

The Latest Trends in Law Firm Technology

On June 18th, the Managing Partner Forum hosted its monthly webinar in the series “The Law Firm of the Future.” This webinar, titled “The Latest Trends in Law Firm Technology,” explored key issues around AI adoption, cybersecurity best practices, cloud computing, and the need for improved strategic planning between law firm leadership and internal IT teams.

Panelists:

- **[Darragh Fitzpatrick](#)**: Executive VP and Partner at [Tabush Consulting Group](#)

Moderators:

- **[John Remsen Jr.](#)**: President of [TheRemsenGroup](#) and President & CEO of Managing Partner Forum

Key takeaways:

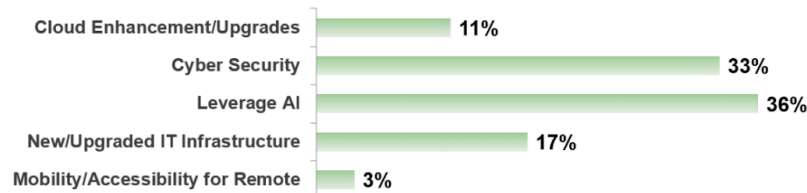
1. Artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity are top priorities and areas of focus for law firms based on the survey results. AI adoption is growing rapidly.
2. Law firm leadership does not meet frequently enough with internal IT teams to discuss strategic planning, goals, and priorities. This can misalign IT teams and leave firms vulnerable.
3. Law firms should require ongoing training for both lawyers and staff on phishing emails and cybersecurity best practices to improve security and prevent data breaches.

Digging Into the Data

The webinar began by jumping straight into the latest findings from the Tabush Group’s third annual survey on law firm technology. This year’s survey, which can be found in detail [here](#), focused on three key topics: strategic planning, cybersecurity, and cloud computing. A notable addition to this year’s survey was the inclusion of questions about emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI).

REGISTRANT QUESTION #1

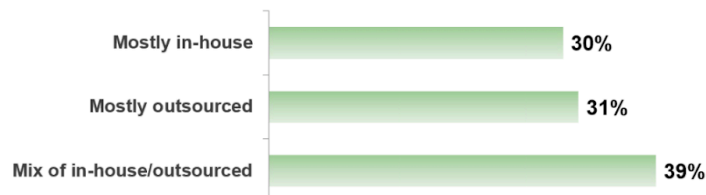
From the list below, what is your firm's top IT priority for 2024?



Interest in AI has surged in the months following the release of Tabush's annual survey. Darragh Fitzpatrick noted that this trend aligns with the survey's findings, though he pointed out a slight discrepancy: the MPF discovered more than expected in-house IT management, particularly within larger firms. Fitzpatrick explained that finding IT professionals who possess both technical expertise and cybersecurity knowledge has become increasingly challenging.

REGISTRANT QUESTION #2

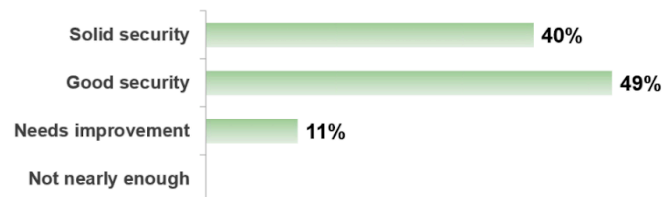
How does your firm currently handle its IT management and support?



During the webinar, John Remsen Jr. posed a provocative question: do IT managers and directors at law firms truly know what they're doing? Fitzpatrick responded yes, but with one caveat: he observed that long-established IT teams might struggle when transitioning to new technologies. This is where the value of an outsourced IT perspective comes into play. According to John, in IT, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

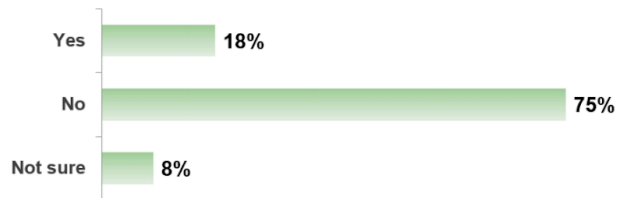


REGISTRANT QUESTION #3
How confident do you feel in your firm's IT against growing cyber threats?



