

The image features a background of several white wind turbines in a row, extending from the foreground into the distance over a body of water. The sky is a clear, light blue. In the foreground, a large, semi-transparent white graphic of a wind turbine's nacelle and blades is overlaid on the left side. The Harbor logo, consisting of the word 'HARBOR' in a bold, sans-serif font with a small square inside the letter 'O', is positioned in the top left corner.

HARBOR

A Harbor Survey

From enablers to growth drivers: Empowering marketing & business development teams to lead law firm expansion

Insights gathered from the 2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey identify where, and how firms can increase efficiencies to proactively drive data informed growth and scale.

2025

Introduction: Marketing technology in 2025

Over the past decade, law firm Marketing and Business Development professionals have steadily shifted their focus from tactical support to strategic enablement. Today, they are expected to serve as the central drivers of firm growth – proactively scan the market, deliver data-informed strategic advice, and equip lawyers with the intelligence they need to compete effectively in today’s dynamic market to win new business.

The modern marketer’s role now spans market and client intelligence, strategic planning, client experience elevation, and lawyer enablement. These expanded responsibilities require not only new skills, but new infrastructure – systems, data, and processes – that support persistent, proactive, and scalable strategic guidance.

To meet these expectations, many firms have embraced a Law Firm Growth Framework (“framework”, “growth framework”) to capitalize on market opportunities at scale. This growth framework connects marketing technology (“MarTech”), internal and third-party data sources, business needs, strategic advice, and, in the aggregate, the firms growth strategy to deliver actionable insights across practice and industry groups.

Legal marketers understand this framework, its value, and have demonstrated its effectiveness – delivering high-impact insights on a project-by-project basis. But despite their localized success, most teams find it challenging to deliver strategic marketing guidance at scale.

Drawing on insights gathered from the 2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey (the Survey), the findings confirm what legal Marketing and Business Development leaders already know: while the vision for their role is clear, the infrastructure to support it is not. Most firms are operating with disconnected systems, disparate data, and ad hoc manual processes – a fragmented picture that creates a cycle of inefficiency and limits the function’s ability to drive growth at scale across the firm.

Yet the path forward is clear. By investing in technology, unifying data architecture, passive data capture capabilities, and bolstering strategic intelligence capabilities Marketing and Business Development teams can drastically improve the value their MarTech systems deliver to the business, the productivity of their team, and the financial success of the firm. The goal is not better tools – it’s connected growth infrastructure that enables business professionals to deliver proactive, data-informed strategic advice across all practices, industry groups, and across the business.

The vision: Activating market opportunities at scale

At the core of modern legal marketing strategy is a growth framework designed to transform fragmented data and technology into actionable intelligence. This framework is not a collection of tools – it is an operating model that connects four critical components into a unified growth engine:

Operating model of a unified growth engine



Marketing Technology

Marketing technology serves as the infrastructure layer of the framework – aggregating, connecting, and housing the data required to power strategic insights. It includes systems such as CRM, Enterprise Relationship Management (ERM), experience management, financial platforms, and intelligence analytics tools. These platforms are not just repositories; they are the central nervous system of the function, enabling seamless data flow, integration, and access.

When fully connected, the MarTech stack becomes a single source of truth for client relationships, lawyer experience, market activity, and business development performance. It supports passive data capture, automates routine processes, and ensures that intelligence is available on demand. Rather than operating as point solutions, these systems must function as a cohesive ecosystem – one that enables Marketing and Business Development teams to deliver insights at scale.

Data

Strategic advice depends on the quality and accessibility of data. The growth framework draws from both internal (client relationships, financial performance, and lawyer experience) and external sources (market trends, client and competitive intelligence, or legal demand forecasts) to build a comprehensive intelligence layer.

The value of these sources lies in their ability to be connected and contextualized. When data is fragmented or inconsistent, insights become unreliable. With a unified data architecture, these sources provide the foundation for proactive analysis – enabling firms to identify emerging opportunities, assess competitive positioning, and align practice strengths with market demand.

Business needs

Data alone does not drive growth – it must be translated into strategic action. The growth framework connects intelligence to specific business needs, such as lateral hiring, geographic expansion, client retention, and go-to-market planning. These needs vary by practice, but the process of identifying and prioritizing them should be consistent.

