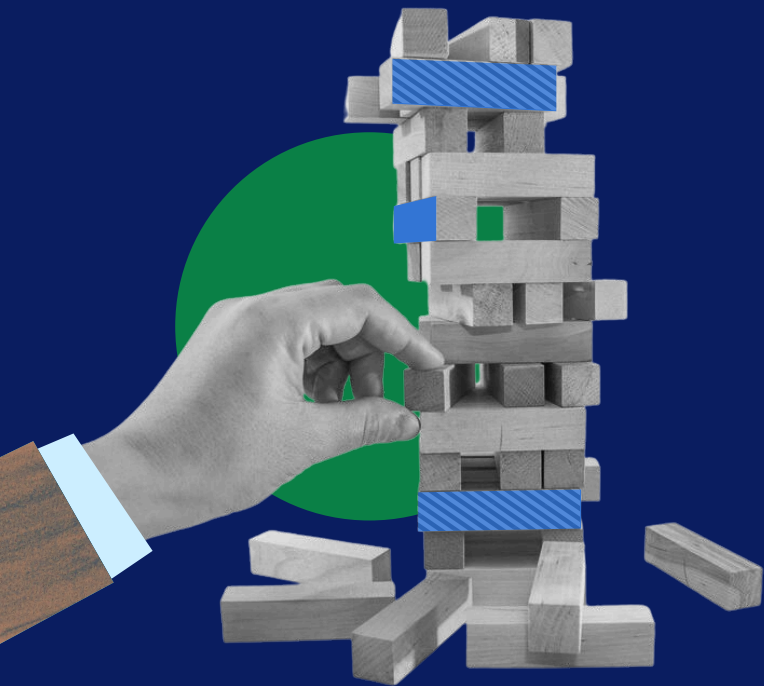
Only

12%

of legal teams report end-to-end contract automation

77%

of organizations saw a jump in contract volume this year



CHAPTER 1

What is the state of contracting right now?

Pause for just a moment and think: how much of your legal department's day is lost in document chases and "contract chaos" that should have been fixed years ago? If you're like most in-house legal teams, it's too much. And the stakes are only getting higher as contract volumes and regulatory risks rise.

To understand how modern in-house legal teams manage contracting, we assessed and benchmarked their contracting process across volume of contracts, turnaround time, and automation levels.

HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

3in4 legal teams process 50+ contracts monthly without proper systems.



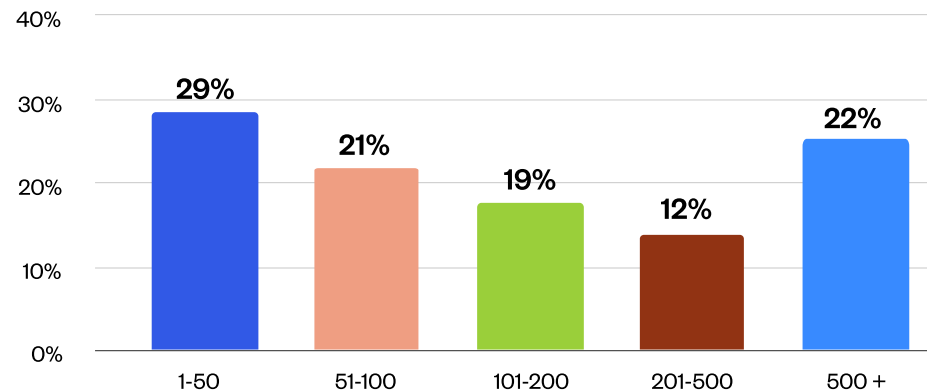
“Our old tool worked for simple contracts, but SpotDraft has been a game-changer for more complex workflows.”



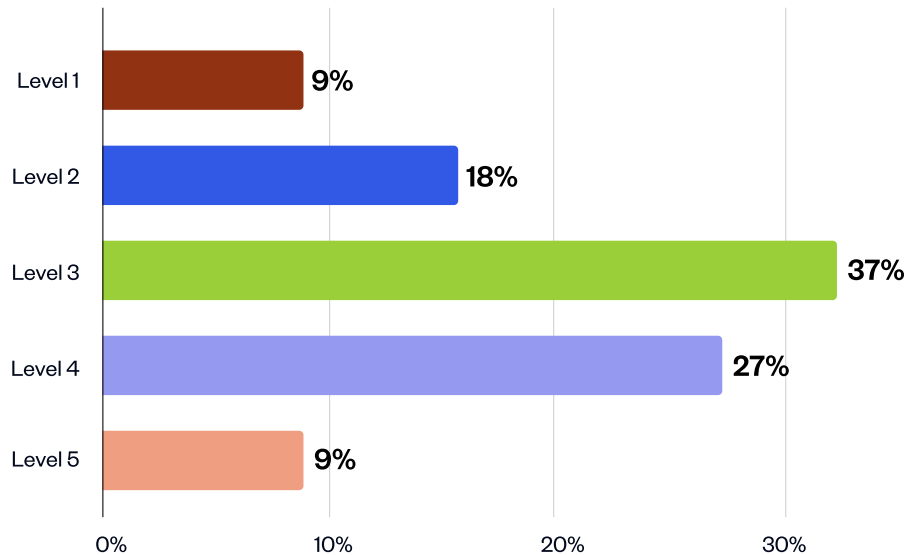
Kerry Sheehan

*Director of Legal Operations & Compliance
at Doral Renewables*

How many contracts does your team process monthly?



