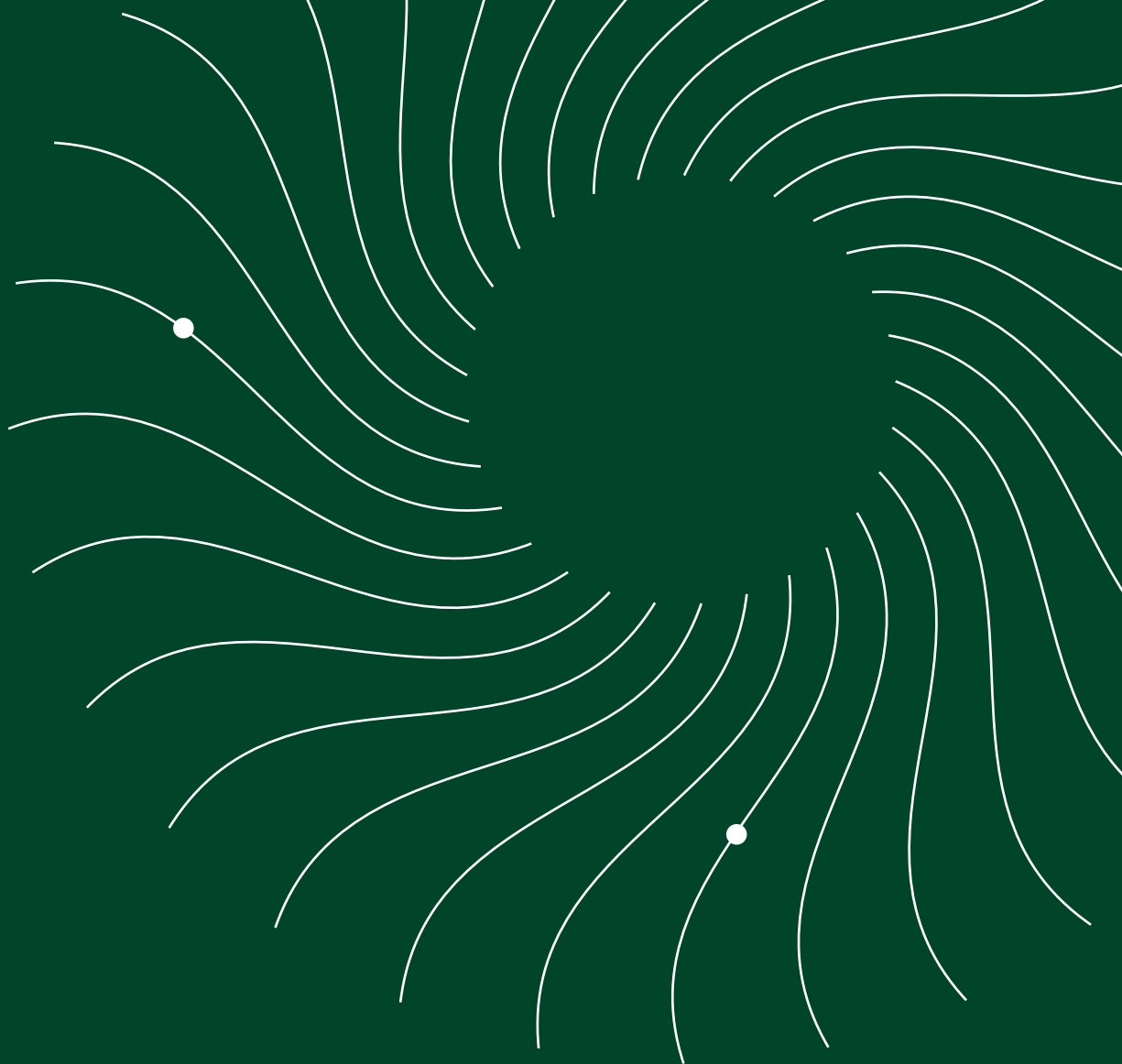




Agentic AI 101

What UK legal professionals need to know

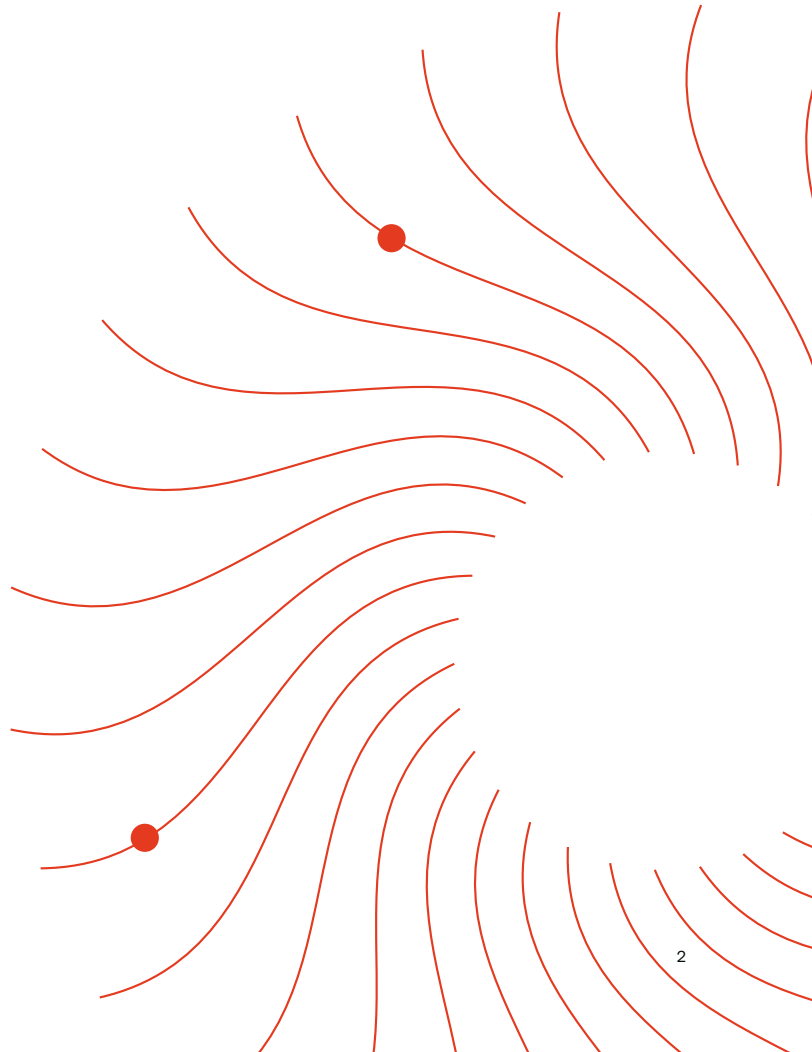
An essential guide for bringing AI agents to your legal practice



For solicitors and in-house lawyers interested in implementing agentic AI but uncertain where to begin, this e-book serves as an introduction and guide.

Readers will learn the fundamental differences between agentic AI and generative AI, how Fiduciary-Grade AI™ works in legal environments, and practical applications across law firms and corporate legal departments.

This e-book also examines the business benefits that come with agentic AI, essential evaluation criteria for selecting the right agentic AI solution, and answers to common questions around implementation, security, regulatory compliance, and measuring ROI.



Generative AI and agentic AI: What are they, and how are they different?



What is a query?

A query, also known as a prompt, is what you give a GenAI or an agentic AI tool to accomplish what you need. At its most basic, a query is a question (“What is the current position on constructive dismissal claims?”) or a command (“Summarise the key holdings from the Smith v Jones judgment.”). Because these AI models use natural language processing (NLP), you can pose a question in a conversational way (versus learning special commands or codes). The best GenAI results require additional context — examples of work, detailed directions, and guidelines such as word count limits or intended audience.

Understand the basics

Awareness and use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in UK legal practice have surged, with 61% of UK legal professionals now using GenAI at work, a jump from 46% in January 2025. But just as legal practices are beginning to adopt GenAI, agentic AI is also demanding consideration. Gartner named agentic AI as the top tech trend for 2025, describing semi-autonomous machine “agents” that move beyond query-and-response generative AI tools to chain multiple tasks together to accomplish larger goals.

Is one better than the other? Do legal teams need both? How can they be used effectively for legal work? Answering those questions requires an understanding of what each technology offers.

What is agentic AI?

First, let’s be clear on what GenAI does. GenAI reacts to specific input and generates output — it creates things. GenAI can produce text, audio/video, or other materials in response to your step-by-step questions and commands. In a legal context, this often means drafting or summarising legal documents.

Agentic AI makes decisions and takes actions — it performs tasks. Agentic AI systems are more autonomous and can handle complex legal processes, moving beyond traditional single-task AI to collaborative, multi-step systems. Agentic Fiduciary-Grade AI, powered by large language reasoning models, can make decisions and complete legal workflows by breaking down complex tasks, executing subtasks, and evaluating progress.

In a law firm that wants to optimise both complex and repetitive tasks, for instance, GenAI could draft a client memorandum based on a standard template and recent case law. Agentic AI could then file the document through the firm’s document management system, schedule a follow-up meeting, and update the matter file to reflect the new work product.

GenAI vs. Agentic AI

GenAI requires assistance to create — you must describe the requirements, provide details, and request refinements to achieve the best results. Agentic AI can integrate across tools and platforms, operating and reasoning more independently once initiated. It can, for instance, interact with other tools to complete a task, such as sending an email directly from your account or triggering an action in your practice management software. The ideal AI solution would use multiple technologies, with agentic AI employing GenAI capabilities, for example.

It’s important to remember, though, that AI isn’t perfect. Both GenAI and agentic AI require human oversight, which includes reviewing generated materials and verifying that tasks were completed correctly. Users will want to plan use of agentic AI around specific human touchpoints, similar to the way a junior solicitor might independently draft a document and then send it to a more senior colleague for review.

In this e-book, we’ll explain the benefits of agentic AI in a legal context and what to look for when selecting an agentic AI solution, as well as answer common questions legal practices have when considering adding agentic AI.

*2026 AI in Professional Services Report and Future of Professionals Report 2026, Thomson Reuters Institute/Thomson Reuters, 2026

How agentic AI works

Explore the applications of agentic Fiduciary-Grade AI

Across law firms and in-house legal teams, most professionals spend too much time on routine tasks that take them away from more personally rewarding and higher-value work. A legal team, for example, might find solicitors devoting excessive time to document review instead of strategic client advisory work that drives value.

Fiduciary-Grade AI agents leverage algorithms that are trained on content relevant to legal work so they can self-evaluate, learn, and question. This means they can be customised to serve the legal sector specifically. Pre-trained agentic AI understands legal workflows, so it can offer tailored assistance. As agentic AI “becomes familiar with” your practice, it adapts and becomes more efficient. The result is a solution that goes beyond simply automating tasks to dynamically performing them sequentially in complex situations. For example, at a law firm, an agentic AI assistant might start by assisting with case research. Over time, it could learn that certain types of matters tend to require specific precedents or filings. It can then begin preparing draft documents or suggesting strategy notes ahead of schedule, without needing instruction to do so.

AI tools have the potential to save lawyers nearly 240 hours per year. Agentic AI can reduce mundane, routine labour, affording you more time for higher-value, human-centred work which AI cannot do. Think of it as a productivity-enhancing assistant, not a replacement.

Once a legal team decides what its goals and needs are, it can use an agentic AI solution to draft a roadmap to those goals, break the path into subtasks, and evaluate progress. Autonomous agents cannot have essential face-to-face conversations with your clients, but they can fulfil client requests on the back end. Remember that human intervention and oversight — such as review of GenAI-produced documents — remains essential in every case.



How legal practices are using agentic AI

Legal teams derive the most value from using agentic AI as a complement to GenAI, but for agentic AI specifically, there is a wide variety of use cases, with specialised applications for the legal sector. In general, legal practices use agentic AI to:

Research	Draft
Analyse	Summarise
Plan	Compare
Organise	Advise

Agentic AI systems are already being built for the legal industry that independently research regulations or law, draft documents based on findings, identify pitfalls, and revise documents. For example, AI agents in legal practices can conduct case law research faster, compare contract versions in real time, and, by working in conjunction with GenAI tools, auto-draft witness statements. Some additional examples of how to meet specific goals across law firms and corporate legal departments include:



In-house legal departments

Screen large volumes of contracts, schedule compliance reviews, and rank risk priorities.



Corporate and commercial teams

Coordinate approvals across multiple stakeholders, segment transactions for personalised document delivery, and monitor market practice trends.



Litigation practices

Generate disclosure logs, adapt search strategies based on document patterns, and track disclosure timelines.



Risk and compliance

Analyse internal policies and external regulatory data to detect potential compliance threats early.

Remember: Agents are not the same as chatbots. Chatbots are not typically considered autonomous systems because they operate within the confines of a script, have limited logic, and can only handle simple tasks (such as retrieving answers to a question from a knowledge base). An agent has a larger number of skills available, is goal-driven, and uses extensive logic to undertake more complicated work.



The benefits of agentic AI

Discover the proven advantages of incorporating agentic AI into legal practice

Even if used only on a modest scale, agentic AI can improve efficiency, accommodate more matters, and elevate work quality. The legal industry started to experiment with agentic AI at the beginning of 2025 as legal software providers began to integrate these systems into their products. As the profession swiftly embraces agentic Fiduciary-Grade AI, doing the same will help you maintain a competitive edge.

✓ **Shift your focus to strategic and advisory work.**

Complete tedious, time-consuming, multi-step tasks faster so you can focus on the strategic work machines cannot do. AI enables firms to monetise expertise rather than time, with lawyers focusing on high-value advisory roles such as strategic risk assessments. Similarly, in-house lawyers can spend less time reviewing contracts and more time supporting business goals. You'll be able to devote more resources to valuable and rewarding endeavours that better serve your practice.

✓ **Increase productivity by completing tasks and obtaining insights and information quickly.**

Agentic AI integrates actions such as research, analysis, and drafting in one seamless workflow. You can use agentic, guided workflows that build a plan and show its work at every step — in a fraction of the time a human could accomplish it. 56% of private practice lawyers using AI said they now spend saved time on billable work, demonstrating clear commercial returns.

✓ **Improve the quality of work.**

Agentic AI can sift through and analyse substantial amounts of data in a short time, leading to in-depth analysis and highly informed recommendations. It also eliminates common human errors, such as typographical mistakes or incorrect numeric input. Lawyers using AI consistently report better client satisfaction through faster response times and more thorough analysis.



What to consider when selecting an agentic AI solution

Know how to distinguish good AI solutions from the rest

Like any platform or tool, some agentic AI solutions are better than others. Not every “agentic AI” is truly agentic, and not all offer the accuracy and security safeguards required for professional use. Below are essential characteristics and AI capabilities to look for when assessing agentic AI solutions for legal work.

Seek	Avoid
Reliable content: Integration with respected, legal-specific information repositories and sources to obtain results you can trust. Ask: Does this agent gather information from a provider I feel confident about? Is it grounded in authoritative legal content?	 Connections to sources that are not thoroughly maintained and verified. Risk: Referencing inaccurate, incomplete, or false information from unreliable sources.
Benchmarked capabilities: Intuitive, intelligent search features that have been tested against legal-relevant benchmarks. Ask: What volume of documents can this agent process at one time? Have there been user studies that reflect the agent’s ability to identify important themes?	 Research capabilities that have not been evaluated. Limited research capabilities and incomplete analysis. Risk: Time-consuming verification and data searches. Inability to sense nuance in complex material and lack of effective problem-solving.
Secure system: A clearly stated, accessible, and robust security and privacy policy that meets industry standards. Ask: Does this agent encrypt data in transit? Does this agent conduct tasks in a way that is compliant with UK GDPR and UK regulatory requirements?	 Vague or difficult-to-find details about privacy and security. Risk: Exposing sensitive data. Using your data to train models used by others.
Ecosystem integration: Integration with the third-party tools crucial to your work. Ask: Can the agent connect to the things I use every day (e.g., Microsoft 365, document management systems, or practice management software)?	 Costly, time-intensive customisations and manual integrations with the tools you use every day. Risk: Limited scalability and finite ways to grow agentic AI use with your practice. Inability to use the agent long-term.
All-in-one experience: Comprehensive functionality and suite of tools that offer a unified experience. Ask: Can I use it across my entire workflow, or just for certain phases of a matter?	 Functionality that addresses some, but not all, of your critical workflows. Risk: Switching constantly amongst tools, creating extra steps, and not fulfilling learning potential because of siloed, patchwork-like processes.

Agentic AI FAQ

Is it too early for my practice to start using agentic AI?

No. Many legal organisations of all sizes are already exploring AI agents and have proven their benefits. About half of UK legal organisations are either planning to use or considering whether to use agentic AI in the near future. Firms that fail to move from surface-level adoption to real integration will lose talent, clients, and strategic relevance. Law departments are similarly at risk of being sidelined as the business adopts AI tools of its own.

Legal practices that haven't embraced agentic AI will find it difficult to compete with those that have — and starting sooner offers advantages. Every bit of time saved, paired with improved results, makes today's adopters far more competitive and affords them a much greater opportunity to discover new uses for agentic AI, continuing a cycle of improved performance.

How do I start integrating AI agents into my daily work?

Different people hold different levels of technological competency. If you're less familiar with agentic AI, start small — request the agent complete a low-stakes task conducive to automation, such as scheduling emails or formatting documents. Legal organisations can also consider designating more technologically advanced solicitors as power users who can quickly identify valuable ways the agents can improve operations. Collaborate with a technology provider that offers the right blend of content, expertise, and solutions to assist you in integrating AI agents into your workflows. Some vendors offer live training or recorded tutorials to support organisational adoption.

What should I look for in a privacy and security policy?

Security is a critical aspect, especially in legal work handling sensitive information. Look for a provider that follows a comprehensive information security management framework, including clearly defined policies, standards, and best practices. Your agentic AI solution should at the very least comply with SOC 2 Types I and II standards, encrypt data in transit and at rest, have strict privacy controls, and not use the data you enter to train underlying models. ICO guidance states that AI systems processing personal data almost always require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), with expectations on fairness, accountability, and transparency.

What about regulatory compliance?

The key compliance obligations for SRA-regulated law firms are outlined in the SRA Standards and Regulations, which already provide a regulatory framework applicable to AI use. The SRA guidance states that "it should always be made clear to clients where they are interfacing with AI". The SRA's position is clear: solicitors are personally responsible for every piece of work they produce, regardless of whether AI was involved in creating it. The technology you select should enable you to meet all SRA requirements, maintain client confidentiality, and fulfil your professional obligations.

How difficult is it to integrate agentic AI into my existing technological systems? What kind of tools and software could we connect agentic AI with?

Some AI agents can embed themselves in the software and services you use every day, such as legal research platforms, office productivity suites, or document management systems, through simple actions such as signing in to your third-party account. A good agentic AI solution should have a straightforward integration process so your agent can move with you amongst multiple products and platforms.

Do I need to train the agents?

Agentic Fiduciary-Grade AI shouldn't require extensive training or customisation to meet your practice's needs. Choose an AI agent that's been trained with comprehensive, reliable, and current datasets and content. It should also operate according to well-designed directives. The more you use the agent, the more it learns, and the more it can do for you.

How do I measure the ROI of agentic AI?

Assess how many hours designated tasks take you without your AI agent, then measure the time they take with it. Equate that time with the hourly costs associated with the tasks now delegated to your agent, and from there you can determine how long it will take you to break even on your investment. Firms can also track increased revenue resulting from the ability to produce more work in less time, whilst in-house teams can track budget savings similarly.

Take the first step with agentic AI

Start innovating

Adopt the work of the future with Thomson Reuters®.

We blend more than 225 years of legal industry expertise with technological innovation to provide pathways that help legal professionals navigate change with confidence.

Thomson Reuters launched CoCounsel Legal UK in January 2026, expanding to over one million professional users of CoCounsel by early 2026 — making it one of the most widely deployed legal AI products in the market. CoCounsel Legal is the Fiduciary-Grade AI solution for legal professionals, trained by legal experts, backed by the gold-standard content of Practical Law and Westlaw, equipped with best-in-class security, and enhanced by cutting-edge GenAI and agentic AI capabilities.

Coming soon to CoCounsel Legal UK: customers describe their matter in plain language — whether it's reviewing a contract, risk-spotting an employment documentation, or formulating a litigation strategy — CoCounsel Legal UK handles the rest. It develops the legal approach, validates the work, and produces high-quality work product.

Learn more about **CoCounsel Legal**
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