Aligning data with business objectives requires collaboration across departments, shared planning processes, and a clear understanding of how intelligence informs decision making. When business needs are clearly defined and supported by reliable data, firms can execute growth strategies with precision and confidence.

Strategic advice

The final layer of the growth framework is the delivery of strategic advice – actionable guidance that empowers lawyers and practice groups to compete effectively. It requires the deep expertise of in-house marketers and business developers who understand which capabilities differentiate the firm, where white space exists across clients and industries, and how to align practice priorities with emerging legal demand.

To scale this capability, firms must embed strategic intelligence into the tools lawyers already use, standardize planning processes, and ensure insights are delivered in real time. When the growth framework is fully operationalized, Marketing and Business Development teams shift from tactical support to strategic leadership, guiding the firm toward measurable growth.

The gap between vision and execution

When these components work together, Marketing and Business Development teams can deliver proactive, data-driven strategic advice across the firm via practice and industry groups - not as isolated projects, but as a scalable, repeatable capability empowering them to be proactive drivers of firm growth. Yet, most firms remain unable to operationalize this framework at scale. Technology investments are fragmented, data quality is inconsistent, processes rely heavily on manual effort and intelligence support is underutilized. The result: strategic advice is delivered in pockets, not across the enterprise. Understanding why requires examining not just what firms lack, but what prevents them from building it.

Fragmented marketing technology ecosystems



Marketing technology has become the backbone of law firm growth strategies - yet for most firms, this backbone is fractured.

While nearly all firms have invested in core systems such as CRM, ERM, and experience management, these platforms often operate in silos. Instead of enabling seamless data flow and insight generation, disconnected systems create bottlenecks that undermine the very purpose of the technology stack.

Disparate systems lead to inconsistent data flows and incomplete insights, forcing Marketing and Business Development teams to spend hours manually assembling information that should be readily accessible. For example, a business development manager trying to identify Energy clients with emerging regulatory needs will have to manually pull data from the CRM, financial system, and

experience system, validate that the data is correct and complete, and combine it to see the full picture. This will take hours and will quickly be out-of-date.

This delay not only slows the delivery of strategic advice but erodes confidence in the accuracy of intelligence. Nearly three-quarters of respondent's report spending more than four hours per week searching for contact or experience data - a resource drain that limits agility and keeps them locked in reactive, project-based efforts rather than enabling proactive, scalable growth strategies.

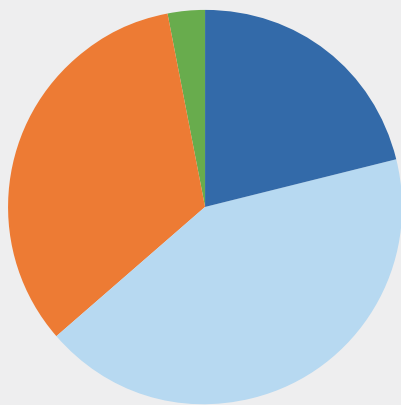
According to the Survey, nearly all firms (97%) report using a CRM system, yet only one fifth (21.2%) achieved full integration across their MarTech stack. The majority

remain partially connected, with 42.4% reporting limited integration, and 36% relying heavily on manual data transfers. Integration issues were cited as the top frustration by 69.7% of respondents, signaling that firms recognize connectivity as a critical barrier to success.

Only **one fifth** (21.2%) achieved **full integration** across their MarTech stack.

2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey

How would you describe your firm's current marketing technology integration level?



- 21.2%** Most systems are integrated
- 42.4%** Some key systems are integrated, but others require manual data transfers
- 33.3%** Few systems are connected, most require manual data transfers
- 3%** Systems operate independently with no connections, moving data between systems is manual



In a recent Harbor Law Firm Leaders Sounding Board, **100%** of participating COOs identified evolving the **Marketing and Business Development** functions as a **top priority in 2026**.

