



Digital by Default

POWERED BY INTELLIGENCE

CLIENT CASE STUDY

From Fear to **91% Daily Adoption**: How a 200-Person Law Firm Embraced AI in 10 Weeks

A mid-size UK law firm needed structured AI training that went beyond lunch-and-learns. Within 10 weeks, 200 staff were using AI tools daily — saving 6.2 hours per person per week and transforming how the firm competes.

91%

DAILY AI TOOL
ADOPTION

200

STAFF TRAINED &
CERTIFIED

6.2 hrs

WEEKLY TIME SAVED /
PERSON

10 wks

PROGRAMME
DURATION

Prepared by

Erhan Timur, Founder

www.digitalbydefault.co.uk

CONFIDENTIAL

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THE CHALLENGE

Partners wanted AI adoption — but 200 staff were paralysed by fear and had zero structure

When the L&D Director at a mid-size UK law firm (200 staff across 4 offices in London, Manchester, Leeds, and Bristol) reached out to Digital by Default, the tension was palpable:

// I'm the L&D director at a mid-size law firm. Our associates are terrified of AI replacing them but our partners want everyone using it. We need structured training that gets 200 staff actually using AI tools daily — not just a lunch-and-learn.

L&D Director, UK Law Firm (32 partners, 68 associates, 45 paralegals, 55 support staff)

The firm faced a deepening crisis where leadership ambition collided with workforce anxiety:

Organisational Pain Points

- **Only 12% of staff** using any AI tools — and those who did used basic ChatGPT with no security awareness
- **67% of associates** anxious about AI replacing their roles (internal survey)
- **3 data breach near-misses** from staff pasting client data into public AI tools
- A previous “AI awareness” lunch-and-learn had **zero lasting impact** — no one changed behaviour
- **No AI usage policy**, governance framework, or tool approval process existed

Business Impact

- Competitors billing **20–30% lower** on document review by using AI effectively
- Firm **losing pitches** where AI capability was a client selection criterion
- Junior associates spending **8+ hours on tasks** AI could complete in 30 minutes
- Risk of **SRA regulatory action** if client data handling wasn't addressed
- Microsoft 365 E5 licence (Copilot-ready) was **already being paid for** but AI features never activated

Why a “Lunch-and-Learn” Wasn't the Answer

The firm had already tried a generic AI awareness session. Attendance was 40%, engagement was superficial, and within a week, nothing had changed. The problem wasn't awareness — it

was fear, lack of structure, and no governance. Staff needed role-specific, hands-on training with measurable adoption metrics, not another slide deck.

DISCOVERY

What we found during the assessment

Before designing any programme, we ran a week-long assessment across all 4 offices, interviewing 24 staff from every role and seniority level:

- **4 distinct user personas** identified (Partners, Associates, Paralegals, Support Staff) — each needing completely different training paths and use cases
- **The biggest barrier was fear, not capability** — 78% of anxious staff said they'd use AI "if someone showed them it was safe and useful"
- **78% of billable hour tasks** had some AI-augmentation potential (contract review, research, drafting, summarisation)
- The firm's existing **Microsoft 365 E5 licence** included Copilot access that had never been activated
- Staff who *were* using AI had **no prompt engineering skills** — getting poor results and concluding AI "doesn't work for legal"

THE SOLUTION

A role-based AI upskilling programme built for lasting adoption — not just attendance

We designed a comprehensive 10-week programme combining governance, hands-on training, and cultural change:

COMPONENT	APPROACH	DETAIL
AI Policy & Governance	Custom framework	Acceptable use policy, client data rules, SRA compliance guidelines, tool approval process
Training Platform	Custom LMS (Notion + Loom)	Role-based learning paths, video modules, hands-on exercises, progress tracking dashboards
Core Tools	Microsoft Copilot, Claude, Custom GPTs	Licensed enterprise tools with SSO, full audit trails, and client data segregation
Prompt Library	200+ practice-specific prompts	Contract review, due diligence, legal research, client correspondence, billing narratives
Measurement	Adoption dashboard	Daily active usage tracking, time saved per task type, quality scores, certification completion
Ongoing Support	Monthly office hours + Slack	Live Q&A sessions, prompt sharing community, new feature training, AI Champion network

Why this approach — and not the alternatives

The firm had explored several options before engaging Digital by Default. Here’s why our programme was selected:

APPROACH	STRENGTHS	VERDICT
Digital by Default Programme	Role-based, hands-on, measures adoption not attendance, ongoing support, legal-specific	Selected
Big 4 Consultancy	£180k quote, 6-month timeline, generic content not tailored to legal workflows	Considered
Microsoft FastTrack	Copilot-only training, no legal-specific prompts or governance framework	Considered

APPROACH	STRENGTHS	VERDICT
Self-Directed Learning	Already tried, zero lasting adoption, no governance, compliance risk	Rejected

IMPLEMENTATION

10 weeks from first call to firm-wide certification

1

Weeks 1–2: Discovery & Governance

Interviewed 24 staff across all roles and offices. Drafted AI usage policy and governance framework (approved by compliance partner). Set up enterprise tool licensing with SSO and audit trails.

