

Womble Bond Dickinson UK lays an AI-ready foundation

Innovative law firm makes iManage Insight+ the engine of its knowledge practice, embracing early adoption of AI capabilities



Industry:

- Legal

Headquarters:

- UK

iManage footprint:

- iManage Work 10 in the Cloud
- iManage Share
- iManage Threat Manager
- iManage Security Policy Manager
- iManage Insight+
- iManage MCP Server

For [Womble Bond Dickinson UK](#), knowledge management (KM) was never an afterthought. The firm operated with a structured KM system in addition to the iManage platform for the best part of 20 years, each generation of iManage search technology deepening how its lawyers found, used, and added knowledge. When the time came to move to iManage Cloud, there was no question that KM would move to the cloud as well. But the platform's knowledge search and management solution for the cloud, iManage Insight+, was still in development, and the firm did not want to wait; they wanted to migrate their documents and knowledge base to the cloud at the same time. So, innovators at heart, they partnered with iManage to help shape the final development and play a central role in the launch of Insight+.



Having a mechanism to exclude content from AI processing is a really valuable tool to have in your arsenal. Keeping content within its existing security and compliance framework is a very important distinction.



Tom Humberstone, Head of IT Applications and Development at Womble Bond Dickinson, UK

Business outcomes:

- Strong vendor partnership
- Simultaneous go-live
- Centralized knowledge repository
- Positive user outcomes
- Content stays governed and secured

The collaboration paid off. Later that year, Womble Bond Dickinson was among the first law firms globally to operate a fully native cloud environment across both document and knowledge management, underpinned by the iManage platform. Tom Humberstone, Head of IT Applications and Development at Womble Bond Dickinson, UK, describes the simultaneous launch of both platforms as critical to setting the firm up for further successful integrations. And, as one of the first participants in the iManage Ask Knowledge early adopter program (EAP), the firm isn't waiting to engage with artificial intelligence (AI), either. Ask Knowledge is built on the enriched Insight+ index, enabling lawyers to pose legal or business questions in natural language and receive grounded, relevant answers that are drawn from trusted knowledge. Womble Bond Dickinson UK has its foundation in place, primed to accelerate.

The business challenge

A crossroads for cloud migration and knowledge management

Inside Womble Bond Dickinson's [iManage knowledge work platform](#) lived two decades of institutional knowledge — including precedents, standard forms, and curated know-how. Carefully gathered and maintained, evolving over time, access to this collective intelligence was vital to the business. Each generation of iManage universal search tools helped embed knowledge management more firmly into how the firm's lawyers worked and deepened their capabilities. It provided a strong foundation to build on and informed Humberstone's strategic thinking ahead of the cloud migration.

To make that knowledge genuinely useful at scale, the firm needed more than storage. It needed a solution that could connect legal work product, emails, and documents with the business context around them — matters, parties, jurisdictions, expertise — and surface the right information to the right lawyer at the right moment. It needed a way to structure, curate, and govern that content so it could be searched intelligently, maintained efficiently, and — looking further ahead — made available to AI tools without content ever needing to leave the governed environment.

That solution was [iManage Insight+](#), a cloud-native knowledge search and management application that would be woven into the iManage platform, but it was still in development. "We were at a bit of a crossroads," Humberstone recalls. "We were planning our cloud migration, but iManage Insight+ was not yet available."

With a twenty-year relationship between the law firm and iManage, Humberstone says a competitive re-evaluation was never on the table. The question was, how should the firm go forward?

Moving to [iManage Cloud](#) without the firm's knowledge management — even temporarily — would divide the firm's operating environment just as the firm was trying to unify. He believed that centralized access to documents, metadata tagging, and knowledge profiling would be prerequisites for everything that would follow.

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The strategic direction highlights the critical role of governed discovery in enabling responsible AI. "Our approach is shaped by the need to uphold confidentiality obligations, client restrictions, and regulatory requirements, with a clear emphasis on maintaining content within secure and controlled platforms," says Humberstone.

Humberstone understands that the tools remaking legal practice must have access to content, but realizes that, "The AI is not necessarily going to decipher between good quality content and something that it shouldn't serve up. The metadata — the knowledge profile — is really, really important." And, with generative AI proliferating across workspaces, Humberstone foresaw AI integrations and MCP connections as imminent priorities for the organization.

The solution

Join forces to make simultaneous migration possible

Collaboration with iManage solved Humberstone's dilemma. Through the middle and later months of the year they planned to migrate, Womble Bond Dickinson worked closely with iManage to give the company's developers a detailed view into how the firm used its knowledge systems.

"We had a lot of interviews to help iManage understand how we use the system today," Humberstone explains. "And that helped us shape what we migrated to the cloud." He says the firm was among the first iManage customers to complete this journey.

The partnership required meaningful work on the firm's side. The legacy taxonomy was a layered structure that had grown and evolved over two decades. To prepare for migration, they streamlined the nodes, the building blocks of a knowledge network, to a maximum of four. These were complemented by enriched search facets and modernized metadata tagging, giving users more ways to refine their results.