SOLUTION



Integrate marketing technology systems and departmental platforms

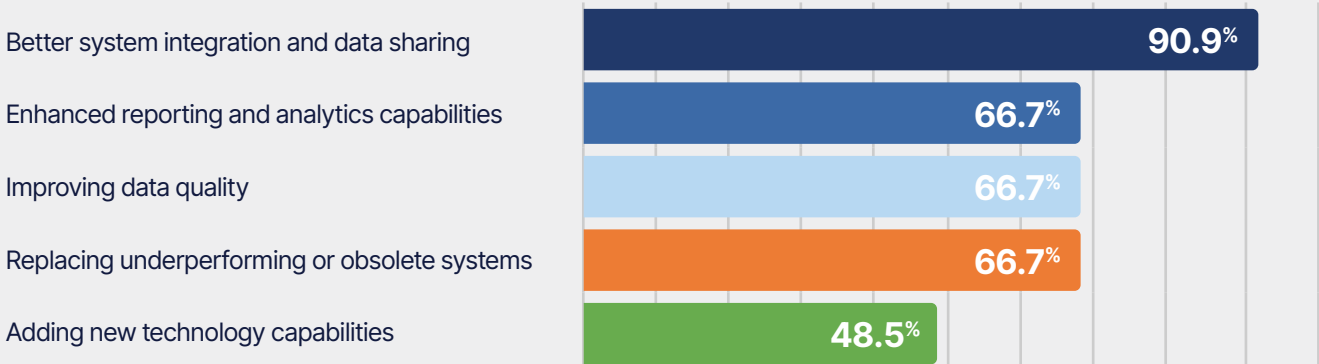
Integration is not a technical preference – it’s a strategic imperative. A connected MarTech ecosystem enables Marketing and Business Development teams to access accurate, real-time data and deliver insights at scale. For instance, a unified CRM, ERM, and financial system can automatically flag when a top clients revenue declines while partner touchpoints have dropped – surfacing risk that siloed systems would miss.

Key steps include unifying core systems such as CRM, ERM, experience management and financial platforms to create a single source of truth; automating data flows to reduce reliance on manual transfers; and investing in scalable architecture that supports future enhancements, including AI-driven analytics.

Encouragingly, firms are signaling a readiness for this shift. Nearly 48.5% of respondents reported they are actively reshaping their MarTech stack, and 90.9% identified better system integration and data sharing as their top investment priority. These actions represent a critical first step toward operationalizing the framework and enabling Marketing and Business Development teams to deliver strategic advice consistently across the firm. In a recent Harbor Law Firm Leaders Sounding Board, 100% of participating COOs identified evolving the Marketing and Business Development functions as a top priority in 2026.

2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey

If you are considering new marketing technology systems, what is your biggest priority?





Poor data quality and stewardship

Even the most advanced technology stack cannot deliver strategic advice without reliable data.

For law firms, marketing and business development insights depend on accurate, complete, and consistently maintained information. Yet, data quality remains one of the most persistent challenges across the legal industry. Inconsistent stewardship practices, fragmented systems, and manual data entry processes create a cycle of errors that undermines confidence in the intelligence firms rely on to drive growth.

Beyond internal data, Marketing and Business Development teams rely on third-party intelligence – market trends, competitor analysis, and third-party research – to anticipate client needs and identify growth opportunities. Yet, these sources are often cut-off from MarTech systems, forcing teams to manually aggregate this information or forego it entirely. When intelligence is not prioritized, firms miss early signals of demand, lose opportunities to differentiate themselves from their competitors, and struggle to validate strategic decisions.

Unreliable data erodes trust in insights and slows execution. Marketing teams often cannot bring a list of top clients to a partner without spending hours gathering