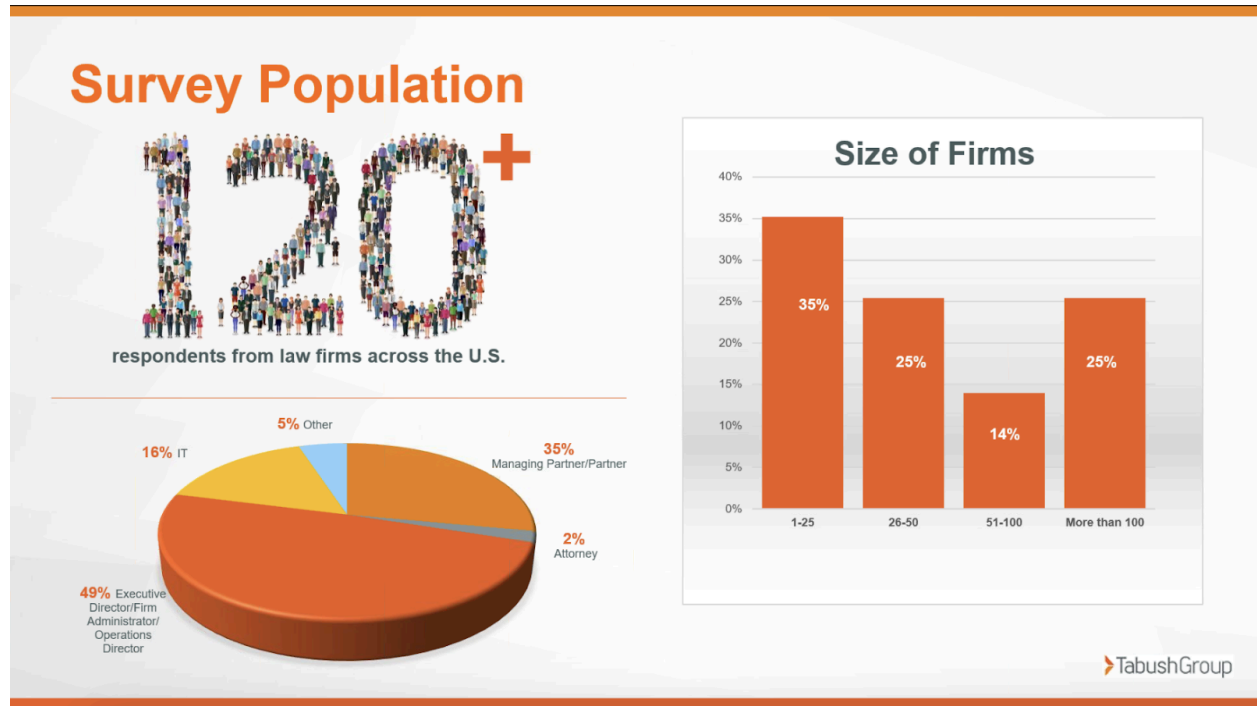
Darragh emphasized the importance of basing cybersecurity opinions on more than just the absence of breaches. He suggested that firms conduct third-party assessments or take a closer look at the risks that need to be mitigated and how they are being addressed. He likened cybersecurity to any other risk assessment, stressing that making decisions without a clear understanding of the tools in place exposes firms to unnecessary risks. He recommended annual cybersecurity assessments as a best practice.

REGISTRANT QUESTION #4
Has your firm experienced a cyber breach?

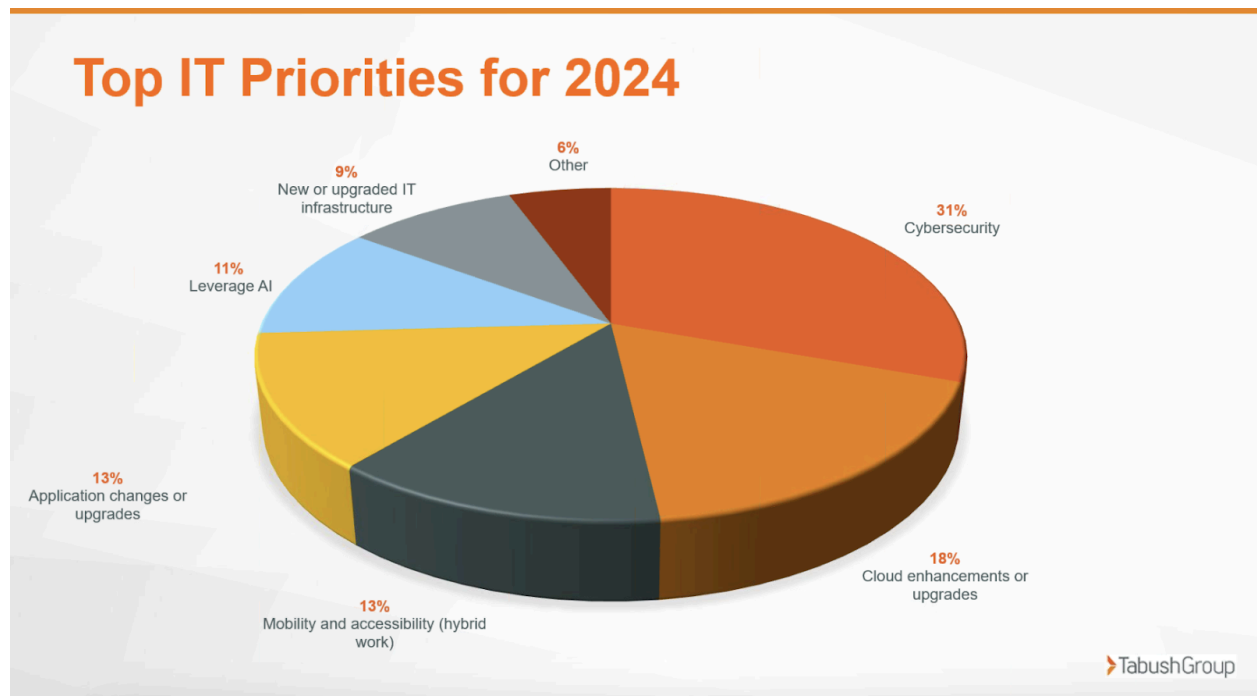


The Tabush survey also revealed an increase in reported breaches, as opposed to these survey results from the webinar audience. Darragh speculated that some breaches might have been contained by IT teams and might not have been classified as such. This points to the importance of defining what constitutes a breach and maintaining vigilance in cybersecurity efforts.

Delving Into Tabush's Annual Survey

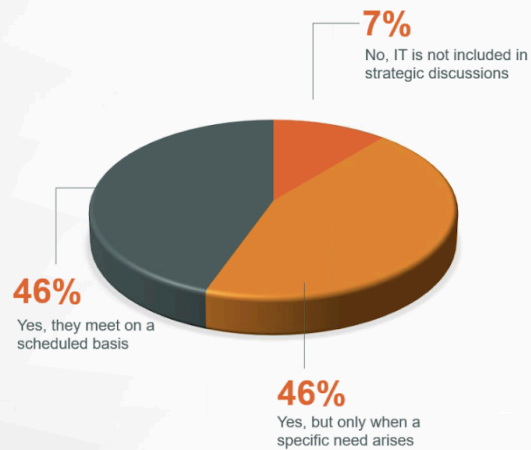


Close to half of survey participants were administrators, about one third were Managing Partners or Partners, 16% IT professionals, then a negligible amount of participants identifying as “other” and attorneys. Mostly leaders responded to the poll, making the data particularly relevant for law firm managers.



Strategic Planning

Does Leadership Meet with IT on Strategy?



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During the webinar, Darragh emphasized the importance of regular strategic planning meetings between law firm leadership and IT teams. He suggested that for firms with fewer than 25 attorneys, an annual strategy meeting might suffice. As firms grow in size, these meetings should become more frequent, ideally twice a year or even quarterly for larger firms. Regular meetings ensure that IT teams are aligned with the firm's priorities and can proactively address strategic goals rather than just managing day-to-day operations.

A Deeper Dive: IT & Strategic Planning

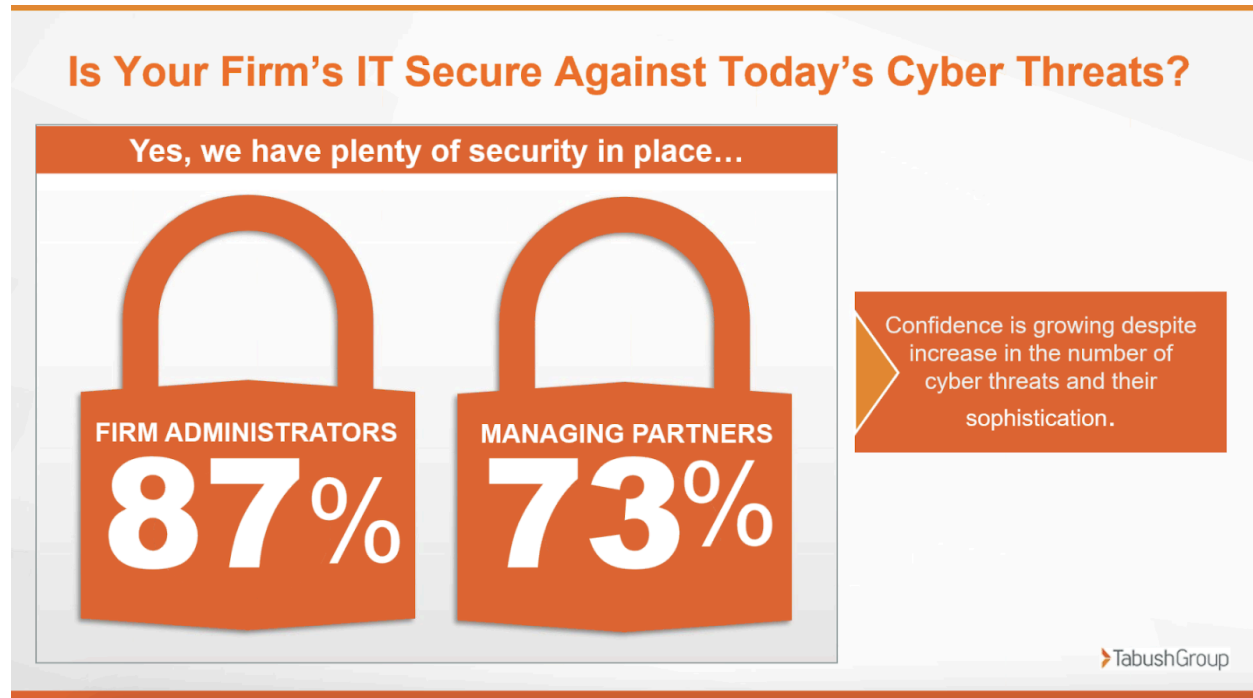


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Darragh advocated for the formation of committees to facilitate effective communication and planning. While managing partners might not need to participate in every IT meeting, it's important to have representatives from leadership involved in the planning process. These representatives should be well-versed in the firm's strategic objectives and IT developments, enabling them to allocate resources appropriately and ensure that IT initiatives align with the firm's broader goals.

He also highlighted the benefits of a blended approach to IT management, combining in-house expertise with outsourced support. This approach ensures that firms have dedicated personnel for daily operations while also benefiting from the broader knowledge and strategic insights of external IT professionals. Darragh stressed that it is more important for IT teams to leverage all available resources than for partners to attend IT conferences.

Cybersecurity



Darragh raised an important question during the discussion: if law firm leadership isn't meeting regularly with their IT teams, how can they be confident in their firm's cybersecurity? He emphasized that regular communication is essential for understanding and mitigating risks.



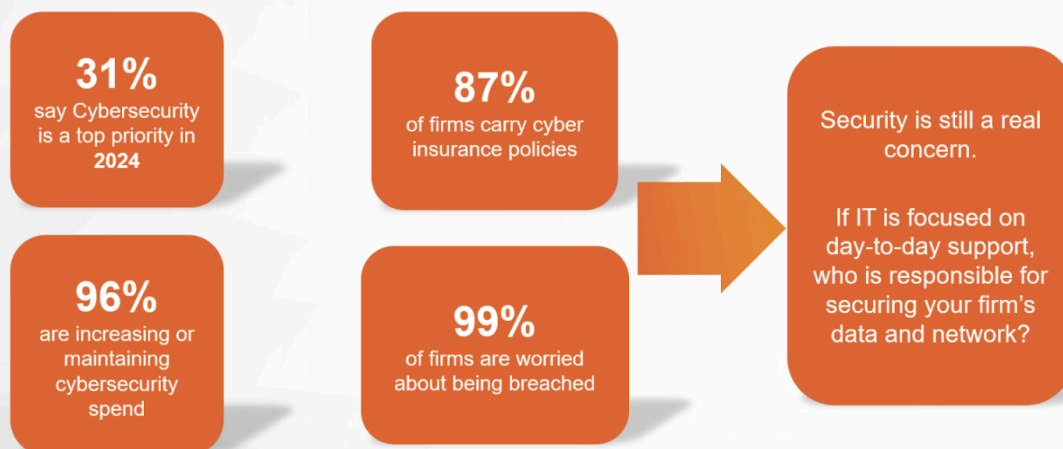
Training plays a pivotal role in maintaining robust cybersecurity. Darragh stressed the need for continuous training for all staff members to recognize and avoid common threats, such as phishing emails. He also recommended that IT teams provide regular reports on training outcomes, identifying individuals who may need additional support or further training to prevent recurring mistakes.

Most Important Role for IT Team



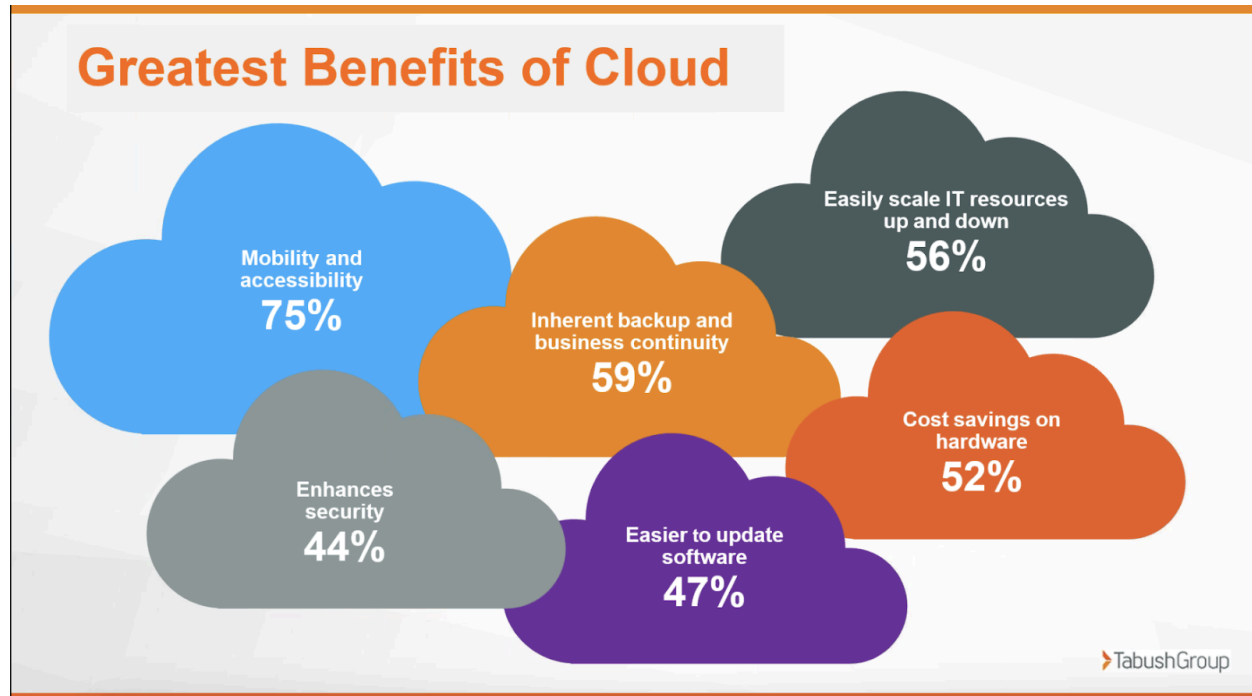
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A Deeper Dive: Cybersecurity



