

## CLOs Urge Teams To 'Lean In' On AI Experimentation

By **Michele Gorman**

*Law360, Boston (October 6, 2026, 10:19 AM EDT)* -- While artificial intelligence is a disruptive technology for corporate law departments, a panel of chief legal officers who spoke Monday urged their peers to be curious about innovation and to encourage their teams to embrace it while also allowing room for mistakes.

"If we don't all lean in now and figure out what role we want AI and technology to play in how we drive impact for our businesses, including what work we want to keep internally to continue to develop our own talent versus what we want to send to outside counsel, someone else is going to create the future of our legal departments for us," said Shannon Klinger, chief legal officer at Moderna Inc.

Klinger was one of three legal chiefs who sat on a panel at the Association of Corporate Counsel's annual meeting in Boston and discussed legal department changes happening in an AI-enabled era. She said that successful AI experimentation will involve failures, which create learning opportunities.

"Legal leaders must create psychological safety to allow their teams to talk openly about failures, to celebrate them, to learn from them — building on the failure to enable the next success, rather than saying, 'That didn't work,' and stifling the next innovation," she said.

Panelist Carolyn Herzog, chief legal officer at Elasticsearch Inc., encouraged lawyers to be unafraid of finding out and understanding how their peers are using AI and to view their use of innovation as a change management process.

Herzog shared that she has spoken with lawyers at other companies who have implemented the same technology as her legal department but are using it in different ways.

"We've always been looking for what's going to be that hurdle, that blocker that is preventing the company from moving forward," she said. "Well now we have an opportunity to lean in even more ... and to think about, what value do we want to provide to the company? How are we leaning in to demonstrate how we're making things go faster?"

She drew on the Industrial Revolution as a comparison.

"When machines started, the world didn't need more ditch diggers, but the ditch diggers didn't really want to give up their jobs, either," she said. "What were the risks around that? Could a machine do what a human did? We're asking a lot of the same questions."

Moderator Sara Morgan, chief legal AI and talent officer at Axiom, asked the legal chiefs to address the worry around AI taking away crucial training for junior lawyers, as departments across industries continue to automate routine and repetitive tasks. Earlier this year, the most recent Law360 Pulse AI Survey found that about a quarter of junior attorneys working in law firms and corporate legal departments said they are concerned or very concerned about their job security amid the rise of legal AI tools.

Herzog said it's important for legal leaders to proactively engage with legal AI tools to bring team members — as well as other business units — along the innovation journey and to understand that their staff might have varying degrees of comfort in using new tools. It's crucial for legal leaders to both leverage the strengths and talents on their team and set expectations related to routine AI use, she said.

"AI isn't replacing humans," Herzog said. "It's replacing humans who aren't using AI."

Hossein Nowbar, president and chief legal officer at AI company ServiceNow, also sat on the panel.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.