

WHITE PAPER

How Legal Teams Can Unlock The Power of APIs

 **trellis**

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What Exactly is an API?

An API is essentially a set of rules and protocols that allow different software applications to communicate with each other, enabling data and functionality to be shared seamlessly between them.

And in today's fast-paced, digital age, application programming interfaces (APIs) are becoming increasingly important for businesses of all types, ranging from law firms and legal service providers to software or services companies, as well as serving insurance, financial services, and human resource sectors, just to name a few.

Almost any modern business can benefit from utilizing an API to build internal or external solutions that help solve a business's specific pain points or the pain points of their customers. **In this White Paper, we'll explore some of the top use cases for APIs in a law firm or legal practice as well as businesses that serve the legal industry.**

What Are Some of the Most Common Use Cases for APIs in the Practice of Law?

Developing Custom Applications and Tools

One of the key benefits of APIs is that they allow businesses to develop custom applications and tools that meet their specific needs. For law firms and legal practices, this could include developing custom applications to manage client relationships, track billable hours, or automate legal research. By leveraging APIs, legal professionals can build bespoke tools that streamline their workflows and enhance their capabilities.

Two Key Examples Include:

- **Law firm internal databases for employee efficiency**

Imagine creating a single source of truth so attorneys don't have to use hundreds of different platforms. Practically speaking, this would mean perhaps having a single database showing all their cases, links to dockets, links to documents, links to info on judges, custom analytics, etc. This would in turn save enormous amounts of the legal practitioner's time so they can better serve clients and bill on other matters. Utilizing an API allows you to integrate both internal firm data and external data from other sources to create a single dashboard and source of truth for your employees.

- **Automating routine tasks**

Another significant benefit of APIs is that they can automate data collection from multiple sources, freeing up time for legal professionals to focus on more complex, high-value work. For example, an API could be used to automate collecting data from multiple databases to aid in the process of creating standardized legal documents, or to manage the capture of data from multiple sources.

Marketing / Business Development

For law firms, APIs are a great path for acquiring enhanced data on corporations and prospective clients, including their portfolio of litigation and business needs. Enhancing client info through APIs can help **aggregate necessary data and customize analytics in order to show rather than tell** a potential client they are they are best equipped to represent them.

Similarly, for companies that sell software or services to law firms/attorneys, being able to reach out with knowledge of a customers' upcoming cases, deadlines, volume or case load, and other firm-relevant information allows a sales executive to **take the driver's seat on sales leads** and give the representative the power to develop outbound messaging that is directly relevant to the customer.

Noteworthy examples include legal service providers, deposition service providers, court reporters, etc. These providers collect external data on law firms and their pending cases to help them understand how to upsell products and services based on a customer's actual needs. Aggregating law firm and court case data via API can put powerful intel directly into the CRM platform.

Provide Customers With Valuable Alerts

As is often said, timing is everything. To that end, APIs endpoints like case and litigation party alerts bring immense value by alerting attorneys and their staff to when their cases change, when their clients have new cases filed against them, or when their opposing counsel is appearing in similar cases.

What's more, alert features provide important boosts to research efforts, enabling legal professionals to **advocate for better outcomes for clients** and making sure that the client relationship remains strong by ensuring partners reach out to clients with important new information before a competitor law firm does. Alerts can be consumed through any internal dashboard, or platform via API creating incredible value and saving both time and money.

Create Custom Analytics Visuals for your Customers using external data (or combining external and internal data).

Enhancing your client's ability to clearly visualize and understand API data-driven, custom analytics can allow for significant gains for your firm or practice. For example, attorneys, legal services firms, and business associations are often tasked with furnishing analytics specific to businesses and corporations based on litigation needs, and costs, such as analyzing:

- Class action case settlements in specific venues;
- Scalable solutions to large OEM auto manufacturers, or
- Legal analytics related to attorneys fees and cost for insurance purposes.

Capturing this external data via API and then building custom analytics that provide direct value to your clients and address their specific research and analysis needs can **make or break** a business. Only via an API can you bring in external data necessary to answer your customers' biggest legal or business questions and directly customize what the visualization and final output will be.

Enhancing Collaboration, Communication, & Cost Effectiveness

APIs are often used to enhance collaboration and communication between different teams within a law firm or legal practice. By integrating different applications and systems, APIs enable legal professionals to work more efficiently and effectively.

Connecting a practice management system with a document management system, allowing lawyers to easily access the latest versions of important documents from a single, centralized location is just one example. Here are several more:

Improving data analytics and decision-making

APIs can be used to improve data analytics and decision-making within a law firm or legal practice. By integrating different data sources, an API can provide lawyers with a more comprehensive view of their cases and clients. For example, an API could be used to connect a CRM system with a case management system, allowing lawyers to access important client information and insights in real-time.

Streamlining compliance and regulatory requirements

APIs can be used to streamline compliance and regulatory requirements for law firms and legal practices. For example, an API could be used to automate the process of gathering data from multiple sources for filing regulatory reports or to ensure that legal documents are compliant with relevant regulations and standards. By leveraging APIs, law firms and legal practices can ensure that they meet their compliance obligations efficiently and effectively.

Cost-Effectiveness

Compared to subscription services, API's can often be more cost-effective. While subscription services typically charge a monthly or annual fee, an API can be integrated directly into a law firm's existing systems, eliminating the need for additional software or services. Additionally, APIs often offer more flexibility and customization options than subscription services, allowing law firms to tailor the API to their specific needs and requirements.

ROI vs. COI

When you think about ROI, undoubtedly one of the most important factors in your decision-making concerning API integration, part of the consideration should be the COI or Cost of Inaction.

The following are some of the COI issues worth pondering:

- What happens if my firm does not build out solutions with APIs, and our competitors gain more of the market share?
- What happens if we fail to help provide sufficient value to our clients?
- What happens if we lack the efficiency our competitors are able to achieve through API integrations, and we are no longer able to price efficiently?

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Trellis invites you to start the conversation toward improved decision-making, increased efficiency, and a competitive advantage in your firm and practice. Below is a list of just some types of businesses integrating Trellis's API to provide cost-effectiveness, greater flexibility, superior service, and elevated levels of value through customization options:

- *Large AM100 firms (large internal data projects)*
- *Insurance Carriers (looking to marry internal and external insurance litigation data)*
- *Mid-Size firms (looking to consume court data and documents directly into DMS or ensuring seamless alerting capabilities in real-time on case changes)*
- *Legal Services Providers (looking to enhance CRM data related to law firms' cases and bring more value through upsells and targeted outbound efforts)*
- *Litigation Support and Trial Visualization companies (looking to bring in external data for custom client analytics and enhance firm and attorney data for purposes of BD)*
- *Real Estate/Foreclosure businesses (looking for information on foreclosures for better lead generation and revenue-building opportunities)*
- *Financial Services companies (looking for external data to assist with risk assessment of individuals or businesses)*
- *HR/Property Mgmt (looking for data related to UD and evictions)*
- *Universities and Law Schools (conducting large academic research projects related to litigation, state court case volumes and outcomes, and judge research)*

Final Thoughts & an Invitation from Trellis

Trellis knows APIs. It's what we do, and we're here to help understand your business' specific needs and goals. As we've seen, APIs offer a range of benefits for law firms and legal practices, and legal service providers—from automating routine tasks to enhancing collaboration and communication. By leveraging APIs, legal professionals can streamline their workflows, develop custom applications and tools, and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. As the legal industry continues to evolve, APIs will undoubtedly play an increasingly important role in helping law firms of all sizes stay ahead of the curve.