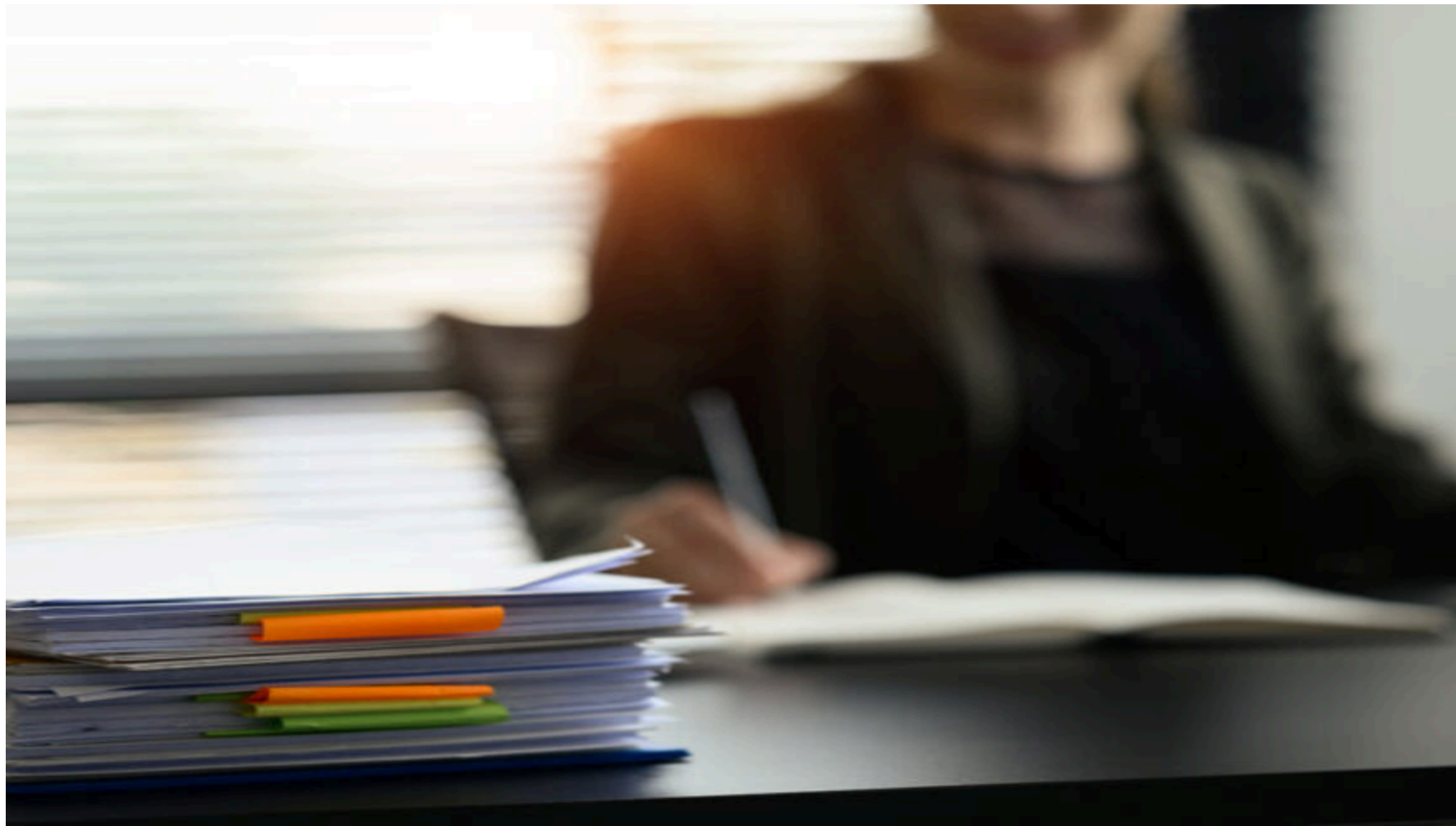


## How Legal Administrators Are Driving the Future of Law



**Legal administrators are often at the forefront of a rapidly changing industry. Here's how specialized staff can support a successful firm in today's legal landscape.**



### **Eryn Carter**

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The legal industry is always evolving and never has that been clearer than in the last several years. The rise of AI, shifts in hybrid work, and increased focus on mental well-being and burnout, among many other topics, have fundamentally changed how law firms operate in today's landscape.

However, one obstacle that firms face in adapting to these changes is the limited bandwidth or ability of lawyers to both practice law and take care of the business side of operating a firm. This should come as little surprise – many law schools prioritize what is needed to pass the bar exam at the expense of the skills required to develop business afterwards.

That's where legal administrators come in. [The Association of Legal Administrators \(ALA\)](#) defines a legal administrator as someone who is actively engaged in or supports the management of a law firm. Depending on the firm, this can include professionals in HR, IT, marketing, finance, and numerous other categories.

## **Managing changes in legal**

One key benefit of having an administrative team is their ability to specialize in areas outside of legal, allowing lawyers to focus on what they were trained to do. For example, while firm partners should certainly be consulted over a change in billing software, an administrator would take the lead on procurement, testing, and implementation.

This is a story playing out in many firms worldwide. Legal administrators have been on the front lines of addressing the tectonic shifts in the industry, and technology – particularly AI – is top of mind as firm leaders decide when and how to invest in systems that give their organization a competitive edge and generate a positive return on investment.

With the rapid growth of AI, many administrators have had to quickly become experts in that subject, finding platforms and packages that improve efficiency while staying within budget, developing training and security protocols, and navigating the inevitable questions and pushback that often accompany such large changes.

AI is just one example of the many different topics firm leaders must focus on in the modern legal industry. Repeat the above process for initiatives surrounding DEIA, recruitment and retention strategies, and more. Add in the day-to-day tasks of running an office, and that gives a sense of the scope of a legal administrative team’s work. As ALA members like to say, they often wear many different hats at their firms.

## Opportunities for growth

A hallmark of a legal administration job is the opportunity for career growth. Many administrators started in their firms as billing clerks, legal assistants, or librarians and now hold titles such as Director of Operations, Regional Manager, or Executive Director. In recent years, there has also been an increased push to elevate legal administrators to C-suite roles, corresponding to a greater need to include their business and operational acumen in strategic discussions.

It is incumbent on firm leaders to provide opportunities for staff professional development to ensure they remain updated on trends and can better support the firm’s strategic goals. A staff that is well trained and cared for will also lend itself to stronger hiring and retention, clearly defined succession planning and a more resilient law firm. ALA and other legal organizations offer resources to help develop skills in many relevant areas.

While legal administrators may not practice law, they are an integral part of a successful firm. As the industry continues to evolve, a strong administrative team is needed to help navigate the many changes still to come. With lawyers and staff each playing the roles they’re best suited for, a firm will be set up for future success.



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