

Law firms need to rethink strategy for AI era with focus on innovation and governance

ET

economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/consultancy/-/audit/law-firms-need-to-rethink-strategy-for-ai-era-with-focus-on-innovation-and-governance/printarticle/122063036.cms

Maulik Vyas



iStock

As global firms prepare to enter the market and technological change accelerates, domestic law firms are rethinking their business models, culture, and growth strategy. With more than 1,100 lawyers and a fast-growing national footprint, Trilegal is positioning itself as an innovation-led platform, balancing institutional governance with entrepreneurial ambition, said [Nishant Parikh](#) and [Sridhar Gorthi](#), partners and members of the [Management Committee](#) at Trilegal.

As the legal sector matures and global firms eye India, how do you see the structure and business model of Indian law firms evolving over the next decade?

We see the entry of international law firms into India as a catalyst for sectoral growth and increased competitiveness. The opening up of the market is a welcome development. Our structure is aligned with global best practices and positions us well to compete and collaborate in this new landscape. As the legal sector matures, Trilegal expects Indian firms to adopt more institutionalised models, mirroring global standards in governance, transparency, and client service.

How do you see GenAI affecting law firms and how they deal with clients? Do you see technology significantly reshaping how law firms operate?

Trilegal sees generative AI as a transformational force, not a threat, for the legal profession and is betting early on its potential to redefine efficiency and client service. It would be naïve to think law firms will remain untouched by the AI wave. Lawyers who embrace AI will outperform those who don't.

Among India's early adopters of legal AI, Trilegal has built a proprietary in-house solution integrated across all lawyers' devices. The tool is widely used across teams for high-volume, low-complexity tasks such as document review, contract summarisation, and due diligence.

The firm is also rolling out an AI-powered document management system that auto-classifies and indexes content, boosting searchability and knowledge access. Ongoing training ensures lawyers adopt these tools responsibly, with an emphasis on improving client outcomes.

AI-driven efficiencies have freed up valuable lawyer hours, allowing teams to shift focus toward strategic, high-value work. We expect further disruption ahead from predictive analytics to collaborative client platforms and we will continue to invest in legal tech aligned with our innovation-led strategy.

What are some of the key strategic areas of growth Trilegal is betting on over the next 3–5 years? Are you looking at new practice areas or geographies?

We are set to launch a new office in Chennai within the next three months as part of our broader strategic push to deepen capabilities in high-growth areas over the next five years.

A key focus is the firm's Dispute Resolution practice, which has expanded significantly in response to rising demand for complex litigation, arbitration, and regulatory work. With growing regulatory scrutiny and cross-border exposure, the need for sophisticated dispute resolution is only increasing. We are also ramping up our M&A and private equity advisory work, anticipating sustained interest from global investors in Indian markets. Also, we are scaling our transactional capabilities to capture a greater share of high-value, strategic deals.

Technology and regulatory compliance, particularly in fintech, data privacy, and emerging digital frameworks, are also priority areas, with the firm building specialised teams to stay ahead of evolving legal and policy developments.

How would you describe the current M&A landscape in India? Are there any particular sectors driving deal activity in 2025? Also, do you see any regulatory shifts or geopolitical trends that influenced the appetite for cross-border mergers and acquisitions involving Indian companies?

India's mergers and acquisitions landscape in 2025 is being shaped by domestic consolidation and rising cross-border interest, particularly in technology, financial services, renewable energy, infrastructure, and healthcare.

These sectors are seeing strong domestic momentum and drawing sustained international attention, as India cements its role in global supply chains. Regulatory reforms, including liberalised [FDI](#) norms and streamlined reverse merger procedures, have improved the ease of doing deals, while geopolitical trends such as the China-plus-one strategy have bolstered India's appeal for foreign acquirers. Despite global headwinds caused by geopolitical scenarios and trade uncertainty, India's economic resilience is underpinning robust deal activity. Trilegal reports continued demand for counsel on complex, high-value transactions and remains focused on delivering integrated advice in this dynamic environment.

What is the composition of the clients in terms of Indian/foreign, and also in terms of the sector/industry? Are there any specific sets of clients who are more geared towards law firms like Trilegal?

