🧾 Buyer's Guide to Legal AI Vendors

Follow-Along Worksheet

Use this worksheet to capture insights as you move through the live session.

How to Use This Worksheet

✔ Check items that already reflect your process.
✔ Add insights or examples from Elspeth Vincent's discussion.
✔ Bring this handout to your next vendor or procurement meeting and use it as your first draft vendor evaluation framework.

1. Strategy to Select Tools

When the market feels flooded with AI products, where do you even start?

- Identify the main problems we want AI to solve (e.g., template generation, NDAs, horizon scanning, automations, etc.).
- Define the ROI we're seeking and have pre-AI baselines.
- Map what tools we already have and whether they can be extended.
- Understand what type of tool we actually need (e.g., CLM vs. AI-only).
- Have a process for shortlisting – not just reacting to polished demos.

📝 Notes:

2. Funding & Long-Term Viability

Most AI vendors are startups. How can you tell who will still exist next year?

- Check how vendors are funded — and who their investors are.
- Review whether they rely heavily on one or two major clients.
- Ask about cash runway, renewal rates, and growth pace.
- Evaluate both survivability and scalability — can they sustain and grow?

📝 Insights / Red Flags to Watch:

3. Product Roadmap & Differentiation

Even well-funded companies can lose direction.

- Review how often vendors ship meaningful updates.
- Compare their roadmap to what's actually been delivered.
- Test whether "coming soon" features are real or vaporware.
- Identify genuine innovation versus repackaged or copycat features.

📝 Notes:

4. Team Quality & Culture

Behind every roadmap is a team.

- Look for experienced technical and legal leadership.
- Assess retention, customer success staffing, and hiring patterns.
- Watch for leadership turnover or founder fatigue.
- Evaluate whether the team consistently delivers on commitments.

📝 Notes:

5. Implementation & Integration

Buying the tool is only the beginning.

- Review the onboarding plan and post-pilot support structure.
- Test integrations early (SharePoint, Slack, Teams, CLMs, etc.).
- Clarify who owns implementation – the vendor or a partner.
- Define what success looks like in the first 90 days.

📝 Notes:

6. Data Security & Confidentiality

Security is the deal-breaker.

- Confirm whether customer data is used for model training.
- Review data protection addendums and subprocessor disclosures.
- Verify third-party audits (SOC 2, ISO 27001) and certifications.
- Establish when and how IT or InfoSec sign-off occurs.

📝 Questions or Follow-Ups for IT:

7. Competitive Landscape

Who are they really competing with, and why does it matter?

- Identify which products they most often replace or integrate with.
- Test their differentiation claims through customer references.
- Verify whether partnerships are operational or purely marketing.
- Assess their staying power in a fast-moving market.

📝 Notes:

8. Pricing & Renewals

The biggest surprises often come at renewal.

- Clarify what future features or add-ons will cost.
- Review automatic renewal or price-escalation clauses.
- Benchmark pricing against comparable tools or user cohorts.
- Ensure pilots or proofs of concept don’t auto-convert to full contracts.
- Negotiate renewal terms that protect long-term value.

📝 Negotiation Points:

9. Closing Takeaways

- Note one question every buyer forgets to ask until it’s too late.
- Record one principle you’ll apply before your next AI purchase.

📝 Final Reflection: