Gamification Code:

COCONUT

Shaping the future of IP firms

Identity, strategy and business models

FICPI

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Womble Bond Dickinson

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Solve Intelligence

Session structure

01	**Moderator Opening**	Survey findings + five business models introduced	~15 min
02	**Speaker Presentations**	Ben · Maya · Chris	~30 min
03	**Moderated Q&A**	Panel discussion, one question per speaker + full-panel close	~20 min
04	**Audience Questions**	Open floor	~10 min

A profession-wide snapshot

PMC Business Model Survey · 99 IP firms · 34 countries · May 2025

99	5.3	90%	82%	72%
Firms surveyed	**Avg. services per firm**	**Feel globalisation's pull**	**Report AI influence**	**Engage in cooperation**
34 countries	*beyond core prosecution*	*63% moderate or large*	*only 9% call it "large"*	*strategic partnerships lead*

Region: Europe 56% · Asia-Pacific 18% · Latin America 12% · North America 9% · MEA 3%

Three forces, one shared pressure

90%

Globalisation

Most pervasive — clients can source IP services from any jurisdiction

65%

Consolidation

Least felt overall, but deepest where it hits — squeezes the 50–100 staff bracket hardest (58%)

82%

Artificial Intelligence

Reshaping client expectations (40 firms) far faster than firm operations (6 firms reduced fee-earners)

The 50-staff inflection point

Firms crossing the 50-staff line show a step-change across every maturity metric.

Avg. services offered

4.6 → **6.8**

<50 staff **≥50 staff**

Business-model change rate

68% → **83%**

<50 staff **≥50 staff**

Formal outsourcing arrangements

13% → **25%**

<50 staff **≥50 staff**

94% of all firms now offer at least one service beyond core prosecution — service diversification is the sector baseline, not a differentiator.

Four tensions the sector hasn't resolved

Regulatory constraints as a hidden ceiling

46% of firms face national restrictions on ownership, scope-of-practice, or cross-disciplinary work

The squeezed middle

50–100 staff firms report the highest consolidation impact (58%) — large enough to compete, too small to absorb the pressure

Awareness without action

82% feel AI's influence; only 6% have reduced fee-earning staff — a 7× expectation gap

Cooperation is wide but shallow

72% cooperate in some form, yet joint ventures remain rare (7%) and North America shows near-zero strategic partnerships

The common thread: every one of these tensions has been recognised across the profession — but none of them has yet forced real structural change.

Five Business Models

MODEL 1

IP Platform Roll-ups

Shared operations, shared data, predictable output

MODEL 2

Full-Service & Big 4 Integration

Integration plus execution, not only more headcount

MODEL 3 ★

Boutique IP Firms

Niche mastery + repeatable products + visible QA

MODEL 4 ★

International & National Alliances

Keep independence, operate like one coordinated team

MODEL 5 ★

AI-Native IP Service Providers

AI does the first pass; lawyers supervise the decisions

Why Models 2 to 5 for this session

No consensus on an ideal model

Q21: only 20% are satisfied with their current model; 19% say there's no single ideal. The remaining 61% split across competing visions — including boutique, alliance, and AI-integrated futures.

These are where the pressure is building

Informal competency-building (53% external courses, 49% self-taught) strains productization; shallow cooperation (7% JVs) leaves alliance maturity untested; the AI expectation gap (7×) is unresolved.

Independent firms don't have to choose consolidation

Models 1 and 2 answer scale with M&A. Models 3, 4 and 5 show how an independent firm competes on niche mastery, coordinated networks, or AI-native delivery instead.

