Legal Information Management, 25 (2025), pp. 162–166
© The Author(s), 2025. Published by British and Irish Association of Law Librarians
doi:10.1017/S147266962510100X

A Practical LEXICON to Spark End-User Engagement with Knowledge Management Tools

Abstract: End-user engagement is a critical success factor for knowledge management (KM) initiatives in legal practice, yet it remains one of the most persistent challenges faced by knowledge professionals. Drawing on interviews with legal industry practitioners and observations from recent BIALL sessions, this article by **Clare Bilobrk** examines the barriers to effective engagement with KM tools and proposes practical strategies for overcoming them. The analysis combines theoretical frameworks, including organisational silos, with actionable recommendations. A concluding LEXICON distils key principles into a mnemonic model, offering legal information managers a framework for embedding KM tools into daily workflows, building trust and sustaining a culture of knowledge-sharing.
Keywords: knowledge management; legal information management; user engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management (KM) has become an established and essential component of legal information practice, with one recent report suggesting that it is increasingly recognised as a way for law firms to stay ahead of the competition.

> "In Q2 of 2025, law firms grew their spending on technology by 8.6% on a rolling 12-month average and their spending on knowledge management by an even stronger 11.2%. These investments are increasingly seen as no longer optional and are simply the cost of staying competitive in a shifting landscape."[1]

Its value lies not merely in the deployment of sophisticated systems, but in the consistent and effective engagement of end-users with those systems. However, achieving this remains a complex and time-consuming undertaking. In law firms and other commercial environments, pressures such as billable hours and individual performance metrics often create structural and cultural disincentives for knowledge-sharing.

The challenge is not simply technical. While KM tools, from intranets and library portals to AI-enabled search platforms, can offer powerful capabilities, their impact is diminished when they are perceived as an administrative burden, a distraction from fee-earning work, or irrelevant to immediate priorities.

This article builds on an exploratory blogpost and a presentation delivered at the 2025 BIALL conference,[2] which sought to answer a practical question raised by delegates: what can we do to get people involved, interested and engaged? To address this, the article draws on:

- Interviews with legal information professionals and knowledge managers
- Insights from sector-specific events, particularly BIALL KM sessions
- Recent academic and practitioner literature

The discussion begins by defining KM and KM tools within the legal context, before examining key barriers to engagement. It then proposes strategies for addressing these barriers, structured around a mnemonic framework – LEXICON – designed to be both memorable and actionable.[3] The article concludes with recommendations for sustaining engagement over time, highlighting the ongoing role of legal information managers as facilitators, advocates, and strategists in the evolving KM landscape.

2. DEFINING KM AND KM TOOLS IN LEGAL PRACTICE

Knowledge management refers to the coordinated practice of identifying, capturing, curating, sharing and applying an organisation's collective knowledge assets. While definitions vary, a widely accepted view describes KM as the systematic process of creating, managing and using knowledge to achieve organisational objectives.[4] These assets extend beyond traditional external library resources

https://doi.org/10.1017/S147266962510100X Published online by Cambridge University Press

to encompass internal information. This includes precedents, know-how, templates, practice notes, policies and tacit expertise, etc.

KM tools are the technological enablers of the knowledge process. These might be (and are certainly not limited to) portals, intranets, search platforms, databases, knowledge management systems, content management systems, document management systems, collaboration spaces and, increasingly, AI-driven assistants. Within legal practice, these systems operate in an environment characterised by high-value intellectual capital, regulatory complexity and the need for accuracy under time pressure.

In this context, the effective adoption of KM tools depends on more than end-user technical capability. Success requires cultural alignment, integration with existing workflows, and the creation of a wider cultural environment in which knowledge-sharing is valued and rewarded.

3. FIVE BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

Interviews with legal information professionals reveal five recurring barriers that impede sustained engagement with KM tools: time, usability, culture, trust and perceived value. While each presents a distinct challenge, they often interact in ways that reinforce resistance to adoption.

Time remains the most frequently cited obstacle. In environments where performance is closely tied to billable hours, KM activity is often perceived as ancillary to 'real' work. Even when practitioners recognise the long-term benefits of knowledge-sharing, immediate client demands frequently take precedence, making it difficult to allocate time for content creation, curation or even use of KM platforms.

Usability issues compound this reluctance. Tools that are overly complex, employ unfamiliar jargon, or require multiple logins disrupt workflows and increase end-user frustration. Poorly integrated systems force users to work outside their usual processes, creating friction that discourages repeat use.

Culture plays a pivotal role. In competitive professional environments, knowledge may be seen as a personal asset rather than a shared resource. This can result in a reluctance to contribute to central repositories or to collaborate across practice areas. Cultural norms that reward individual achievement over collective success can inadvertently perpetuate this behaviour.

