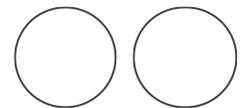




Firms have a lot to lose when vendors refuse to integrate with other solutions. | Credit: Canva

Avoiding Legal Tech Vendors That Don't Play Well with Others


eSentio Technologies
 6,374 followers



February 20, 2025

By [Simon Elven](#)

We've all heard the adage "Play nicely with the other children," and it holds as much weight in legal technology as it did on the school playground. When law firms invest in major technology, a vendor's failure to "play nice" results in more than strained relationships – it can have devastating effects on firm budgets, productivity and future technology plans.

As legal tech vendors acquire new products and consolidate, they will attempt to "platformize" their offerings. This isn't a bad thing per se, but it can be troubling for firms that don't want all the products a vendor has to offer. Given this truth, when making new product decisions, it is critical that firms scrutinize whether the platforms they choose will integrate well with other products they need or already own. Some firms like the idea of a larger solution set of products from the most prominent of law firm vendors, but often the array of products don't necessarily work to meet the needs of all firms in the same way.

This openness to interoperability is of heightened importance in a cloud-to-cloud integration environment where firms have diminished control and are highly dependent on the cooperation of their vendors.

At eSentio, our extensive experience with product selection, implementation, and integration has provided us with unique insights into the criteria that are crucial when selecting a vendor. One of the critical components we emphasize relates to the opening paragraph – how well does a particular vendor support other products used by a firm? This requires careful scrutiny, as every vendor claims to have an open approach to collaboration. However, the reality can be more nuanced.

Assessing Support for Integration Among Vendors

The first question to consider is the baseline: how easy is it to get support from a particular vendor when the firm takes a best-of-breed approach to the products it licenses? Does a vendor encourage the integration of complementary products, or not? Firms should consider how receptive their primary vendor is to another product when support is needed to ensure that integrations work correctly (or at all).

Vendors may not be particularly transparent when discussing integration partnerships, so it is important to gather as much information as possible at the assessment stage.

How Will the Vendor Meet Integration Challenges?

Our experience with various vendors has shown significant differences in their willingness to be flexible when working with a competing vendor's product. It would clearly be unreasonable to expect a major modification to a vendor's roadmap to assist the better functioning of a partner's solution. But the vendor should be willing to consider, say, a minor tweak to an API call needed by the firm. This could make (and, indeed has made) all the difference in a client's perception of a vendor's openness. When integrating products, both the vendor's and partner's reputations are on the line, but the one that takes the hit is always the one that won't cooperate.

Perceived (or Actual) Competing Offerings

Perhaps the trickiest situation arises when a vendor perceives a conflict between one of their offerings and a partner's solution. This is common when a firm chooses a different product than that of the vendor's competing solution set. This best-of-breed approach has been common and is expected in our industry. While a vendor will be disappointed when another product is chosen, there should be no resistance in allowing the firm to make that choice and integrate what it wants.

Resistance can take some subtle and not-so-subtle forms. For instance, support may be slow to obtain when needed to complete an integration. This subtle resistance can be damaging to the timeline of a project. But a more damaging situation occurs when a vendor simply refuses to allow a completing product to integrate. When this situation happens—and it does—a firm must ask itself: is this a vendor they want to work with?

When new vendors enter the market and build a better mousetrap, a firm shouldn't be prevented from using it because their primary vendor wants to hold onto a market share. Firms need their vendors to be on their side, not out for themselves. If a vendor doesn't want to lose market share, they should innovate and offer a better solution. If they do, clients will stay. If they don't, they will lose out to better products.

Navigating Tricky Integrations: A Checklist

In an increasingly consolidated legal tech environment, few law firms can rely on true agnosticism from their vendors. To avoid costly integration challenges, firms should take these steps:

- Establish your technology roadmap and future requirements with a holistic view of your existing vendors, partnerships and functionality.
- Determine if the vendor:
 - will readily provide their API to third parties looking to integrate with their platform.
 - has an approved list of partners. It is sometimes just as enlightening to see who is not on that list as who is!
 - uses established criteria for integration partnerships. Firms should consider what criteria might come into play when looking at the products they would like to implement in the future.
- Gather insights from peers in the industry and understand how vendors are likely to interact with others.
- Explore contractual options that obligate the vendor to integrate with preferred solutions.
- Consider engaging a third-party consultancy to help evaluate tech vendors and, particularly, their approach to integration.

Choose Carefully

As more vendors acquire and consolidate products, there's a high likelihood that a clash of competing solutions will arise. Firms must be prepared to stand their ground on required features and functionality. Selecting a legal tech vendor that supports seamless integration with other tools is crucial for maximizing your firm's investment.

By carefully evaluating vendors' openness to collaboration, support for integrations, and willingness to address integration challenges, law firms can ensure they have chosen a partner that aligns with their needs and will support their long-term strategy. Let's see who is playing nice and who is not.

Simon Elven is Director of UK Operations at eSentio Technologies.