How complex are the contracts within your organization?



For legal ops teams specifically, things are no different.

90% rate their contracts as moderate to highly complex

For most in-house legal teams, contracts are not simple “one-pagers.” Over 90% of legal professionals report dealing with moderate to high complexity in their agreements, a reflection of both the nature of their business and the evolving regulatory landscape. This complexity isn’t just about size—it’s about the web of obligations, regulatory touch points, and business-critical outcomes at stake.

As contracts grow more complex, managing them with manual methods quickly becomes unsustainable, leading to confusion, inefficiency, and heightened legal risk. That’s why a clear understanding of contract complexity is the cornerstone of building scalable, resilient legal operations.

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Why do some teams fly while others crawl?

We came across a massive performance disparity between high-performing and struggling legal teams. Organizations at the extremes show a massive difference in contract processing speed.

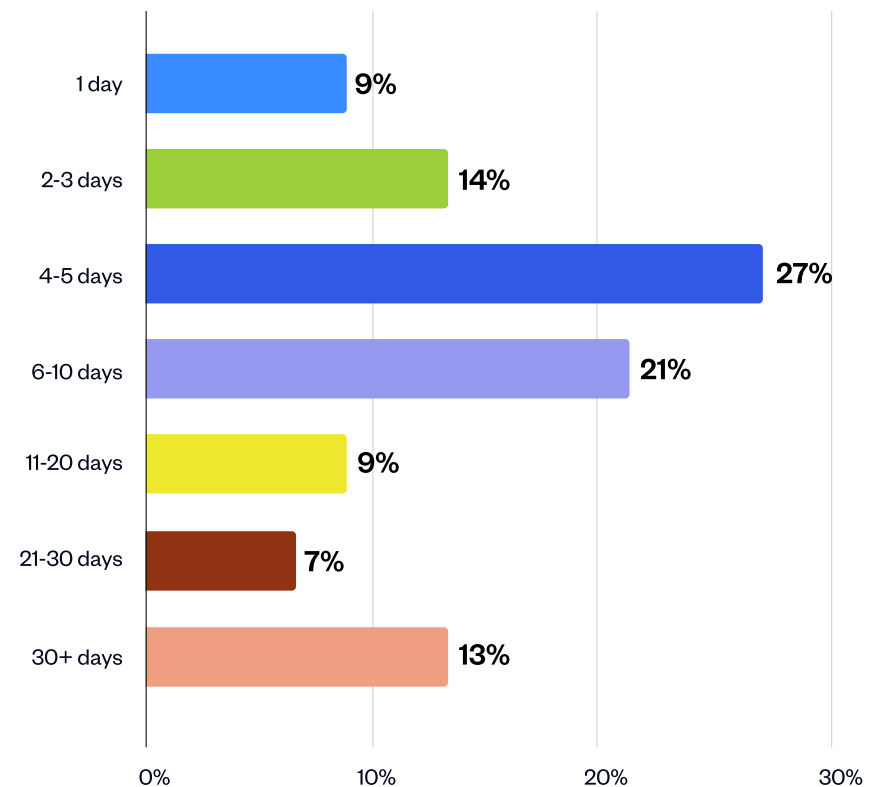
HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

1 in 3 legal teams take over 15+ days to complete standard contracts

The gap between top-performing legal teams and those struggling is most evident in contract turnaround times: our survey shows that teams with automated workflows routinely complete standard contracts like NDAs and MSAs in just 1–3 days, while those still relying on manual processes and scattered tools often take a week or more—and sometimes as long as 30 days.

This isn't just about speed; it's about a proactive approach to process improvement. Teams that streamline and automate their contract management consistently eliminate delays, enabling business agility, while those that don't remain trapped in slow cycles that frustrate stakeholders and hinder growth.

How long do standard contracts, such as NDAs and MSAs, typically take to complete?

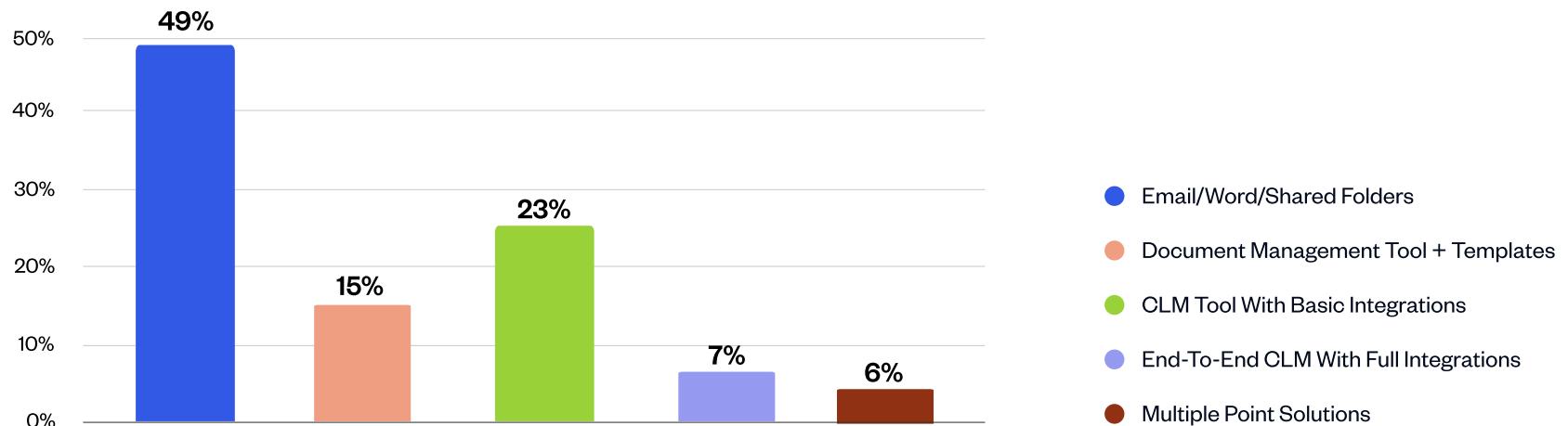


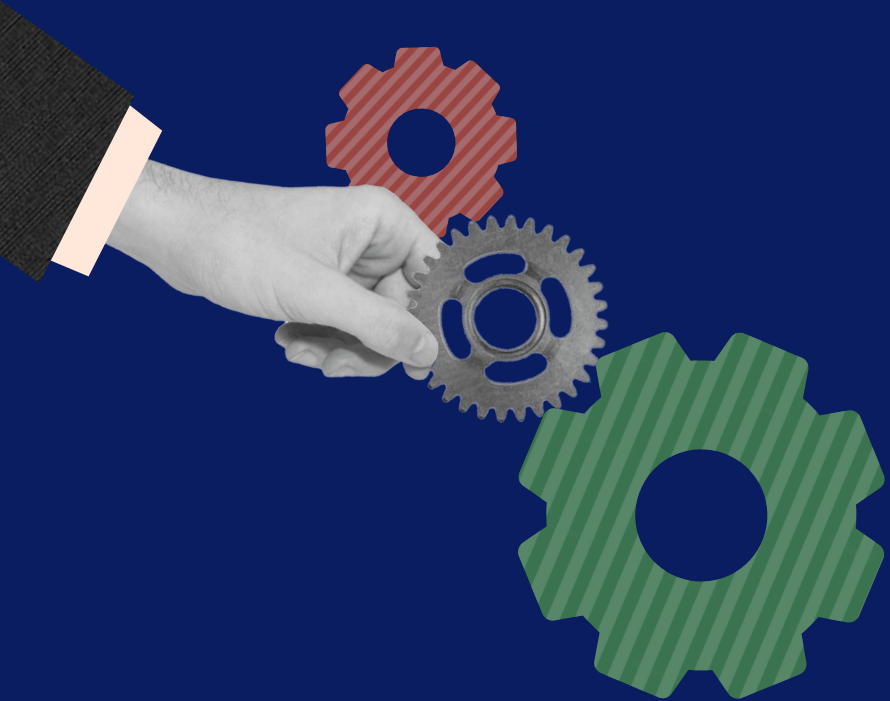
Today, most in-house legal teams manage contracts using a patchwork of email, Word documents, and shared network folders—a legacy approach that still dominates nearly half of organizations. While some have adopted basic document management tools or cloud storage, true end-to-end contract lifecycle management (CLM) platforms remain the exception rather than the rule.

HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

49% of legal teams still manage contracts like it's 1995—with email and Word docs

How do you primarily manage contracts today?



