AI Governance for Law Firm Leadership

Why governing your firm's AI use is now a leadership duty — and how to commission it

From CounselCore.ai — the authority on in-house AI compliance for law firms.

The shift

AI governance has become a board-level issue. In BDO's 2026 Board Survey, 51% of directors named AI and emerging technology their top challenge for the year ahead; the Conference Board found 83% of S&P 500 boards have formally named AI a material risk — yet Grant Thornton's 2026 survey found only about 1 in 10 boards providing strong AI oversight, and McKinsey found 72% of organizations unprepared for the changes AI requires. Law firms carry an additional exposure most industries do not: for lawyers, the core duties are personal and non-delegable. Under NYCLA Opinion No. 755-2026 (November 5, 2026), a firm must rigorously assess any AI tool before deploying it, must never place unredacted client data into an unsecured public AI tool (a disclosure that can waive confidentiality), and must manually verify all AI-assisted work before signature and filing — submitting AI "hallucinations" can be treated as frivolous conduct.

The reframe: you govern the practice, not the model

Governance is not about governing the AI. It is about governing the human practices, decisions, and arrangements through which AI is adopted and made consequential in your firm: which tools are approved, what data may go into them, who may use them, and who answers for the output. The rules for using AI are new and still tightening — ethics opinions, court sanctions, client security reviews, and emerging AI laws all point the same direction. Firms that adopt AI the right way, inside a governed system, get the benefit without the trouble: no waived privilege, no sanctioned filings, no client trust lost.

What firm leadership should commission

- An approved-tool inventory and a documented pre-deployment assessment for every AI system the firm uses — before use, not after an incident.
- A written data rule: no client information in unapproved or public AI tools, with client consent obtained where disclosure is required.
- A verification rule: every AI-assisted draft is read in full, every citation opened and checked, every fact confirmed before anything is signed or filed.
- Firm-controlled access, individual accounts, and an audit trail — so the firm can show who used what, on which matter, and when.
- A named owner for AI oversight at leadership level, with periodic review as tools, rules, and client expectations change.

The compliant way to adopt AI: CounselCore

CounselCore is in-house AI built for compliance from the architecture up — so a firm that adopts AI through CounselCore adopts it in line with the duties above, and stays compliant as they evolve:

- Deployed in-house, on infrastructure your firm controls — client data never leaves your walls, so there is no third-party disclosure to manage.
- Your data is never used to train shared models. Your matters stay your matters.
- Access is firm-controlled, with individual accounts and an audit trail leadership can actually inspect.
- Nothing is filed, sent, or submitted by the system on its own — your attorneys verify and sign, the way the Opinion requires.

Prepared by CounselCore.ai for your firm's leadership review with its own counsel. This brief is general information, not legal advice.
CounselCore.ai · info@counselcore.ai · (908) 795-8377 · Request a confidential briefing at counselcore.ai

Sources: NYCLA Ethics Opinion No. 755-2026 (Nov 5, 2026); BDO 2026 Board Survey (Oct 2026); The Conference Board, S&P 500 board disclosures (2026); Grant Thornton 2026 AI Impact Survey; McKinsey, State of Organizations 2026.

Approved for distribution by CounselCore: Timothy Connolly, President & CEO Date: November 12, 2026