Ben Lehberger

Dilworth IP

Introduction

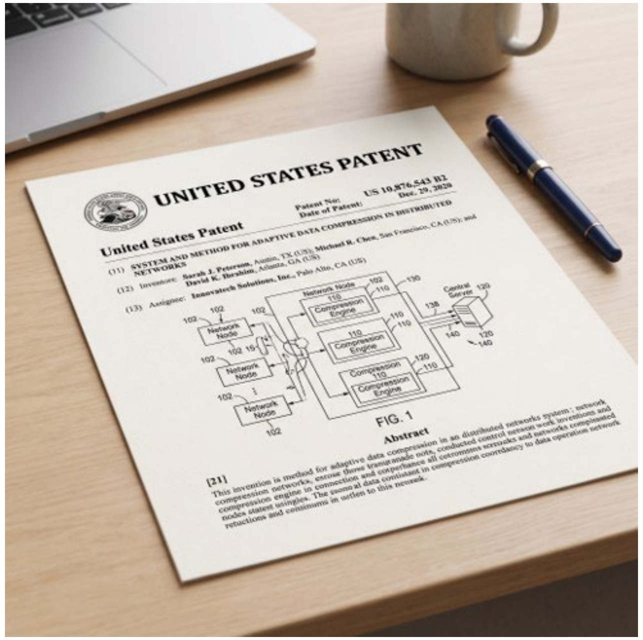
- About Me
  - Registered Patent Attorney (Mechanical)
  - 20+ years of experience in boutique IP firms
  - Joined Dilworth IP in 2019
  - Partner, Management Team

DILWORTH IP
WE PATENT THE FUTURE®

- Our Firm
  - IP Boutique in New Haven, CT USA
  - Founded in 2007 with chemistry focus
  - Expanded to full-service IP practice with 19 remote employees across 7 states
  - Senior attorneys with industry and USPTO experience

Patent Boutique Model Overview

- Most common model among FICPI members
- Single focus and expertise in intellectual property
- Personalized client service through senior attorneys with specialized experience
- Flexible fee arrangements, including fixed fees
- Agile and not constrained by other practice areas

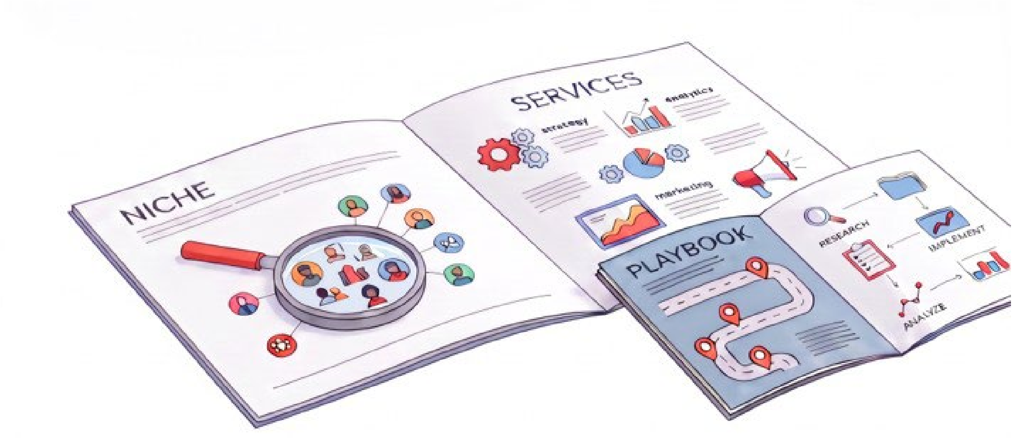


Succeeding with the Patent Boutique Model

- Own a Niche
  - Technical field
  - Forum
  - Client niche

- Operating Playbook
  - Standardized, repeatable work product with visible QA
  - Outsourcing for efficiency
  - Artificial Intelligence

- Productized Services
  - Fixed-fee packages
  - Competitive intelligence
  - Deal support

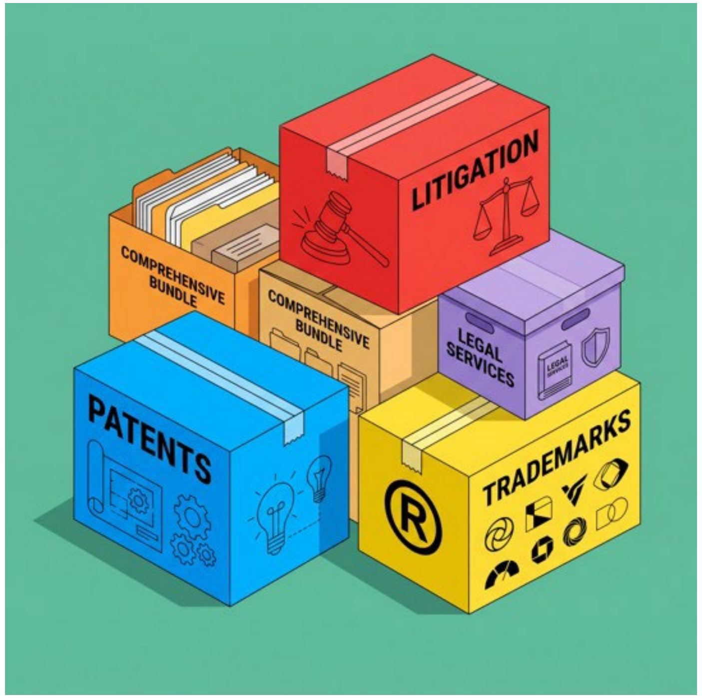


Patent Boutique Model in Practice - Niche

- Mid-market companies / growth-stage, funded innovators
  - IP protection strategies for clients with no or small in-house IP teams
- Function as “general contractor” for work outside of core offerings
  - Bring in other resources and service providers as necessary
- Litigation readiness
  - Partner with larger firms as needed

Patent Boutique Model in Practice – Productized Services

- Fixed-fee patent and trademark prosecution
  - Tiered pricing based on complexity
- Competitive intelligence
  - monthly or quarterly competitor monitoring packages
- IP Consulting Packages on fixed-fee and monthly retainer basis
  - Strategic assessment, training, roadmap, portfolio growth & monetization



Patent Boutique Model in Practice – Quality Assurance

- Standardization & Visible QA
  - Best Practice Committee
  - Standard templates and checklists
  - Defined review gates before delivery
  - Adoption of AI for efficiency and quality

- Outsourcing & Partnering
  - Docketing
  - Information disclosure statements
  - Document shelling, assembly of responses, and review
  - Patent valuation
  - Large-scale litigation

Patent Boutique Model in Practice – AI Adoption

- AI Adoption for Legal Services
  - Adopting AI throughout practice with attorney always in the loop
  - Fixed fee models allow firm to benefit from AI efficiency

- AI Adoption for Back Office
  - Implementing AI for office tasks beyond legal work
  - Internal competition for developing AI agents

- AI-Powered Marketing
  - Create authority and repurpose content
  - Find opportunities and scale relationships

Patent Boutique Model – Vulnerabilities and Risk Management

- Losing Strategic Focus
  - Expanding beyond the firm's differentiated capabilities
  - Pursuing work that the firm cannot deliver efficiently or exceptionally
- Client and Talent Concentration
  - Excessive reliance on key clients or professionals
  - Limited succession planning and institutional knowledge
- Poorly Designed Fixed-Fee Arrangements
  - Underpricing, scope creep, or incorrect complexity assumptions
  - Failure to track effort, profitability, and exceptions
- Unsafe or Ineffective AI Implementation
  - Inadequate protection of confidential client information
  - Overreliance on AI-generated work product

The Future of the Patent Boutique

- Niche and specialization more important in the age of AI
- Differentiate from competitors, and demonstrate value over do-it-yourself AI legal tools
- Focus on high value work, rely on technology and outsourcing for lower value and repetitive tasks
- Leverage AI beyond legal work
- Specialization wins opportunities, technology improves efficiency, but trusted relationships create enduring businesses

Patent Boutique Model

Thank You!

Maya Muchemwa

Womble Bond Dickinson

Model 4: International/National alliances

- This model is defined by the collaboration of "**independent firms**" to form a **virtual firm**

- The cooperation is **transparent to clients** and is designed to increase incoming work for the participants. It can take the form of:

  - ❖ ***national alliances***
  - ❖ ***multi-firm alliances/networks***
  - ❖ ***bilateral strategic alliances***

Model 4: International/National alliances

NATIONAL ALLIANCES/FORMAL COOPERATION AGREEMENTS:

firms in the same country coordinate by region, capability, sector focus, or overflow capacity.

ALLIANCES/NETWORKS:

structured groups of independent firms coordinating cross-border or national work

CAPABILITY STITCHING :

firm A provides service X and firm B provides service Y; together they deliver a bundled offering without merging

BILATERAL STRATEGIC ALLIANCES *(two firms+):*

deep cross-border or national cooperation designed to increase incoming work for the firms

Model 4/Womble Bond Dickinson

In 2017, Bond Dickinson combined with Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice to create **Womble Bond Dickinson (International) LLP** in which WBD (UK) LLP and WBD (US) LLP operate as a non-profit sharing partnership

This means **WBD** mainly fits the **Model 4** definition, as a:

BILATERAL STRATEGIC ALLIANCES *(two firms+):*

- Servicing clients under one brand name and referring work between each other
- Shared standards, templates (as appropriate), systems/operations (onboarding, conflicts etc)
- Cross-border teams offered to clients as needed

Model 4/ Womble Bond Dickinson

- Womble Bond Dickinson is a transatlantic full-service law firm, with a strong IP offering in both the US and the UK

- The firm boasts over 1,300 legal professionals from 40 offices in the US and UK.

- On the IP side, the firm works with many other IP practitioners outside the UK/US based on informal/formal agreements

- In the UK, the current version of the firm came about as a result of a merger of two regional firms (Bond Pierce and Dickinson Dees) in 2013

Model 4/Womble Bond Dickinson/Cross-border teams

BOND DICKINSON Expertise

NEWS

Bond Dickinson and Womble Carlyle advise on transatlantic M&A deal

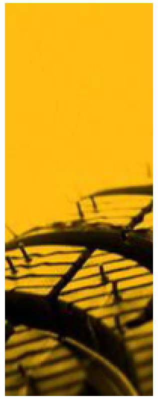
Aug 18 2017 • 3 Min Read

Between 2015 and 2017 the two firms had a **"best friends"** arrangement

NEWS

Womble Bond Dickinson advises Peregryn on acquisition of Ultima Cars IP, rights and tooling

Aug 13 2026 • 1 Min Read



Womble was able to field a team of US and UK lawyers, giving the client streamlined legal support from "one" team

Model 4/ Womble Bond Dickinson

- Beyond the UK and US, clients have access to other legal networks.
- Lex Mundi is an example: bringing independent law firms across 125 countries – the largest network in the world.
- Lex Mundi members are not affiliated in the joint practice of law; each member firm is an independent law firm and renders professional services on an individual and separate basis.
- Only one vetted member per jurisdiction

Model 2/IP in the full-service law firm

By definition, Model 2 means a wider organization integrates IP capability to sell end-to-end solutions:

- Single point of contact
- Commercialization package: licensing strategy + valuation + agreement drafting/negotiation
- One platform proposition — clients buy coverage and integration in a single engagement
- Full-service law firm integration: IP boutiques join larger firms to align prosecution with transactions and disputes.

WBD – Model 2 Roots?

- WBD brought boutique firms (as well as larger firms) into the fold, including **James Love Legal** in 2019 (UK) + US firms:

  Blakely Sokoloff Taylor Zaffman (IP practice) in 2017

  Abelman Frayne & Schwab in 2023

  Moyles IP in 2023

  Lewis Roca (with a strong IP arm) in 2025.

- Now over **150 IP lawyers** across the UK and US.
- Good for "jurisdiction/state" differences

WOMBLE BOND DICKINSON
JOINS FORCES WITH
LEWIS ROCA

Renowned California IP Firm Joining With Womble Bond Dickinson

Newest Additions are latest in year of major growth for Womble Bond Dickinson.

NEWS PROVIDED BY
Womble Bond Dickinson →
Dec 20, 2017, 09:36 ET

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WOMBLE BOND DICKINSON Expertise

NEWS

WBD strengthens IP offering with acquisition of James Love Legal

Jul 23 2019 • 1 Min Read

U.S. law firm Womble absorbs small IP firm, extending tie-up trend

By Chinekwu Osakwe

April 6, 2023 8:45 PM GMT+1 · Updated April 6, 2023

Signage is seen at the legal offices of the law firm Womble Bond Dickinson in Wilmington, Delaware, U.S., June 9, 2021. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly Purchase Licensing Rights

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News>Womble Bond Dickinson plants flag in New York with five-lawyer team from local IP boutique

Womble Bond Dickinson plants flag in New York with five-lawyer team from local IP boutique

Launch of firm's 20th US office marks five-year anniversary of transatlantic merger that created Womble Bond

28 April 2022

2 Shares

FICPI

Thank you!

Chris Parsonson

Solve Intelligence

Solve Intelligence

AI-native IP firms.

The oldest firm in the room can be the most AI-native. What sets firms apart is how they leverage AI for client work.

Chris Parsonson
Founder and CEO, Solve Intelligence

We build AI for patent work.

An AI platform for patent work.

Used across the patent lifecycle: drafting, prosecution, litigation, freedom-to-operate, portfolio analysis and invention harvesting.

700+

IP firms and in-house teams use Solve, across six continents.

>40%

of the AmLaw 100 use Solve.

#1

AI platform for patents in an independent SKILLS survey of 130 leading law firms.

$60M backing from Y Combinator, Microsoft, Thomson Reuters, 20VC, Operator Collective and others.

> What follows comes from helping hundreds of these firms adopt AI.

Two ways to read Model 5.

THE USUAL DESCRIPTION

A new kind of provider

A lean, AI-first firm where a few senior partners, sometimes just one, run everything. Examples: Landfall IP, Lightbringer, PromptIP.

WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE

What separates firms is how far they have taken AI, not when they were founded.

Add up where AI is actually being used today, and the vast majority of it sits inside firms that existed long before AI took off.

> Model 5 is a way of working that any firm in this room can move toward.

The pros and cons of each route.

New, lean firms

AI-first, run by a few senior partners

STRENGTHS

A few senior partners, even one, can run everything.

AI in the workflow from day one, with no legacy systems.

Outcome-based pricing and faster turnaround.

TRADE-OFFS

Building the back-office from scratch is the real hurdle.

Clients and reputation often move with the partner, non-competes allowing.

Capital-intensive, and no track record yet.

Established firms

Adopt and re-tool what already works

STRENGTHS

Existing clients, distribution and trust.

Resources to roll out across the firm.

Deploy well and the efficiency gains turn into revenue.

TRADE-OFFS

Change management across many people.

Legacy systems and data to untangle.

Culture and incentives take time to shift.

> The winner is whoever adopts fastest and goes deepest.

What adopting AI does for a firm.

Commercial gains

The economics of the firm improve

- In-house teams are consolidating their panels, and the firms that have adopted AI are winning that work.
- More matters, fewer write-offs, more cross- and up-selling.
- Higher profit margin per matter.
- Lower training costs for associates and merged teams.

Strategic gains

The firm becomes easier to choose

- Price flexibly for the clients you want to land.
- Faster turnaround on tight deadlines.
- Higher quality work back to clients.
- Easier to hire and keep top talent, who want the best tools and the most interesting work.

> Better economics, happier clients and a stronger team.

This is already happening.

$1M+

one practice group, ahead of target within six months

CASE STUDY · ANONYMISED

A long-established firm rolled AI out to one practice group. Within six months the group had gone from behind its billable target to more than $1M ahead, and the firm's other groups are now following.

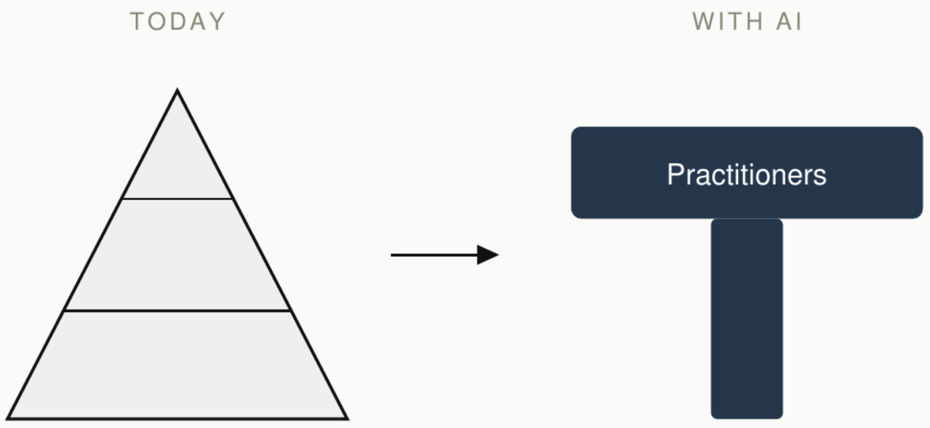
The largest firms are committing hundreds of millions to build AI in-house.

New, lean firms are forming around AI from day one.

Clients are consolidating work with the outside counsel that has adopted AI.

> The gap between adopters and the rest is already opening.

The shape of the firm changes.



Pyramid
people carry the routine volume

T-shape
AI carries the routine, people do the judgment work

AI is absorbing the work, not the people. AI-native software companies write nearly all their code with AI, yet top tech firms are hiring roughly 20% more engineers than a year ago.

Patent work is heading the same way. When you can chart all 50,000 patents in a portfolio rather than a sample, demand grows.

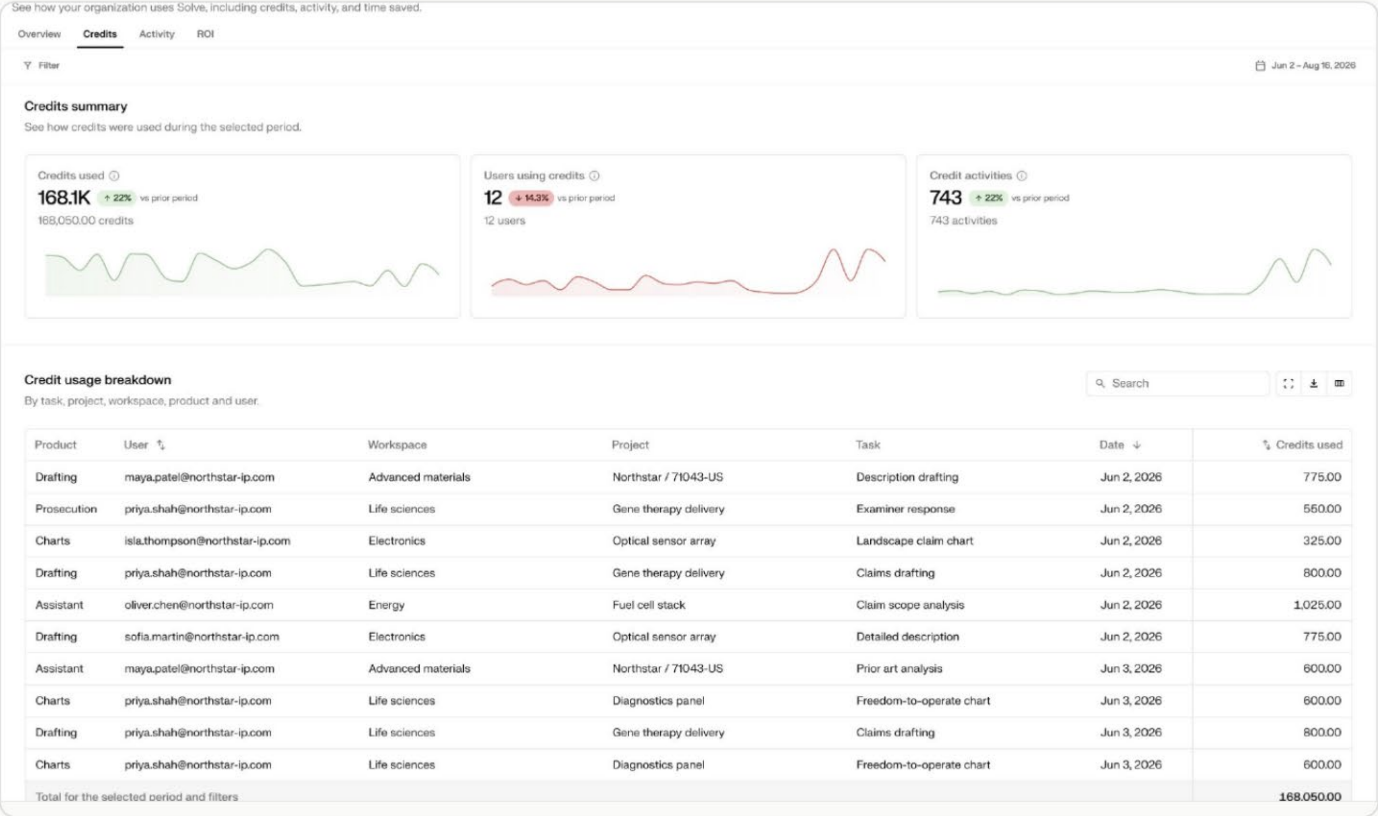
Everyone moves up: seniors work with clients in real time, and juniors get to the interesting work sooner.