Trust is another critical factor. Professionals may withhold contributions if they are uncertain how their knowledge will be used, whether it will be attributed appropriately, or whether sharing will diminish their perceived value within the organisation. Conversely, leadership may underinvest in KM initiatives if the return on that investment is not immediately visible, perpetuating a cycle of low adoption.

Finally, **Perceived Value** determines whether users see KM as integral to their work. Without clear, demonstrable links between the use of KM tools and improvements in efficiency, accuracy or client service, such systems risk being dismissed as irrelevant or peripheral.

These barriers align closely with the 'silo' typology described in *Harvard Business Review*, which identifies three forms of organisational siloing: *systemic*, *elitist*, and *protectionist*.[5]

- *Systemic silos* emerge from structural separation, such as rigid departmental boundaries or practice-group specialisation, which limit opportunities for cross-functional collaboration.
- *Elitist silos* occur when certain groups – often those with specialised expertise – view their knowledge as exclusive, restricting access and discouraging broad participation.
- *Protectionist silos* are characterised by deliberate information-hoarding to maintain power, control or competitive advantage.

For KM professionals, this typology offers a useful context. Time pressures, for example, may be intensified by systemic silos, where duplicated effort across departments goes unrecognised. Usability challenges may be exacerbated by elitist silos, in which tool design reflects the preferences of a small expert group rather than the needs of the wider user base. Cultural and trust issues often arise from protectionist silos, where knowledge-sharing is viewed with suspicion.

Addressing these barriers, therefore, is not simply a matter of tool enhancement or user training. It requires an explicit recognition of the structural and cultural contexts in which KM operates. Targeted interventions, for example, aligning goals across departments, modelling inclusive communication, and establishing secure, transparent mechanisms for sharing, are essential for dismantling silos and creating an environment in which engagement with KM tools can flourish.

4. IDENTIFYING THE GAPS: LISTENING AS A CORE PROFESSIONAL SKILL

Before implementing or revising KM tools, legal information professionals must establish a clear understanding of user needs. The reference interview, a core skill in librarianship, is particularly applicable here: structured, open-ended questioning that surfaces implicit requirements and challenges.[6] In the context of KM, this approach can uncover needs that users themselves may not have articulated, helping to ensure that solutions are fit for purpose.

Targeted conversations with a cross-section of relevant people, for example, practice support lawyers, fee-earners, business development, risk and compliance, and administrative teams, can reveal barriers invisible to system administrators. This listening process not only generates valuable intelligence but also fosters trust,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S147266962510100X Published online by Cambridge University Press

signalling that KM initiatives are collaborative rather than imposed.

One example from the BIALL KM Special Interest Group session 'Connecting KM Across Professions' (26 February 2025) illustrates the point. A new joiner asked: "Where do I put my stuff?". Far from indicating disengagement, this question reflected a willingness to contribute, provided the process was clear and supported. In this case, attentive listening uncovered not only a specific user query but also a more general issue: uncertainty about ownership and process.

This demonstrates that the barriers to effective KM are often rooted in a lack of listening. Without mechanisms to capture and act upon user perspectives, valuable insights remain scattered across departments. By actively listening and addressing these barriers – whether through clearer governance, streamlined submission processes, or visible acknowledgement of contributions – KM professionals can foster a sense of ownership among users.

When individuals see that their input is valued and acted upon, KM systems shift from being perceived as imposed tools to becoming collaborative assets that strengthen organisational performance.

5. STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT: THE *LEXICON* FRAMEWORK

To provide a practical model, the engagement strategies discussed here are structured around the mnemonic **LEXICON**:

***Link* KM to daily workflows** – Ensure KM processes fit seamlessly into existing tasks. Automate data capture where possible and avoid separate, burdensome submission processes.

***Empower* champions** – Identify respected individuals in different practice areas who can model engagement, provide informal support, and advocate for KM adoption.

***eXplain* the value** – Clearly connect KM use to real-world benefits: reduced duplication, faster turnaround, higher-quality outputs and better client service.

***Integrate* with existing systems** – Embed KM tools within familiar platforms, minimising the need for multiple logins or disruptive context-switching.

***Cultivate* a knowledge-sharing culture** – Recognise contributions, from formal content creation to informal expertise-sharing, in visible and meaningful ways.

***Optimise* for ease of use** – Apply user-centred design principles: intuitive navigation, powerful search and minimal friction.

***Nurture* feedback loops** – Implement and act on feedback mechanisms – such as "Was this helpful?" buttons – to signal responsiveness and continual improvement.

6. SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT: KM AS A CONTINUOUS CYCLE

Achieving initial buy-in for a KM initiative is only the first step; sustaining engagement requires continuous attention and adaptation. KM should be understood not as a one-off project but as an ongoing, cyclical process in which each stage reinforces and informs the others.

The cycle begins with the active *capture* of knowledge from real-world work, ensuring that valuable insights, precedents, and innovations are not lost in the flow of daily activity. Once captured, the material must be structured, that is to say, organised in a way that supports discoverability, standardisation and ease of use. This is followed by *delivery*, which involves ensuring that knowledge is accessible at the point of need, integrated with existing workflows and systems so that it can be retrieved without undue effort.

However, the cycle does not end with delivery. Sustained engagement depends on regular *review*, whereby user feedback and usage data are analysed to determine whether resources are meeting their intended purpose. This leads to *optimisation*, in which systems and content are refined to reflect new business priorities, changes in legal practice, or evolving user requirements.

For example, if a firm develops expertise in a new sector or area of law, the KM system should be ready to support that expansion through updated taxonomies, new expert profiles and relevant precedents.

In this cyclical model, each phase builds the conditions for the next: effective capture facilitates better structuring; well-structured content enables seamless delivery; informed delivery encourages meaningful feedback; and feedback, in turn, drives optimisation. Engagement is maintained not by one-off campaigns, but by embedding this iterative process into the operational fabric of the organisation, supported by clear ownership, dedicated resources, and a commitment to continual improvement.

7. TRANSFORM QUICK WINS INTO LASTING CHANGE: PRACTICAL MEASURES FOR KM ENGAGEMENT

Effective engagement with knowledge management (KM) requires both rapid, visible wins and deliberate, long-term strategies. Short-term interventions demonstrate immediate value, while sustained measures embed KM into organisational culture. The following framework presents **seven complementary approaches** drawn from professional practice and real-world examples.

FOUR PRACTICAL ACTIONS FOR IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Conversations that reveal immediate fixes

Targeted, informal discussions with knowledge producers can surface critical gaps between user needs and KM provision. For example, a precedent author may flag unclear submission processes, or a fee-earner may struggle to locate essential resources. Even anecdotal insights often point to systemic issues that can be addressed quickly.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S147266962510100X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Feedback tools that invite real use

Embedding low-barrier feedback mechanisms – such as "Was this helpful?" or "Suggest an improvement" buttons – signals openness to collaboration. Visible follow-through on user suggestions builds trust and reinforces the perception that the KM system evolves with its users.

Showcasing small wins to drive adoption

Highlighting tangible successes, such as time saved through reuse of existing content, makes KM value concrete. Brief 'knowledge win' stories in newsletters or intranets can motivate further engagement without the formality of full case studies.

Putting leadership front and centre on KM

Visible endorsement from senior leaders such as video messages, intranet posts, or acknowledgements at meetings positions KM as a strategic enabler. Directly linking KM outcomes to business performance strengthens this message.

THREE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

Integrate knowledge sharing into everyday workflows

Knowledge capture should feel integral to daily tasks, not an additional burden. One law firm librarian worked with a vendor to introduce a 'User Contributions' feature within the library management system, enabling experts to publish directly into the platform. Recognition of such contributions reinforces participation.

Humanise and brand the KM system

Internal messaging shapes perception. A generic label such as 'Document Repository v3' offers little appeal. Naming the system, crafting a backstory, using branded visuals, champions and user stories, create a sense of ownership and relevance, increasing user affinity.

Foster a culture of recognition and connection

Sustained engagement grows from consistent acknowledgement of contributions. Recognition can range from a mention in a meeting to an intranet leaderboard. In one consultancy, an informal conversation revealed an undocumented niche expertise, leading directly to new business – a reminder that soft skills remain as vital as technology.

By combining immediate, low-cost interventions with longer-term cultural strategies, KM practitioners can both demonstrate value quickly and lay the groundwork for sustained adoption. Each approach reinforces the others, creating a cycle of visibility, trust and participation that positions KM as an indispensable professional function.

8. THE KEYS TO SPARKING END-USER ENGAGEMENT?

End-user engagement with KM tools is both a strategic necessity and a practical challenge for legal information professionals. The solutions lie not solely in technology, but in the integration of human-centred design, cultural change and active advocacy.

The LEXICON framework presented in this article offers legal information managers a practical, memorable tool for addressing these challenges in a systematic way. By linking KM to daily workflows, empowering champions, explaining and highlighting value, integrating systems, cultivating a sharing culture, optimising usability, and nurturing feedback, professionals can create the conditions for sustained engagement.