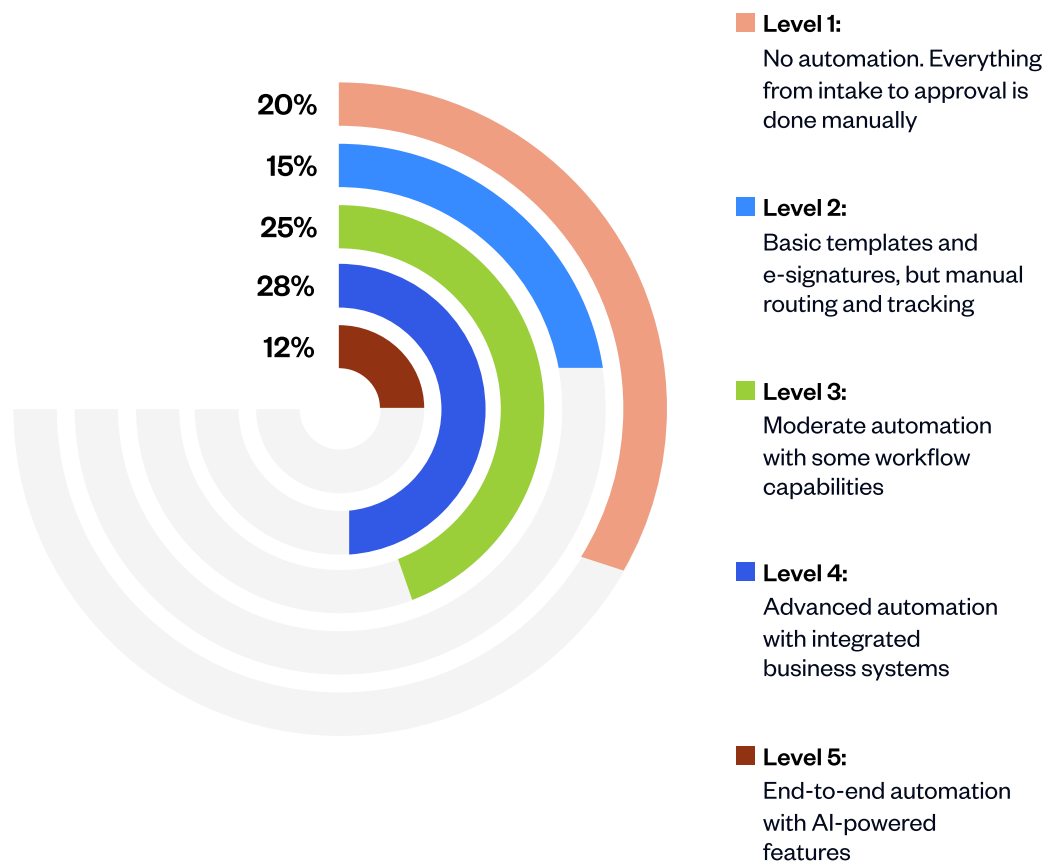


CHAPTER 2

Is automation the cure-all legal teams need?

Our survey captured how automation is impacting contracting processes for legal teams across industries. What we found is something we like to call 'The Automation Paradox'.

What is your current level of contract automation?



When asked about their current level of contract automation, most in-house legal teams report that they are still early in their journey.

This isn't just about efficiency—it's about competitive survival. Organizations still managing contracts through email are operating at a fundamental disadvantage compared to peers who've implemented strategic automation.

Successful automation, however, isn't solely about adopting AI tools. Organizations are achieving automation sophistication even with basic tools, suggesting that process innovation is outpacing platform adoption.

Successful automation depends more on **process design, stakeholder training,** and **optimization** than on feature-rich platforms. Organizations with basic tools but well-designed processes often outperform those with sophisticated platforms but poor implementation.

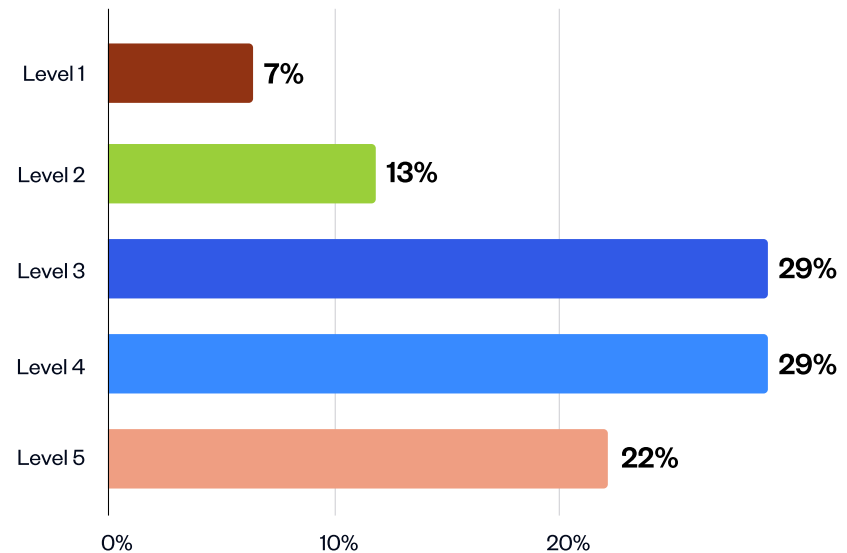
Survey data shows that most in-house legal teams are eager to automate their contracting processes. In fact, 76% of organizations report a high willingness (between level 3-5) to invest in automation, reflecting wide recognition of the benefits in efficiency, accuracy, and risk reduction.

However, this enthusiasm doesn't always translate to action—only 10% describe their organizations as “fully committed,” with dedicated budget and buy-in already in place.

HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

76% of legal teams have high willingness to automate their contracting process

How willing is your organization to automate contracting?