2

Weeks 3–4: Champion Network & Pilot

Trained 16 “AI Champions” (4 per office) as peer coaches. Pilot group of 30 associates completed Module 1. Iterated content based on live feedback and real workflow testing.

3

Weeks 5–7: Full Rollout (Cohort-Based)

4 cohorts of 50 staff, each completing 3 half-day workshops + daily 15-minute AI challenges. Role-specific modules: Associates (contract review), Paralegals (research), Support Staff (document formatting & admin).

4

Weeks 8–10: Certification & Embedding

Final assessments and Digital by Default AI Practitioner certification. Launched ongoing Slack community, set up monthly office hours, handed over to internal AI Champions for sustained momentum.

THE RESULTS

Measurable transformation within the first 90 days

Key Performance Metrics (90-Day Post-Programme)

91%

DAILY ACTIVE AI
USAGE (UP FROM 12%)

6.2 hrs

AVG WEEKLY TIME
SAVED PER PERSON

£1.4M

PROJECTED ANNUAL
VALUE OF TIME SAVINGS

94%

STAFF SAY AI MAKES
THEM MORE EFFECTIVE

0

DATA BREACHES SINCE
PROGRAMME LAUNCH

4.8/5

PROGRAMME
SATISFACTION SCORE

What the numbers mean in practice

Productivity Transformation

Associates now complete first-pass contract reviews in **45 minutes instead of 4 hours**. Paralegals produce research memos 3x faster with AI-assisted analysis. Support staff automate document formatting, saving 8+ hours weekly across the team.

Fee Competitiveness

The firm won **3 major pitches in Q1 2026** where AI capability was explicitly asked about by the client. Now able to offer fixed-fee arrangements on document-heavy matters with confidence — something competitors still can't do profitably.

Culture Shift

Fear of AI dropped from **67% to 8%** in the post-programme survey. 23 staff voluntarily joined the AI Champions network. Associates now compete to find creative AI use cases, with a monthly **"AI Win" award** presented at all-hands meetings.

Risk Reduction

Zero data breaches since programme launch (vs 3 near-misses before). All AI usage is logged and auditable. The SRA-compliant governance framework was **praised by external auditors** as "best-in-class for a mid-size firm."

// I went from thinking AI would take my job to realising it's the best paralegal I've ever worked with. I do more interesting work now than I did two years ago.

Senior Associate, Corporate Team

// This wasn't a training programme — it was a culture change programme that happened to involve AI. Digital by Default understood that the technology was the easy part. Changing minds was the real challenge.

L&D Director, UK Law Firm

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

Phase 2: From trained users to custom AI agents

Following the success of the upskilling programme, the firm is now commissioning bespoke AI agents for specific practice areas:

- **Due Diligence Assistant** for M&A — an AI agent that reviews data room documents, flags risks, and generates summary reports in the firm's house style
- **Clause Library Chatbot** for Commercial Contracts — associates can search and retrieve standard clauses by describing their need in plain English
- **Automated Time Narrative Generator** — AI drafts billing narratives from calendar entries and document activity, saving fee earners 30+ minutes daily
- **Client-Facing AI Demos** — the firm now showcases its AI capability in client pitches, positioning technology as a competitive differentiator

Ongoing Support & Evolution

Digital by Default provides quarterly programme refreshes: new tool training (as AI evolves rapidly), updated prompt libraries, advanced workshops for power users, and governance framework reviews. The AI Champions network meets monthly and has become the firm's most active internal community. **Daily adoption has climbed from 91% at programme end to 96% at the 6-month mark.**

IS THIS RIGHT FOR YOU?

This programme is a strong fit if...

- Staff are **anxious or resistant** to AI adoption
- AI tool usage is **low or inconsistent** across the firm
- You have **no AI usage policy** or governance framework
- Previous training had **no lasting impact** on behaviour
- You need **role-specific**, not generic, AI training
- You want **measurable adoption metrics**, not just attendance
- You need **compliance-ready** AI governance (SRA, FCA, etc.)
- You want a programme that **embeds**, not a one-off workshop



Let's explore what an AI upskilling programme could look like for your firm.

Book a free 30-minute discovery call. No pitch decks — just an honest conversation about your team, your challenges, and whether structured AI training is the right next step.

[Book Your Discovery Call →](#)

hello@digitalbydefault.co.uk

www.digitalbydefault.co.uk

LinkedIn: Erhan Timur

About Digital by Default

Digital by Default is a London-based AI automation consultancy that builds production-grade AI systems for businesses ready to move beyond experimentation. From voice AI and intelligent chatbots to workflow automation and AI governance, we deliver measurable outcomes — not transformation theatre.

Services include: AI Voice Agents · Chatbots & Virtual Agents · Custom AI Agent Development · RAG & Knowledge Base AI · Workflow Automation · White-Label AI SaaS · AI Strategy & Training · AI Governance & EU AI Act Compliance