

TOP 10 2021 JOB MARKET PREDICTIONS IN LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

Jared Coseglia's predictions for the 2021 legal technology job market speak not only to the evolving ecosystem of employment opportunities within legal technology but also to how the community's approach to interviewing and staff selection will adapt and change because of the pandemic—now, and in some cases, forever.

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The pandemic is not over, and 2021 will bear the burden of much of the trending experienced in 2020. One thing will be very different: Companies and law firms are back to hiring legal technologists with the regularity and ferocity seen before the pandemic. Some verticals (namely data privacy and protection and e-discovery) are going to produce greater volumes of jobs in 2021 than other areas, which will struggle for either budget (legal operations) or available talent (business development). Our predictions for the 2021 legal technology job market speak not only to the evolving ecosystem of employment opportunities within legal technology but also to how the community's approach to interviewing and staff selection will adapt and change because of the pandemic—now, and in some cases, forever.

1. Speed Wins War for Talent. The world just spent a year hesitating about any hiring needs. There will be less uncertainty,

despite continued abnormality, about the human capital requirements of organizations for 2021. This means more predictability around hiring, which means more decisive hiring decisions from employers compared to 2020. The average search lifecycle extended nearly three times its 2019 length in 2020 for everything from legal project managers to chief privacy officers. This has already changed, and speed of talent acquisition will be a key competitive differentiator for any hiring manager looking to lock in the best talent in 2021.

2. The New Review. There is a new game in town for document review, and it centers around breach and PII. As cybersecurity and privacy regulatory risk permeate the corporate landscape, the ability to compartmentalize PII data and coordinate documents for proper reviews for various agendas (both compliance and litigation) has created new nuanced revenue streams for law



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firms and ALSPs. It has also created a way for doc reviewers and ESI pros to slowly transition their career focus. Right now, these jobs pay better than traditional document review but follow a similar modality of hourly contract augmentation. Attorneys with IAPP certifications have better odds of getting employers' attention, but these roles do not always go exclusively to lawyers. Service providers who are not in this business

yet should seriously consider the likelihood of repeat recurring revenue amidst the seemingly never-ending global culture of data breach incident handling that will only intensify in 2021.

3. Privacy Program Explosion. 2020 put a lot in focus, and corporate data privacy policy and practice were highlights. A 2021 fully Democratic-dominated U.S. federal government likely means more regulation, and that means more work for privacy pros. In 2020, it was expected to see a surge in mid-market corporate privacy program hiring; instead, companies recalibrated their leadership with a surprising abundance of CPO-level staffing. Now comes the tidal wave of opportunities in privacy across the globe. In Q4 2020 alone, TRU tracked over 1,000 net new privacy openings in corporate America. Expect jobs for entry to mid-level privacy pros to be abundant in the first half of this year.

4. Contract Staffing Remains 50%+ of Jobs. Last year, TRU predicted contract augmentation would reach 50% by 2021, and in fact, 56% of jobs received by TRU in 2020 were contract or contract-to-hire roles. This will increase this year. Yes, in 2022, there will be more full-time roles available, but hiring managers in legal operations, data privacy, security, e-discovery, information governance, contract management, and more are all fighting for headcount budget and approval. The shortest path to getting an employee is often through a contract. Expect this to



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increase in 2021 as demand for talent surges in mid-Q1, specifically in e-discovery, forensic collection, and corporate privacy program and incident handling roles.

5. Remote WFH Augmentation Pushes Past 75%. In 2019, 25% of legal tech jobs were fully remote positions. In 2020, that surged to 68% of successfully made new hires. Last year, TRU predicted remote WFH augmentation could reach 33% by 2021, but the pandemic has hyper-accelerated this trend. The balance of an on-premise versus remote workforce will undoubtedly swing back, but not in 2021. Most companies hiring in legal technology will not force a return to office this year, and many ALSPs and law firms will be exiting from office space in part or entirely moving forward. Talent that has adapted to remote employment will fight back against employers who want to return to a five-day, in-office arrangement, and hybrid models will become the norm. The effort to craft culturally-resonant, hybrid virtual and in-office employment opportunities, even after it is unilaterally safe to return to an

office, begins now in 2021. Forward-thinking companies will use these models to keep and attract employees this year.