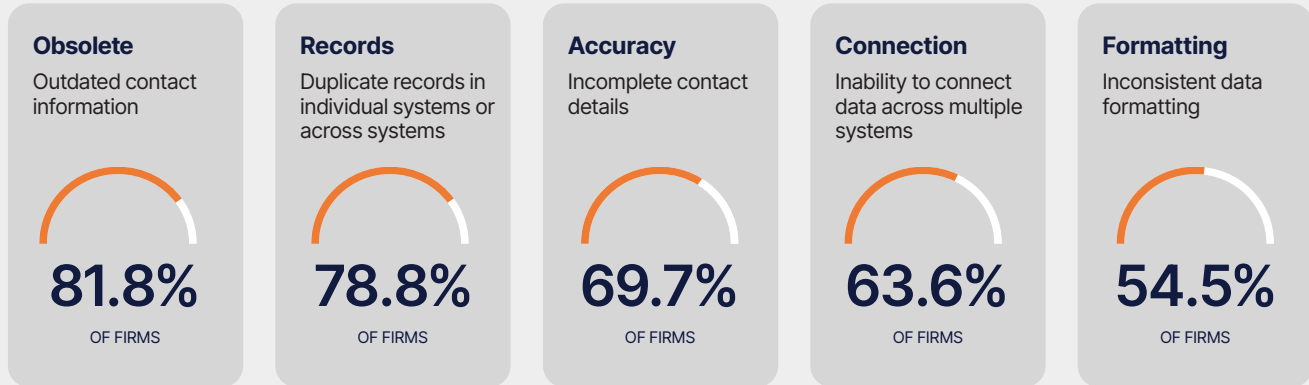
account details from various internal and external systems, scoring relationships, and formatting the report. Inconsistent matter opening practices – such as rushed or incomplete data entry – further compromise data quality, requiring manual review and correction by dedicated staff. Without the capacity or automation needed to overcome these bottlenecks, the expectation for marketers to anticipate client needs becomes unrealistic. These inefficiencies not only delay strategic initiatives but can compromise client relationships, misdirect growth initiatives, and diminish the credibility of Marketing and Business Development teams when advising firm leadership.

The Survey underscores the severity of this issue. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.6%) cited poor data quality as a top frustration, with common problems including outdated contact information, duplicate records, and incomplete contact or company details. These issues are not isolated – they are systemic, stemming from disconnected platforms and the absence of standardized governance.



2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey

What data quality issues does your firm most commonly encounter?



SOLUTION



Establishing robust data governance

To overcome these challenges, firms must treat data governance as a strategic priority. This begins with defining clear ownership and accountability for data integrity. Dedicated stewardship roles – whether internal or outsourced – are essential to ensure consistency and accuracy across systems. Standardizing data entry protocols, implementing validation rules, and leveraging automation for routine updates can significantly reduce errors and improve reliability.

Encouragingly, the Survey indicates growing recognition of this need. Nearly 70% of firms have yet to invest in dedicated internal data stewards, and only 21.2% rely on outsourced support. These steps represent progress, but governance must extend beyond individual roles to encompass firmwide policies and processes.

For many firms, overcoming this challenge requires more than technology – it demands scalable solutions that add capacity and expertise without increasing headcount. Whether through automation or external managed services, firms need models that reduce the manual burden of gathering and synthesizing intelligence, enabling Marketing and Business Development professionals to focus on interpreting insights and shaping strategy. By embedding data quality standards into daily operations and aligning them with strategic objectives – tying data accuracy and completeness metrics to team performance goals or automating alerts when client records lack key information – firms can transform their marketing technology from a static resource into a trusted source of intelligence capable of powering the framework for scalable growth.

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Limited lawyer engagement

Even with robust technology and clean data, the growth framework cannot succeed without lawyer participation.

Relationship intelligence and client insights often originate from lawyer interactions, yet most firms struggle to capture this information effectively. Traditional approaches rely on lawyers manually updating CRM systems – a task that competes with billable priorities and rarely becomes a habit. As a result, critical client and activity data remain siloed, incomplete, or entirely absent.

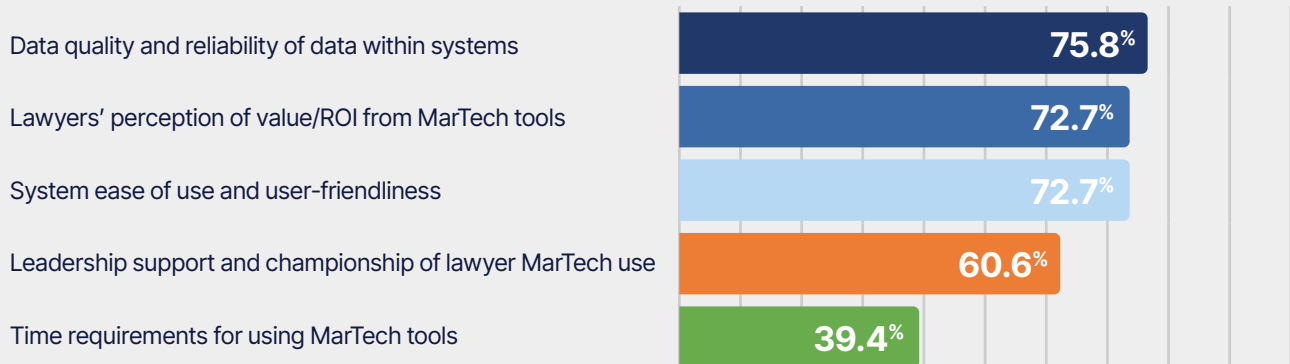
Without reliable relationship intelligence, Marketing and Business Development teams cannot deliver personalized, actionable advice. Informal interactions – such as coffee meetings, networking events, or conference engagements – often signal emerging opportunities but rarely make it into CRM systems. Yet, these details are essential for mapping “who-knows-who” relationships and building the intelligence that powers the framework.

One firm noted that even with CRM and ERM tools in place, the challenge is not identifying white space – it is getting lawyers to act on the insights. This lack of engagement leads to missed cross-selling opportunities, incomplete client profiles, and reduced confidence in analytics, forcing teams to rely on assumptions rather than evidence.

The depth of this challenge is highlighted by the Survey. Only 18.2% of lawyers regularly engage with CRM systems, and 60.6% of respondents cited low lawyer adoption as a major obstacle. While firms have invested heavily in technology, the lack of lawyers’ input limits the accuracy and completeness of relationship data, reducing the strategic value of marketing insights.

2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey

What factors most influence marketing technology adoption at your firm?



SOLUTION



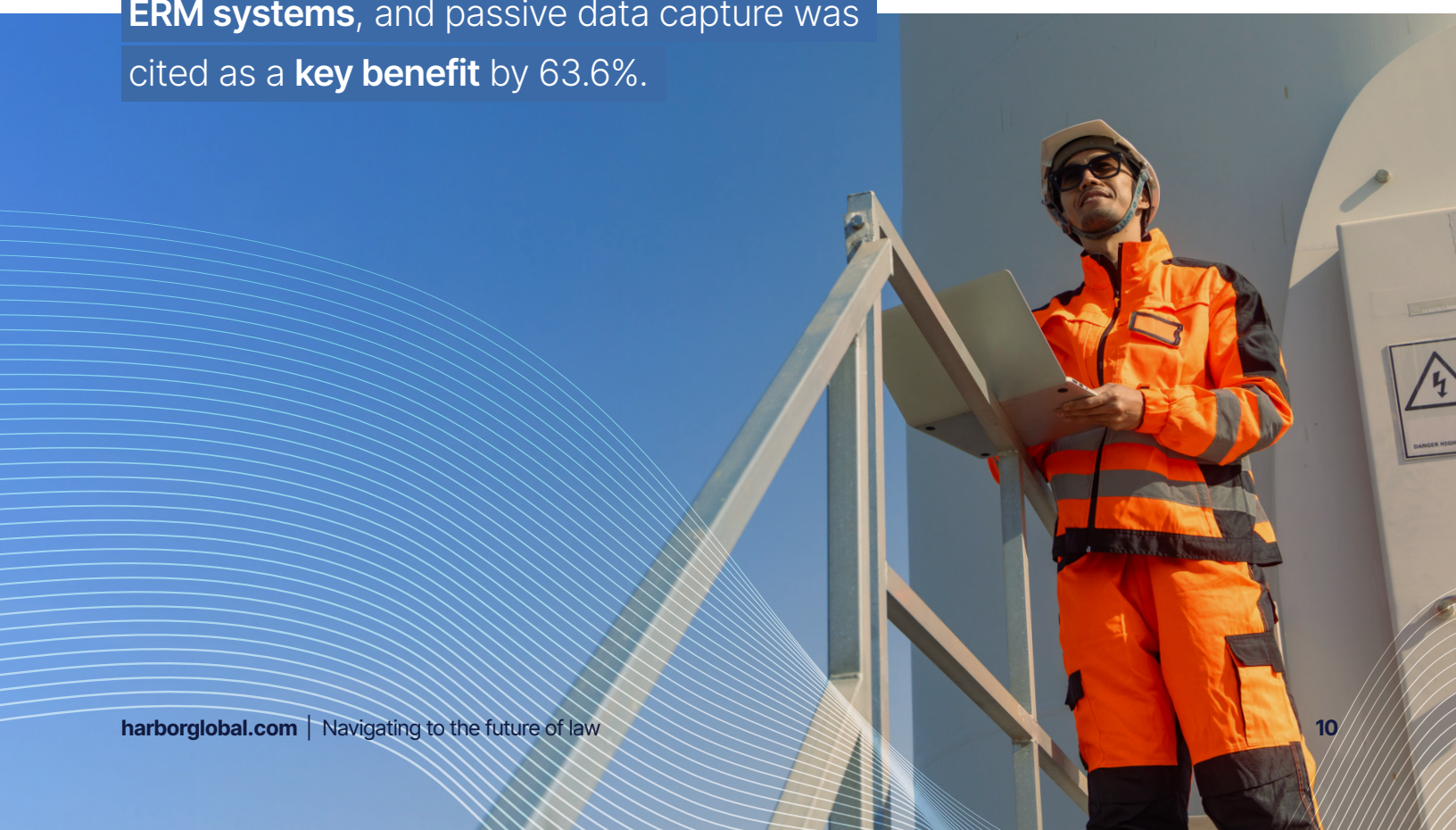
Enabling passive data capture and embedded workflows