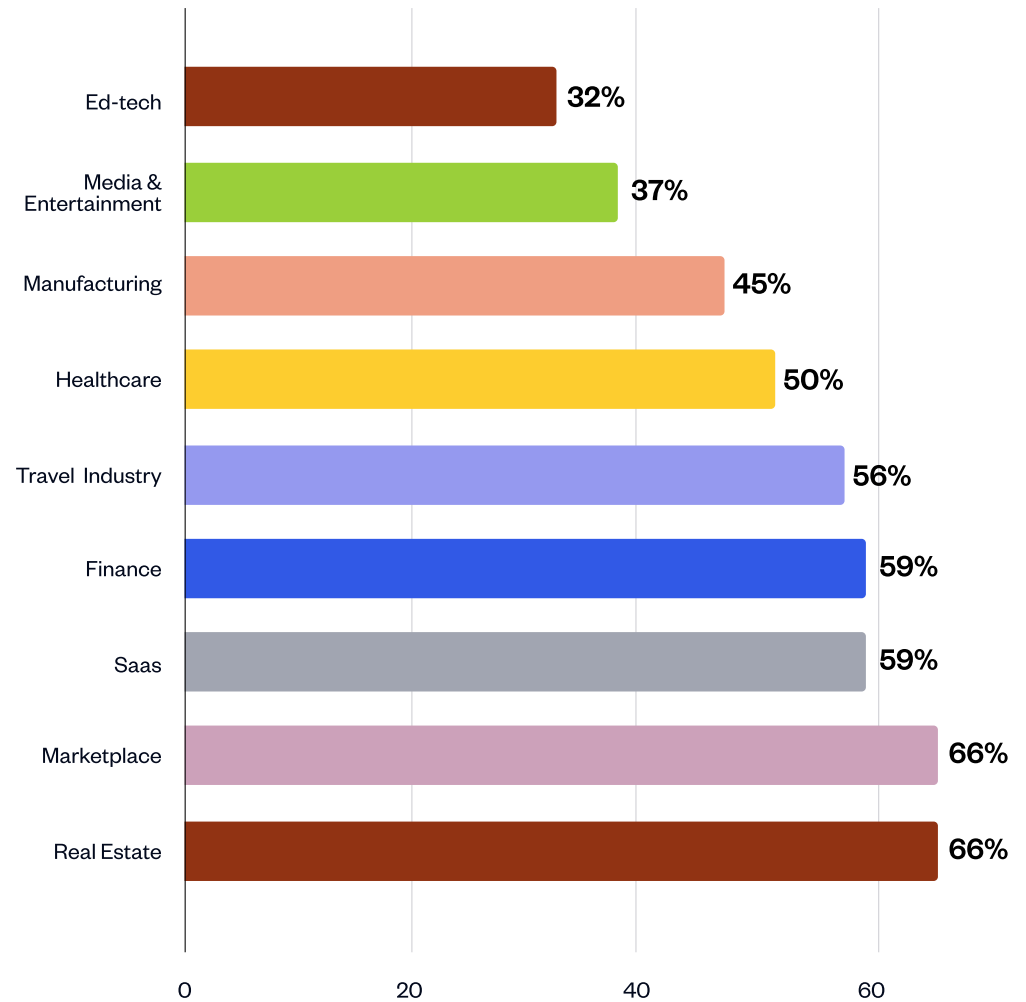
HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

Ed-tech, media and entertainment, and manufacturing companies are the least willing to automate contracting

Willingness can also differ by industry, with IT, SaaS, and finance more likely to push automation forward, while sectors like Ed-tech, media, and manufacturing express greater caution due to cultural or resource challenges.

Ultimately, while the appetite for automation is strong across legal teams, moving from intention to true transformation still requires investment, planning, and internal alignment.

Automation willingness across industries



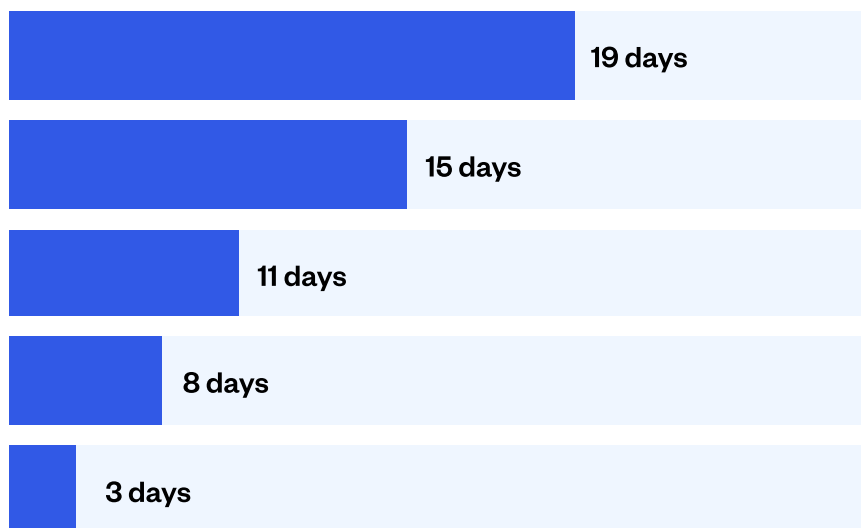


CHAPTER 3

What do high performing legal teams do differently?