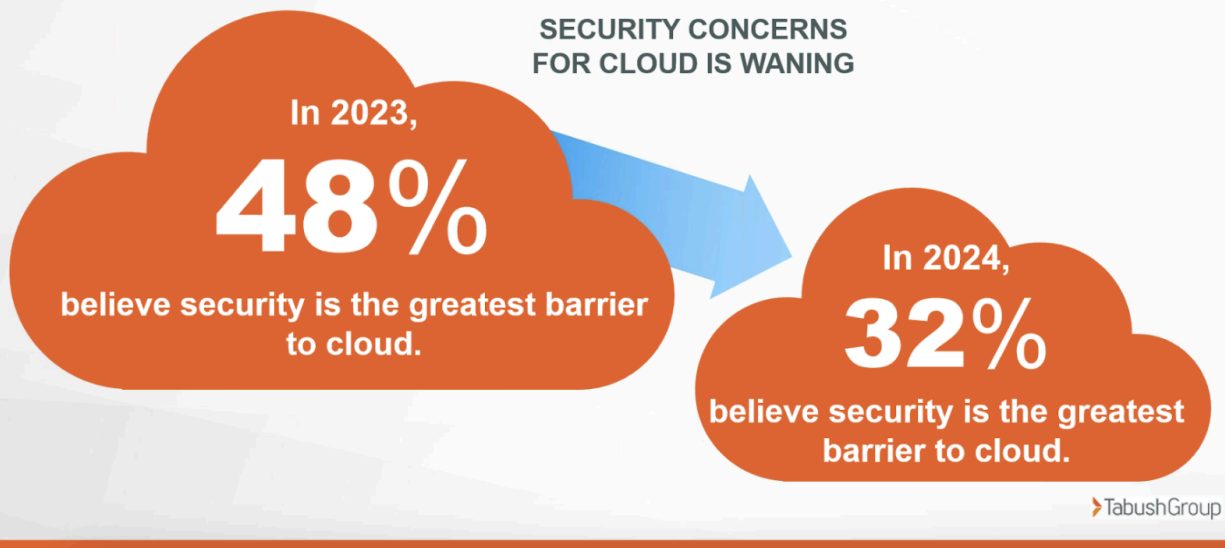
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The advent of AI brings new challenges to cybersecurity. As AI technologies advance, traditional indicators of phishing and other threats may become harder to detect. Darragh highlighted the necessity of understanding these evolving risks and implementing strategies to mitigate them.