Lawyer engagement is essential to the growth framework, but it cannot rely on manual input. ERM systems offer a proven solution by automatically harvesting relationship signals from email signatures, calendar activity, and other lawyer workflows, and appends them to the appropriate contact record in the CRM. This approach minimizes disruption to lawyer routines while ensuring marketing has access to accurate, timely insights.

Survey findings suggest firms are moving in this direction. More than 60% of respondents have adopted ERM systems, and passive data capture was cited as a key benefit by 63.6%. Beyond technology, firms should embed insights into tools lawyers already use – such as Outlook or collaboration platforms like Teams or Slack – so that intelligence becomes a part of their everyday workflows rather than an additional task. When lawyers can access actionable intelligence without leaving their daily workflow, Marketing and Business Development teams can turn insights into opportunities faster and influence decisions in real-time.

While ERM addresses contact capture, firms must continue to explore strategies to close the activity gap, whether through automated prompts, integrated mobile tools, or streamlined reporting processes. By reducing friction and demonstrating the value of accurate data, firms can foster a virtuous cycle where lawyers benefit directly from the intelligence they help create.

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Inability to deliver strategic advice

The growth framework is designed to enable Marketing and Business Development Teams to deliver proactive, data-informed strategic advice across the firm.

Yet for most firms, the vision remains aspirational. While teams can produce high-impact insights for individual practices or isolated initiatives, scaling these efforts across the entire organization is a persistent challenge. Manual processes, fragmented systems, and inconsistent data governance create bottlenecks that prevent Marketing and Business Development professionals from operating as true growth drivers.

Without connected infrastructure and standardized processes, Marketing and Business Development teams are unable to perform the level of analysis required to position the firm competitively in the market. For example, if the firm sees rising regulatory demand in the Energy and Utilities sector, the marketing team may know which clients fall within that industry – but without integrated systems, unified data, and leveraging competitive and client intelligence they cannot determine which clients are most likely to need regulatory services, what competitors are already serving them, or how the firm’s own

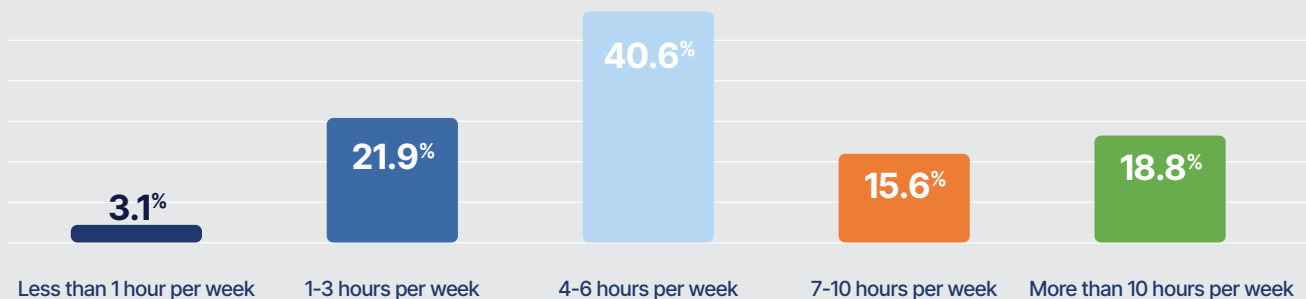
experience compares. And, without proactive market intelligence, the firms may miss the opportunity to capture latent or emerging demand.