The dramatic performance variations revealed in our survey data—from organizations completing contracts in 1 day to others taking 15+ days—provide valuable insights into what separates efficiency leaders from struggling teams.

Automation Level x Turnaround time



To understand the impact of automation on contracting, we studied how an increase in automation level speeds up contract turnaround for legal teams.

HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

Manual contracting takes 19 days— automation brings it down to 3 days



Teams with higher contract automation consistently achieve faster turnaround times for standard contracts



Organizations at automation level 3 close contracts 8 days faster on average than those at level 1.

At the lowest level of automation, contract completion takes a staggering 19 days, underscoring how manual processes can become major bottlenecks.

As organizations adopt more automation, turnaround times drop steadily: to 15, then 11, 8, and ultimately as low as 6 days. The most automated teams deliver results more than three times faster than their manual counterparts.

This reinforces a powerful message—investing in higher levels of contract automation doesn't just save administrative time, but fundamentally changes how quickly legal can support business goals, accelerate deals, and reduce operational stress across the company.

HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

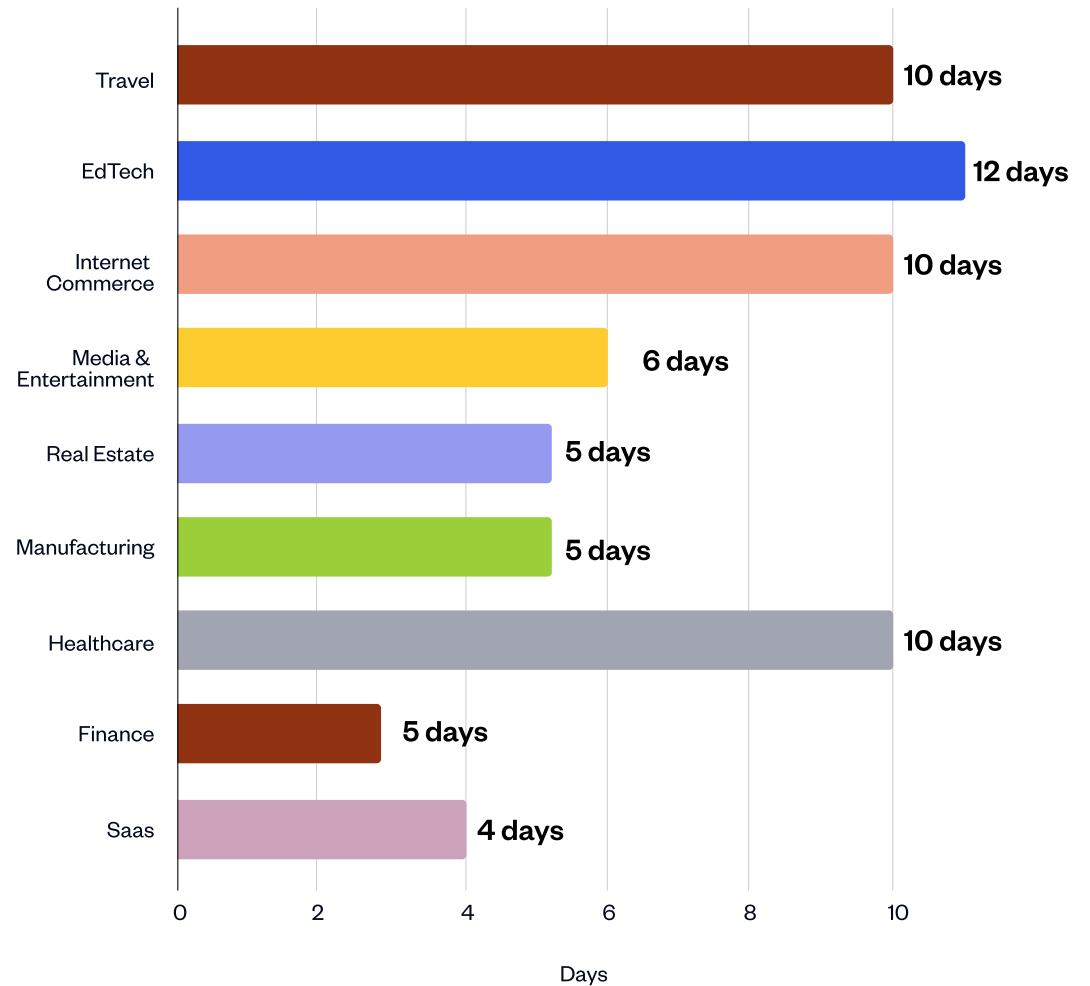
Fintech and IT industries lead with 3-4 day contract turnaround time

Fintech and IT solutions stand out as the clear leaders, finalizing contracts in just 3–4 days on average—an efficiency enabled by their advanced use of automation and digital workflows.

In contrast, industries like travel, edtech, and internet commerce experience much longer cycles, often exceeding 10 days, due to heavier reliance on manual processes, complex approval chains, or legacy systems.

These differences reinforce a central theme of the benchmarking report: teams and sectors that invest in modern contract management are able to move more quickly, reduce bottlenecks, and better support business agility, while those slow to adapt risk falling behind in today's fast-paced commercial environment.

