TECHNOLOGY & GOVERNANCE

Infinity and Beyond: Surviving with AI!

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A perspective from an independent, privately owned multi-disciplinary practice

Private equity has moved through the claims, dispute resolution and legal advisory market at pace. It brings capital for acquisitions and technology, but it also brings pressure: return targets and leverage that, sooner or later, tend to show up in client fees.

Systech isn't PE-backed. We're privately owned and financed. **That's not a disadvantage to manage around. It's a structural advantage we intend to use.**

So the question we've had to answer isn't "can we afford to compete with PE-scale AI investment?" It's "what does AI adoption look like when it only has to answer to clients, not to an investor's exit timetable?" Here's how we're approaching that.

THE MARKET HASN'T STOOD STILL

Three things are converging on our sector at once:

- **Consolidation.** A growing number of claims consultancies, expert witness practices and law firms have taken external investment in recent years, changing the economics of how those businesses operate.
- **Fee pressure downstream.** Debt service and investor return expectations don't disappear. They tend to surface as rate card inflation or reduced flexibility on scope, a pattern clients are increasingly alert to.
- **Rising client expectations.** Clients now expect AI-enabled turnaround on document-heavy work: chronologies, bundles, disclosure review. They ask how firms are using AI, not whether they are.

Standing still isn't a neutral option. A firm that's neither PE-backed nor AI-enabled risks looking under-resourced on both counts. Our answer is to stay independent while closing the technology gap deliberately, **matching PE-scale outcomes without PE-scale spend.**

GOVERNANCE COMES BEFORE CAPABILITY

Because our services span claims and commercial management, dispute resolution, legal advice and expert witness work, governance isn't a compliance afterthought for us. It's what makes AI adoption defensible to clients, regulators and tribunals alike. Four principles sit ahead of any use case:

- **A human always signs off.** AI may draft, organise or cross-check; a qualified consultant, lawyer or expert reviews and takes ownership of every output: non-negotiable for expert witness reports, where independence and demonstrable authorship of opinion are a duty to the tribunal.
- **Enterprise tools only.** No client-confidential or privileged material goes into consumer-grade AI. We work under enterprise agreements with contractual data protection and no training on our data.
- **One firm-wide AI policy.** A single, clear policy on approved tools, permitted data use and accountability: no ungoverned, ad hoc use across the business.
- **Independence safeguards for experts.** Any AI-assisted data organisation or checking must leave the expert able to demonstrate the opinion is unambiguously their own.

WHERE WE'RE ACTUALLY APPLYING IT

Not as a slogan, but as specific, reviewed use cases across the practice:

- **Claims and commercial management:** building and cross-checking chronologies from large document sets; first-pass delay and disruption analysis, freeing consultant time for judgement rather than data assembly.
- **Dispute resolution:** summarising and cross-referencing bundles and witness statements; supporting case and precedent research ahead of full legal review.
- **Legal services:** contract review assistance and legal research support, always reviewed by a qualified lawyer before use.
- **Expert witness services:** using AI to organise and sense-check underlying data, and never to generate the opinion itself. Authorship stays unambiguously with the expert.

THE EVIDENCE: RISING COSTS, UNEVEN SAVINGS

This isn't a hypothetical concern. Thomson Reuters Institute and Georgetown Law's 2026 State of the US Legal Market report found that law firm technology spending grew 9.7% in 2025 alone, with knowledge management spend, closely tied to AI capability, up 10.5%. Since 2021, cumulative technology investment across the industry has risen by around 39%, leaving firms spending roughly 40% more on technology than before generative AI arrived.

Over the same period, billing rates have climbed sharply: separate surveys from Wells Fargo's Legal Specialty Group and the Thomson Reuters/True Value Partnering Institute Law Firm Rates Report 2026 put 2025 rate growth at around 9–10%, against inflation of roughly 2.8%, more than three times the rate of price rises elsewhere in the economy. Partner profits grew faster still, up 13.7% in the Wells Fargo survey of over 130 firms.

Thomson Reuters' own analysts have flagged the obvious question this raises: premium billing tied to AI adoption is only sustainable if clients can see the value, and the real test of any AI investment is whether it produces a measurable improvement for the client, not just the firm. Rising technology spend, rising rates and rising partner profits arriving together is not, by itself, proof that efficiency gains are reaching the invoice.

THE GAP

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We think that gap is worth naming plainly. It's also why we've built Systech's programme around the opposite sequence: **prove the efficiency first, then let it show up in price, not the other way round.**

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COST, AND FOR CLIENTS

This is the part that matters most to the people we work for. A typical PE-backed investment pattern funds large, often proprietary, technology spend through debt and investor capital: serviced, over time, through fee growth. Rollout tends to follow a reporting or exit timetable rather than evidence of what's actually working. Investor return expectations compete directly with any efficiency dividend that might otherwise reach the client.

Our approach is different by design: proportionate use of established commercial AI tools under enterprise terms, funded from retained earnings, piloted by practice group, and scaled only where the evidence supports it. Efficiency gains get reinvested in service quality and price stability, not routed toward servicing someone else's capital, and not absorbed into rate rises clients can't trace to any tangible improvement.

THE ROAD AHEAD

We're treating this as a staged programme, not a big-bang rollout: foundations and governance first, then targeted pilots where the case for time saved is clearest, then controlled scale-up guided by evidence, with ongoing benchmarking against the market rather than a race to adopt novel capability for its own sake.

Systech doesn't need to match PE-backed competitors pound for pound in technology spend to stay competitive. We need disciplined, well-governed adoption of proven AI, applied where it demonstrably improves turnaround and quality, and deliberately held back where independence, privilege or professional duty require a human hand throughout.

We're AI-enabled because it serves our clients, not because it services someone else's investment.

To infinity, proportionately.

Systech International is an independent, privately owned consultancy providing claims, dispute resolution, commercial management, legal and expert witness services.