Nor can they identify which practice strengths align with emerging legal demand, or synthesize client, market, and competitive intelligence into actionable guidance for lawyers. The result is a disconnect between market opportunity and firm action, where insights exist but cannot be activated at scale.

During conversations with clients, we discovered their Marketing and Business Development teams can deliver strategic advice at the client level, and according to the Survey, nearly 75% spend more than 4 hours a week searching for contact or experience data that should be readily accessible. The limited access to integrated systems and data creates inefficiencies that hinder the ability of teams to deliver maximum strategic growth impact across the firm.

2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey

How much time per week does your team spend searching for contact data or experience information that should be easily accessible?



SOLUTION



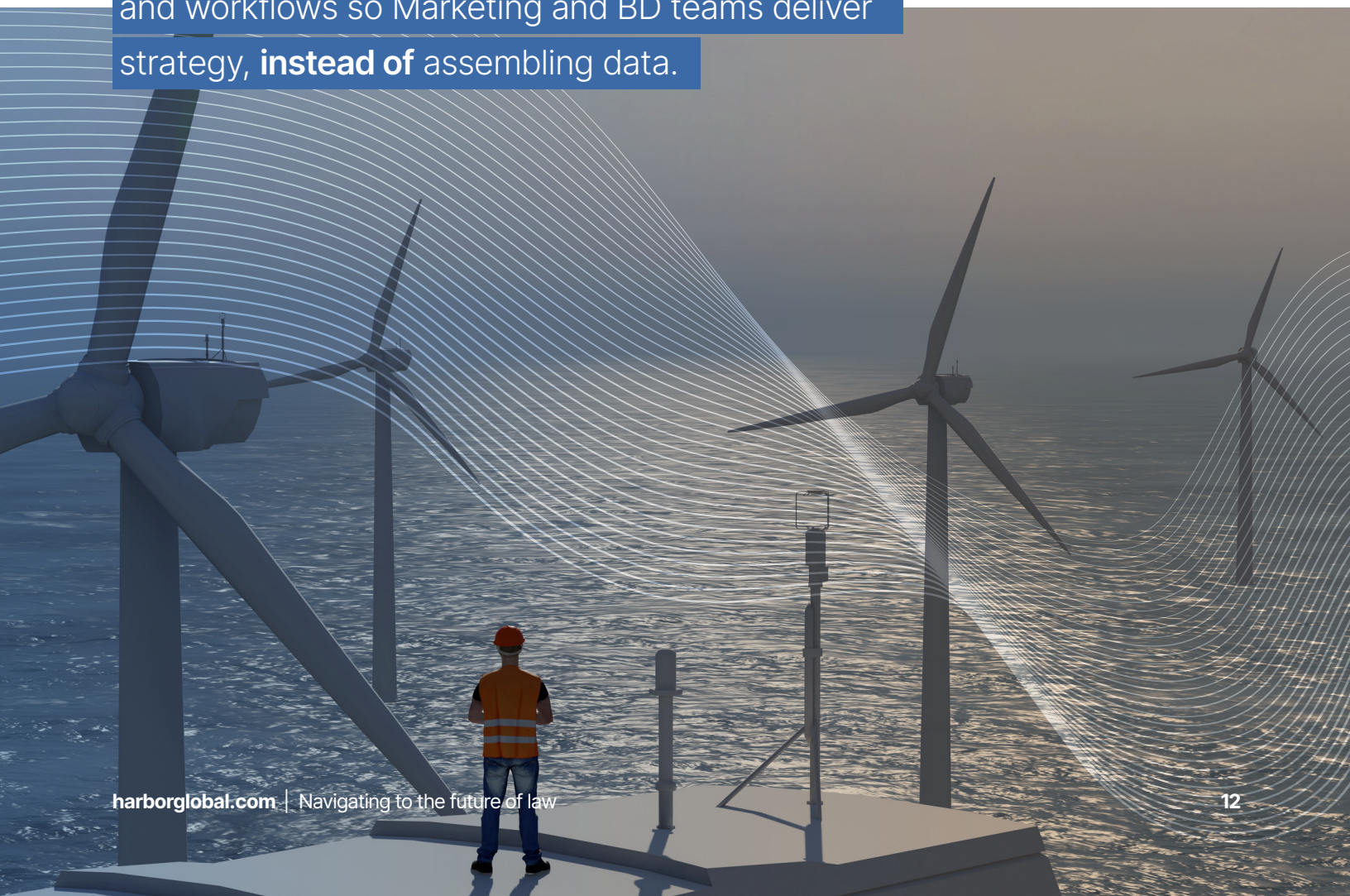
Shift to strategic intelligence delivery