"As a firm with established knowledge management systems for nearly 20 years," Humberstone recalls, "there was quite a bit of conceptual change for us to absorb." He adds that, in practice, the transition proved smoother than the scale of change might suggest.

Deliberate governance choices are reflected in the curation model the teams jointly landed on. While the platform supports broader content submission, they have intentionally maintained a controlled model whereby content curation and stewardship remain with assigned owners. This ensures that everything in the repository is well-formed, accurate, and appropriately tagged. That workflow runs directly within [iManage Work](#), driven by [Microsoft Power Automate](#), making submission and curation a natural extension of the platform that the firm's knowledge workers use daily.

"Go-live delivered everything at once," says Humberstone. "No disconnected knowledge estate. No deferred migration. That was absolutely critical. It put us in a really good position to focus on what's next with subsequent integrations into the iManage Cloud platform."

The business outcomes

A coherent, unified story paves a smooth path to adoption

Moving document and knowledge management both to the cloud while combining them on a single platform in one fell swoop was an ambitious goal, achieved through hard work and good planning. Wrapping the knowledge management change inside the broader cloud migration gave users a coherent, unified story rather than a series of disruptions.

Insight+ is now being accessed by a significant proportion of the firm's lawyers, with approximately 600 lawyers and 1,250 users connected to the iManage platform. The firm has seen particularly strong engagement from the real estate, corporate and commercial, and private wealth practice groups. Thorough preparation by the implementation team smoothed the path to strong adoption. Because they were already familiar with taxonomy navigation, faceted search, and the general shape of the knowledge workflow, users experienced minimal disruption of their day-to-day activities.

Silence is a metric Humberstone swears by. "One measure of success is not hearing anything. If you don't get feedback that something isn't performing or is producing the wrong results, that's a really solid position to be in. Hearing nothing is very, very positive."

Building outward from a governed core

The foundation the firm has built isn't just about accessing knowledge today — it's about enabling AI integrations that are meaningful and safe. "Being in a good place with understanding your data well, enriching it where possible, gives you context," says Humberstone. "That context is everything for what comes next."

And enriching their data with context has yielded meaningful learning. Earlier, Humberstone mentioned the firm's involvement in the Ask Knowledge EAP. Customer participation in early access programs is an essential contributor to the product roadmap at iManage. It's win-win because iManage developers get critical feedback that helps them develop products and features that better meet customer needs. Humberstone remarks that the clearest finding from the [Ask Knowledge](#) EAP was how the mental model differs from traditional search.

"It's less about search in the traditional sense," Humberstone notes, "and more about asking the right question — that distinction is fundamental." The EAP also revealed that Womble Bond Dickinson users wanted to refine and filter their initial results. The firm fed this back to iManage, and it has directly influenced the product roadmap.

A metadata governance layer needs to underpin knowledge content — an essential capability in modern legal practice. Today, this is realized through the curated knowledge profile, where key tags, including confidentiality, client, and AI processing controls, are centrally maintained, Humberstone explains.



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With iManage MCP Server, we'll have this ability to connect content with AI and then do other workflow tasks with it. Accessing content where it needs to reside, governed and secured, without worrying about having put it in another repository to do something with it — that will be game-changing.

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He plans to leverage [iManage Security Policy Manager](#) to apply confidentiality flags, client-related restrictions, and AI processing permissions at the client/matter level when iManage makes the capability available. Then documents within the matter will inherit these permissions so that when AI tools connect using Model Context Protocol (MCP), they surface only content that has been explicitly authorized. "So you always know where your content is and how it's being protected," says Humberstone.

Looking ahead

Womble Bond Dickinson's near-term roadmap reflects the firm's philosophy of building outward from a solid core — and that core is governance. The firm is piloting next-generation co-authoring while maintaining the principle that content stays where it belongs: inside iManage, under proper controls, not scattered across OneDrive or external repositories.

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The governance principle doesn't stop there. [iManage Threat Manager](#) helps them keep tabs on employee behavior, intervenes to prevent data loss, and delivers usage analytics to address regulatory compliance and information governance needs. Enhancing the Security Policy Manager implementation remains a key focus, transitioning from traditional workspace security to a policy-driven approach that delivers scalable and consistent information barriers.

Collaboration links is another new feature that enables lawyers to co-author with outside parties directly within iManage — extending that model to client work. Clients can also benefit from the firm's ability to address lifecycle management across its growing digital estate with tools like [iManage Disposition Manager](#), a project Humberstone looks forward to working on in the near future — which, all things considered, looks pretty bright.

About iManage

iManage is dedicated to Making Knowledge Work™. Our cloud-native platform is at the center of the knowledge economy, enabling every organization to work more productively, collaboratively, and securely. Built on more than 30 years of industry experience, iManage helps leading organizations manage documents and emails more efficiently, protect vital information assets, and leverage knowledge to drive better business outcomes. As your strategic business partner, we employ our award-winning AI-enabled technology, an extensive partner ecosystem, and a customer-centric approach to provide support and guidance you can trust to make knowledge work for you. iManage is relied on by more than one million professionals at 4,000 organizations around the world. Visit www.imanage.com to learn more.