Average contract turnaround time across industries



HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

Automation increases efficiency by 73% —Each contract workflow delivers more with technology

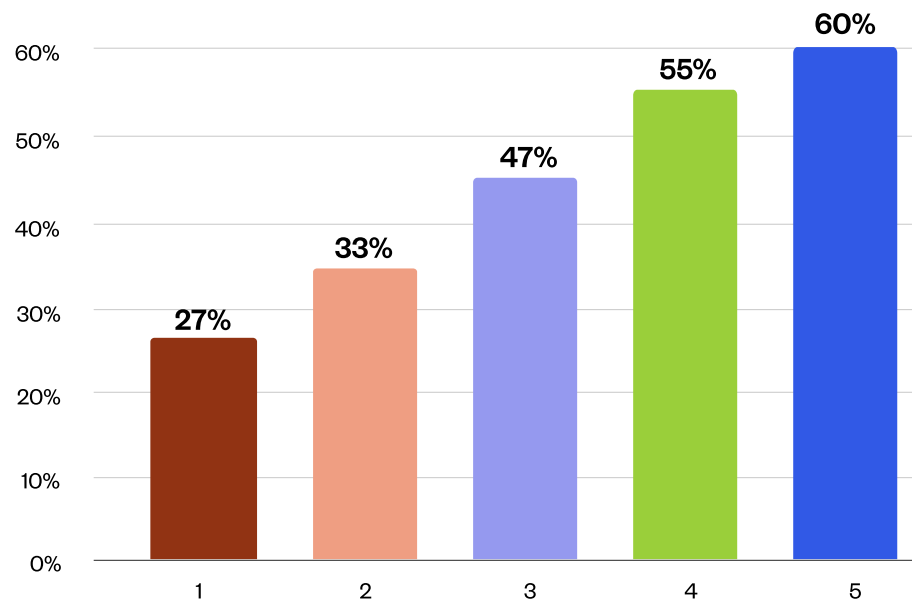
To bring true clarity to how efficiently legal teams operate, we developed an efficiency score that combines the three most vital metrics in contracting: monthly contract volume, automation level, and average turnaround time.

Rather than looking at just speed or volume in isolation, this score balances how many contracts a team handles, how automated their process is, and how quickly they deliver results.

WHY THIS MATTERS

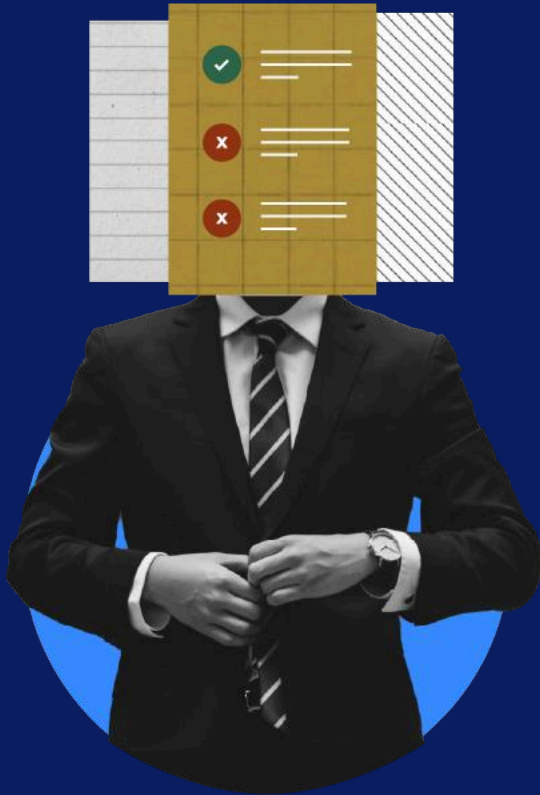
This metric rewards both scale (handling more contracts) and maturity (higher automation), but crucially penalizes slow processes—so teams only score high if they automate and move fast.

A higher score means your operation not only handles more business but closes deals quicker—showcasing real-world throughput, not just theoretical capability.



How did we calculate average contracting efficiency score?

$$\text{Efficiency Score} = \frac{\text{Monthly Contract Volume} \times \text{Automation Level}}{\text{Average Turnaround Time (days)}}$$