New and established firms end up with the same shape, just at different scale.

A good deployment frees 50 to 60% of capacity, and that becomes more work per person, not fewer people.

> The pyramid flattens into a T, and the freed capacity is where margin and revenue grow.

AI spend is becoming a billable line item.


See how your organization uses Solve, including credits, activity, and time saved.

Overview | Credits | Activity | ROI

Filter — Jun 2 – Aug 16, 2026

Credits summary

See how credits were used during the selected period.

Credits used: 168.1K (↑ 22% vs prior period) — 168,050.00 credits

Users using credits: 12 (↓ 14.3% vs prior period) — 12 users

Credit activities: 743 (↑ 22% vs prior period) — 743 activities

Credit usage breakdown

By task, project, workspace, product and user.

Search

Product	User	Workspace	Project	Task	Date	Credits used
Drafting	maya.patel@northstar-ip.com	Advanced materials	Northstar / 71043-US	Description drafting	Jun 2, 2026	775.00
Prosecution	priya.shah@northstar-ip.com	Life sciences	Gene therapy delivery	Examiner response	Jun 2, 2026	550.00
Charts	isla.thompson@northstar-ip.com	Electronics	Optical sensor array	Landscape claim chart	Jun 2, 2026	325.00
Drafting	priya.shah@northstar-ip.com	Life sciences	Gene therapy delivery	Claims drafting	Jun 2, 2026	800.00
Assistant	oliver.chen@northstar-ip.com	Energy	Fuel cell stack	Claim scope analysis	Jun 2, 2026	1,025.00
Drafting	sofia.martin@northstar-ip.com	Electronics	Optical sensor array	Detailed description	Jun 2, 2026	775.00
Assistant	maya.patel@northstar-ip.com	Advanced materials	Northstar / 71043-US	Prior art analysis	Jun 3, 2026	600.00
Charts	priya.shah@northstar-ip.com	Life sciences	Diagnostics panel	Freedom-to-operate chart	Jun 3, 2026	600.00
Drafting	priya.shah@northstar-ip.com	Life sciences	Gene therapy delivery	Claims drafting	Jun 3, 2026	800.00
Charts	priya.shah@northstar-ip.com	Life sciences	Diagnostics panel	Freedom-to-operate chart	Jun 3, 2026	600.00
Total for the selected period and filters						168,050.00

Credit usage by user, matter and task. Product view, demonstration data.

WHAT WE ARE STARTING TO SEE

Firms are breaking AI credit spend down by matter and by task.

It gets passed through to the client as a line item, the way an outside search firm or draftsman would be.

Some firms even mark it up, which turns AI from overhead into revenue.

In five years, this is just how firms work.

AI will run through everything a firm does, the way the internet does today. At that point, being AI-native stops being a differentiator.

The five models converge, and Model 5 gets absorbed into the other four.

A firm can hold a Model 3 niche, join a Model 4 alliance, and run on Model 5 systems at the same time.

> So, for this room: how quickly can you adopt, and pull ahead?

Questions for the panel

Ben — With everything we've covered today — AI, consolidation, shifting client expectations — what does it actually feel like to be running a boutique like yours right in the middle of all that change?

Maya — Womble Bond Dickinson itself came together through a US–UK combination. From where you sit, what was the main reason the two sides actually wanted to engage with each other in the first place?

Chris — We're seeing a lot of players build AI tools for the work itself — drafting, prosecution, search. But the back end of most firms — billing, practice management, client reporting — is still very traditional. Is that the next frontier for AI-native operations, or is it a much harder problem than the drafting side?

Full Panel — What are the disadvantages of operating your business model?

Full Panel — Whatever model a firm chooses, someone still has to train the next generation. As AI changes what a junior lawyer actually needs to know, how do you think the next generation should be trained?

Over to the room

Audience Questions

The floor is open — what would you ask us?


Gamification Code:
COCONUT
FICPI
STRENGTHENING THE PRACTICE OF THE INDEPENDENT IP ATTORNEY