6. Substance Sells Software. Relationships Sell Services. In 2021, the polarity of selling styles and habits will expand, separating those who sell software in legal technology from those who sell services even further. Software companies (and their VC/PE) are banking on the quality of their product and patents to drive adoption and subscription. Sales reps will make less money but will be hired in greater abundance in software, while services sellers will become fewer and more bloated in compensation expectations when considering a job move. Services companies, particularly consulting firms and e-discovery providers, still value above all else proven relationships and track records of success and are trending back toward only hiring those with large books of business. Very few e-discovery services sales pros changed jobs in 2020. Expect rapid acceleration of attrition in Q1 and Q2 2021 with bigger paydays for proven

services sellers and greater quantities of jobs for software sellers.

7. TAR Sets the Bar. If you are or want to be an e-discovery project manager or analyst, of which jobs consistently constitute 20% or more of the legal technology landscape, you need to have experience with TAR (technology-assisted review). Where having the ability to create and consult on advanced analytic workflows was a “nice to have” skill, it has now become a standard for anyone in a project manager-level role or higher. Level up in TAR in 2021 if you want to get ahead in e-discovery.

8. Zoom Well or Fail. Interviewing, like everything else, will never be the same. For the foreseeable future, most interviews are going to be conducted via video technology like Zoom. The ability to connect meaningfully via Zoom with your interviewer or interviewee is critical to the successful hiring of professionals in legal technology in 2021. This goes both ways. Hiring managers must polish their video interviewing skills, where the temptation to multitask is far more present than during in-person interviews, and be just as mindful of artfully attracting the prospect as the prospect is at presenting themselves as a convincingly good employee. Conversely, those being interviewed who excel at giving good Zoom may trump competitors who have more closely aligned skills and experiences with the actual job. Unlike some other predictions, it is highly likely that

this trend will not evaporate as the pandemic uncoils in 2021. Video interviewing is here to stay as an economical means of first and second-pass screening of candidates for agencies and direct employers. Get good at Zooming or get beat by those who are.

9. Certifications Required, Not Desired. People had a lot of downtime in 2020, and the number one question asked in interviews in 2020 through TRU was, “What have you done during the pandemic to grow professionally?” The reason employers say they “desire” certifications and do not “require” them is simply because they want (perhaps misguidedly) a larger corpus of candidates to apply without self-selecting out; but the reality in 2021 is that not having certifications like the CIPP, CIPM, and other IAPP credentials when interviewing for any privacy job at any level immediately puts you at a disadvantage. The same applies to most e-discovery jobs when it comes to employers who robustly use Relativity. They expect their project managers and analysts to have an RCA, and not having one is a disadvantage. There is a big difference between having certifications and getting competitive advantage in the job market and being disadvantaged by not having the certification. The former, which was the situation in the recent past, led to higher salaries and advancement opportunities. In 2021, without certain discipline-specific certifications,

employers will wonder why a candidate lacks an industry-standard accreditation and move quickly on those who have them instead.

10. Diversity Defines You. Employers will make a much more disciplined effort to interview, recruit, and hire diverse candidates in 2021. Since June of 2020, TRU has experienced a quantifiable increase in hiring managers requiring a minimum amount of diverse candidates for consideration before selecting a candidate to extend an offer. Hiring managers will have the greatest success diversifying staff in privacy programs and the most difficult time in cybersecurity and legal IT, particularly around gender. In 2021, putting diversity awareness first in the hiring process will serve not only as a means of defining brand reputation but also as an acute means of talent acquisition and employee retention.

Jared Coseglia is the founder and CEO of TRU Staffing Partners, a cybersecurity, e-discovery, and privacy staffing firm celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2020. TRU has won dozens of accolades, including repeatedly being awarded an Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing American company and National Law Journal's #1 Legal & Litigation Support Staffing Agency. Coseglia, who has placed over 3,000 professionals in his career, is a prolific contributor of original content and provides a one-of-a-kind perspective on industry staffing trends.