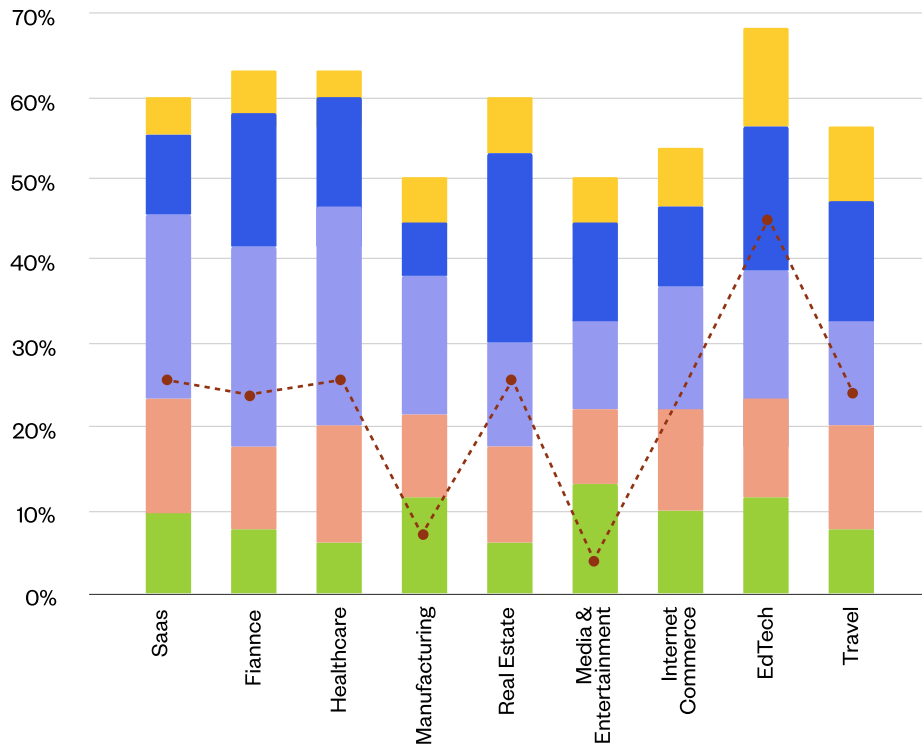
CHAPTER 4

Understanding future readiness and the evolution of legal teams

We analyze how contract volume growth, automation maturity, and turnaround times combine to reveal not just rising contract demands, but how efficiency and speed empower organizations to scale effectively.

Approximately how much has your contract volume increased year-over-year?

⦿ YOY Growth
 ● Level 1
 ● Level 2
● Level 3
 ● Level 4
 ● Level 5






HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

Higher automation maturity clearly correlates with faster contract growth across industries.

As contract volumes rise and business demands evolve, the mandate for in-house legal teams is rapidly shifting from reactive support to strategic enabler.

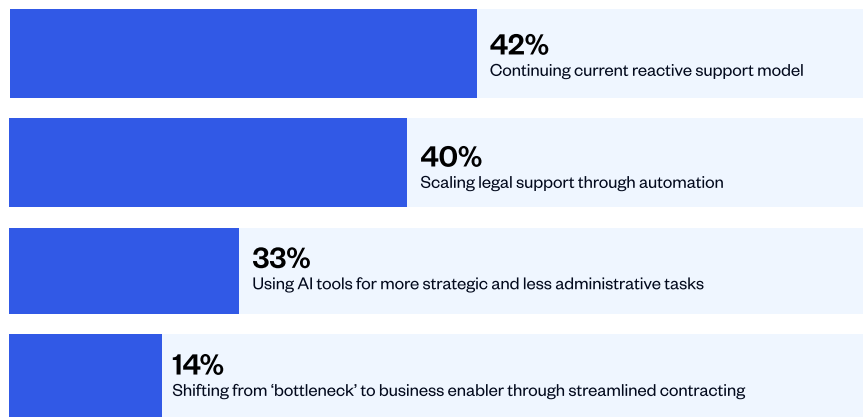
KEY INSIGHTS

- 
Consulting and EdTech lead in automation (levels 4–5) and contract growth (48% and 33% YoY).
- 
IT/SaaS, Finance, Real Estate & Internet Commerce hold steady with mixed automation and 20–21% growth.
- 
Manufacturing and Media/Entertainment lag with low automation (levels 1–2) and slowest growth (10% and 7%).

High-performing teams are leveraging automation, analytics, and cross-functional collaboration to scale support without sacrificing compliance or quality.

These future-ready teams proactively forecast workloads, automate routine agreements, and provide real-time insights for business leaders.

How do you envision your legal team's role evolving over the next 12 months?*



*Participants in this survey could choose more than one response

The role of legal is transforming: 40% of leaders expect to expand automation to boost impact, and a third are piloting AI to take on more strategic responsibilities.

Today, the most successful legal functions are those that adapt quickly, invest in smarter processes, and embrace technology not as a one-time fix, but as a driver of ongoing evolution.

For legal teams, future readiness isn't a distant goal—it's a mindset and operational shift that starts now, setting the groundwork for sustained efficiency and business partnership.

HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

A combined 80% of legal teams are shifting from reactive support to modern, tech-driven strategic roles.

This distribution illustrates a legal ecosystem evolving rapidly in response to rising contract volumes, complexity, and the availability of advanced tech solutions.

The emphasis on automation and AI signals a profound shift in skill sets, priorities, and operating models—from reactive risk mitigators to proactive partners driving business acceleration.

Conclusion

The role of legal is transforming:

40% of leaders expect to expand automation to boost impact, and a third are piloting AI to take on more strategic responsibilities. Today, the most successful legal functions are those that adapt quickly, invest in smarter processes, and embrace technology not as a one-time fix, but as a driver of ongoing evolution.

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