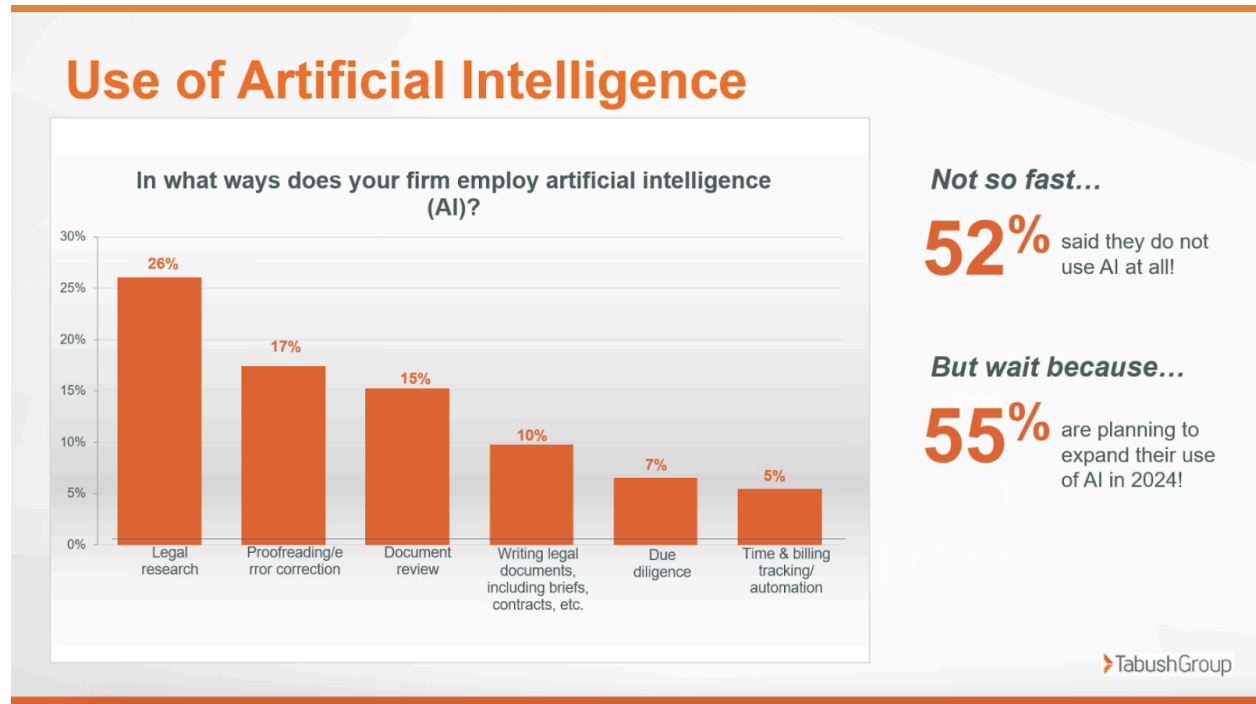
Cloud computing has also become an integral part of modern business operations. Darragh noted that IT infrastructure should support and enhance the way employees work, rather than forcing them into rigid workflows. Especially in a remote work environment, cloud solutions should enable seamless and secure access to necessary resources from any location.

Greatest Barrier to Cloud



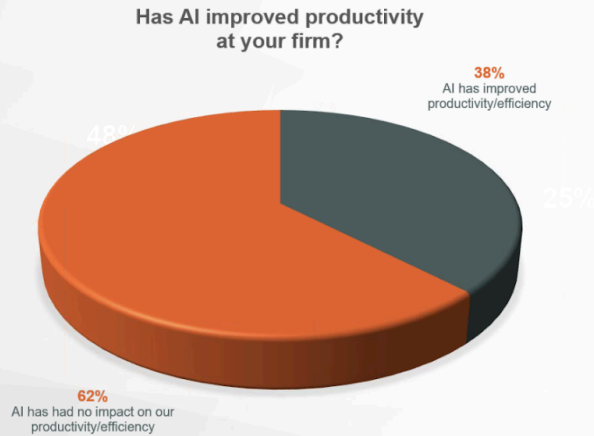
Despite ongoing confusion about the safety of cloud computing, Darragh assured that with a well-versed IT team, managing cloud security is entirely feasible. By staying informed about the necessary measures to secure cloud environments, law firms can confidently leverage cloud technologies to support their operations without compromising security.