In applying this framework, legal information managers not only improve the adoption and impact of KM tools but also position themselves as key drivers of organisational knowledge strategy. In doing so, they affirm the significant role of the profession in shaping not only the systems, but the culture, of knowledge within their organisations – fulfilling the promise set out in this practical LEXICON to spark end-user engagement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author acknowledges the contribution of interview participants, and the insights gained from BIALL sessions in shaping the analysis presented in this article.

Endnotes

[1] Thomson Reuters, *Legal Frontiers: Q2 2025 – Calm in the Hurricane's Eye* (Thomson Reuters, 8 August 2025) <www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/legal/lffi-q2-2025-hurricane-eye/> accessed 11 August 2025

[2] Clare Bilobrk, 'How Can We Successfully Unlock Organisational Knowledge by Engaging Our End-Users?' *KnowAll Matrix* (17 March 2025) <https://knowallmatrix-librarysoftware.co.uk/2025/03/17/how-can-we-successfully-unlock-organisational-knowledge-by-engaging-our-end-users/> accessed 11 August 2025

[3] I chose LEXICON because of the links with Samuel Johnson and the UK city of Birmingham, where the 2025 BIALL conference was being held.

[4] IBM, *What is Knowledge Management?* (IBM, undated) <www.ibm.com/think/topics/knowledge-management> accessed 11 August 2025

https://doi.org/10.1017/S147266962510100X Published online by Cambridge University Press

[5] Keith Ferrazzi, '3 Types of Silos That Stifle Collaboration—And How to Dismantle Them' *Harvard Business Review* (28 March 2025) <https://hbr.org/2025/03/3-types-of-silos-that-stifle-collaboration-and-how-to-dismantle-them> accessed 11 August 2025

[6] Robin Filipczak and Stacey Grijalva, 'The Reference Interview: Asking Better Questions for Happier Customers' *Library Leadership Podcast* (Episode 132, 3 January 2024) <https://libraryleadershippodcast.com/132-the-reference-interview-asking-better-questions-for-happier-customers-with-robin-filipczak-and-stacey-grijalva/> accessed 11 August 2025

References

APQC, 'Knowledge Management Engagement and Culture FAQ' *APQC (*29 July 2024) <www.apqc.org/resource-library/resource-listing/knowledge-management-engagement-and-culture-faq> accessed 11 August 2025

BIALL KM Special Interest Group, *Connecting KM Across Professions* (online event, 26 February 2025)

Bilobrk, Clare, 'Boosting KMS Engagement' *Prenax* (11 December 2024) <www.prenax.com/boosting-kms-engagement> accessed 11 August 2025

Bilobrk, Clare, 'How Can We Successfully Unlock Organisational Knowledge by Engaging Our End-Users?' *KnowAll Matrix* (17 March 2025) <https://knowallmatrix-librarysoftware.co.uk/2025/03/17/how-can-we-successfully-unlock-organisational-knowledge-by-engaging-our-end-users/> accessed 11 August 2025

Brown, Clare, 'How Can You Transform End-User Engagement in Your Global Law Firm?' *Vable* (24 June 2024) <www.vable.com/blog/how-can-you-transform-end-user-engagement-in-your-global-law-firm> accessed 11 August 2025

Ferrazzi, Keith, '3 Types of Silos That Stifle Collaboration - And How to Dismantle Them' *Harvard Business Review* (28 March 2025) <https://hbr.org/2025/03/3-types-of-silos-that-stifle-collaboration-and-how-to-dismantle-them> accessed 11 August 2025

Filipczak, Robin and Stacey Grijalva, 'The Reference Interview: Asking Better Questions for Happier Customers' *Library Leadership Podcast* (Episode 132, 3 January 2024) <https://libraryleadershippodcast.com/132-the-reference-interview-asking-better-questions-for-happier-customers-with-robin-filipczak-and-stacey-grijalva/> accessed 11 August 2025

IBM, *What is Knowledge Management?* (IBM, undated) <www.ibm.com/think/topics/knowledge-management> accessed 11 August 2025

Thomson Reuters, *Legal Frontiers: Q2 2025 – Calm in the Hurricane's Eye* (Thomson Reuters, 8 August 2025) <www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/legal/lffi-q2-2025-hurricane-eye/>accessed 11 August 2025

Biography

Clare Bilobrk has over 25 years' experience managing law libraries for national and international firms in the UK. She now works with Bailey Solutions, supporting information professionals worldwide in demonstrating the value of their services and systems. She writes regularly on knowledge management and library practice and has presented at BIALL, AALL and other professional forums.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S147266962510100X Published online by Cambridge University Press