Success depends on integrating technology, data, and workflows so Marketing and Business Development teams deliver strategy, instead of assembling data.

This begins by standardizing workflows for market demand scanning, client intelligence, and go-to-market planning. Repeatable processes ensure that insights are not dependent on ad hoc efforts but can be delivered consistently across practice and industry groups. With standardized processes, Marketing and Business Development teams can apply their expertise to interpreting intelligence and shaping growth strategies, rather than spending time manually gathering data.

Equally important is aligning marketing and business development efforts with the firm's overarching goals. Coordinating GTM initiatives with practice and industry priorities ensures that insights drive meaningful and measurable outcomes. This alignment requires a connected framework where technology, data, and processes converge – enabling Marketing and Business Development professionals to guide lawyers toward the most promising and proactively identified opportunities based on reliable intelligence.

Success depends on **integrating** technology, data, and workflows so Marketing and BD teams deliver strategy, **instead of** assembling data.



2025

Conclusion: Connectivity, clean data, and strategic intelligence

Law firm Marketing and Business Development teams have a clear remit: Deliver strategic advice that drives measurable growth. The framework for activating market opportunity is well understood – connect marketing technology, internal and external data sources, business needs, and strategic advice into a unified growth engine. Yet, most firms remain constrained by fragmented systems, inconsistent data, and manual processes that limit scalability.

The opportunity now is to move from vision to execution. By investing in integrated infrastructure, disciplined data governance, and embedded workflows, firms can transform their marketing and business development functions from reactive support into strategic leadership. These investments are not just operational improvements – they are drivers of firmwide growth.

Marketing and Business Development professionals are uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. Their deep understanding of the firm's strengths, market dynamics, and client priorities allows them to deliver tailored, actionable intelligence in a way that no other function can replicate. Information becomes intelligence when integrated - connecting internal data with external market insights and competitor analysis to create a holistic view of opportunity. When equipped with the right tools and processes, they become central drivers of competitive advantage.

The path forward is incremental, but clear. Each step – system integration, data stewardship, lawyer enablement, proactive intelligence market monitoring, and standardized planning - builds toward a connected infrastructure that supports scalable strategic growth strategies. Firms that operationalize a growth framework and embedding intelligence into everyday workflows will unlock the full potential of their Marketing and Business Development teams and position themselves with a competitive advantage that fuels sustained growth.



Connect with a Harbor expert

Ready to **transform your marketing** and business development teams into **drivers of growth**? Let's discuss how a **connected** growth framework can be the **foundation of your strategy** - giving you the **tools, data, and processes** you need to move beyond reactive, tactical support and **deliver strategic advice** at scale.

Contact

Marketing Technology Team

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About the Harbor Marketing Technology Survey

The 2025 Harbor Marketing Technology Survey is a benchmarking initiative exploring how firms are building their technology stacks, integrating systems, managing data quality, and measuring impact. The survey is designed to provide law firm leaders with actionable data and peer benchmarks to turn their marketing and business development teams into growth drivers by providing an understanding of the challenges marketers face to provide strategic advice firm wide.

About Harbor

Harbor is a globally integrated team of strategists, technologists and specialists focused on helping law firms, corporations, and their law departments achieve breakthrough outcomes. We are also helping to steer a legal industry in the midst of turbulent change. We navigate alongside our clients and partners, providing salient insights, scalable resources, and seasoned advice.