Emerging Technology



The survey snapshot was conducted at the end of 2023 and into 2024, providing a current view of emerging technology trends in the legal sector. Darragh noted a significant shift in the application of AI technologies. While AI was initially leveraged primarily for legal research, the focus has now moved towards document review and proofreading.

Does AI Increase Productivity?



Managing partners and firm administrators do not agree:

48% of Managing Partners and Partners say AI increases productivity

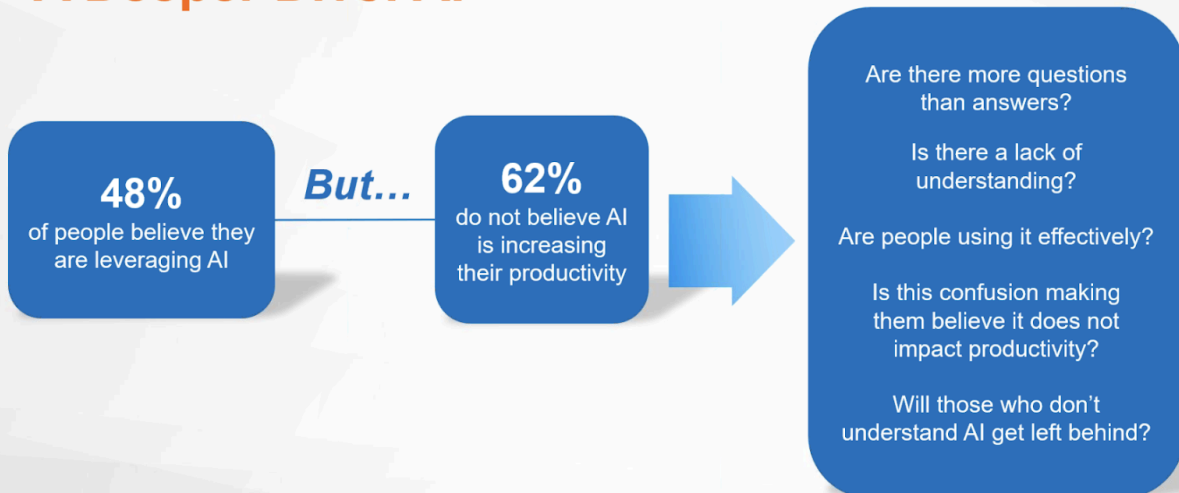
but...

22%
Only of Firm Administrators and Ops say AI Increases productivity

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Darragh emphasized the importance of evaluating existing technical tools to determine how emerging technologies, particularly AI, can streamline and refine workflows. Law firms should assess their current processes and identify areas where AI can be integrated to enhance efficiency and productivity.

A Deeper Dive: AI



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What's a Managing Partner to Do?

Final Thoughts

- Security, security, security....and then more security!
- Even larger firms are turning to outsourced IT for their expertise
- Cloud is crucial, but there's misinformation and misunderstanding about cloud. More education is needed
- The jury is still out on AI...or is it?

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In the closing section, Darragh and John offered practical advice for managing partners thinking actively about how to leverage law firm technology. They emphasized that there is no "one-and-done" solution for security, as the field is constantly evolving. Continuous vigilance and adaptation are essential for maintaining robust cybersecurity.

Outsourcing IT functions can enhance a firm's technological posture by introducing fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. Darragh highlighted that leveraging the expertise of external IT providers can help law firms stay abreast of the latest advancements and best practices in the industry.

John urged managing partners to embrace AI technology, advising them to understand and experiment with it. He likened the adoption of AI to learning to ride a bike, starting with a simple "tricycle" to build confidence and knowledge before progressing to more complex applications. John stressed that while firms don't need to be the first to adopt AI, they should avoid being the last, as AI is here to stay and will continue to play an increasingly vital role in legal operations.