We maintain a balanced client portfolio, with 60% of revenue generated from the domestic clients and 40% from international mandates. The firm remains sector-agnostic, advising across a wide spectrum of industries.

Clients facing high-stakes, multi-dimensional matters, particularly those requiring a blend of regulatory, corporate, and disputes expertise, tend to turn to us. We are regularly engaged in complex mandates such as large equity buyouts and distressed acquisitions under India's Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. These deals often span multiple practice areas and demand deep sectoral insight, legal precision, and commercial alignment. What sets us apart is our ability to deliver integrated, business-focused legal solutions in fast-moving, highly regulated environments.

Clients today are more commercially and globally savvy. How are Indian law firms evolving their service delivery to stay ahead of changing expectations?

As clients grow more commercially astute and globally connected, Indian law firms are evolving service delivery to meet rising expectations for speed, insight, and value.

Clients still want responsiveness and quality, but they also expect strategic alignment and proactive advice tailored to their business. We are emphasising long-term partnerships, aiming to act as business enablers rather than just legal advisors. This shift has led to a deeper focus on understanding clients' commercial objectives and delivering solutions that extend beyond the legal remit.

To enhance efficiency and responsiveness, Trilegal has invested in advanced legal tech, including real-time tools and process automation, to offer data-driven, cost-effective outcomes. Combining legal expertise with commercial acumen and tech-led delivery allows us to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving, globalised market.

What is Trilegal's current bench strength in terms of partners and lawyers, and where will you see it in the next three years?

Trilegal's lawyer count has crossed 1,100 across its offices in Bengaluru, [Delhi](#), [Gurugram](#), and [Mumbai](#), with its equity partnership standing at 144 as of June 2025. The growth reflects the firm's ongoing elevation of senior talent across key practice areas, including Corporate, Projects, [TMT](#), Banking & Finance, and Disputes.

We do not chase headcount for its own sake. Growth will continue to align with client needs, market dynamics, and emerging areas of legal complexity. We are aiming to deepen expertise and broaden capabilities as part of our long-term strategy, focusing on sustainable growth rather than scale alone.

How has Trilegal's adoption of an all-equity partnership model fundamentally differed from the traditional partnership structures?

Trilegal's adoption of an all-equity partnership model has set it apart from traditional law firms, challenging the conventional, hierarchical structures that often restrict career progression.

Our model was born from a desire to eliminate glass ceilings and promote genuine meritocracy. Every partner shares the same balance sheet, which fosters alignment, accountability, and collaboration.

Unlike traditional firms where equity is concentrated among a few, Trilegal's structure ensures equal ownership and transparent decision-making. Clear governance rules and open financial disclosures underpin the model, creating a culture of shared responsibility and collective success. Our success has prompted others in the market to rethink their structures. We are seeing a shift across the profession toward broader equity participation, a reflection of the model's impact and sustainability.

Could you explain the firm's approach to internal compensation and profit-sharing formula?

Trilegal has instituted a structured and transparent compensation and profit-sharing model designed to align rewards with individual performance, not hierarchy. The framework combines fixed retainers with variable components tied to clearly defined performance bands.

Evaluations incorporate both quantitative metrics, such as billable hours and revenue, and qualitative factors, including client satisfaction, relationship-building, and professional development. Our system ensures comparable pay for comparable performance, regardless of team or location. By minimising discretion and ad hoc decisions, the model promotes fairness and consistency across the firm. We regularly review the compensation structure to reflect evolving market conditions and internal business goals.

What distinguishes the firm from its peers, and what has driven its growth over the past decade? Could you share quantitative indicators that reflect its performance?

Trilegal's growth trajectory over the past decade has been underpinned by early investments in institutional infrastructure, a transparent and meritocratic culture, and a focus on scalable systems. According to the firm, these foundational pillars have enabled it to consistently attract top-tier talent and build one of the most sought-after platforms for legal professionals in India.

We set out to build a firm rooted in strong systems, technology, and competitive compensation. This has paid dividends—both in our financial performance and our ability to retain and attract high-calibre lawyers.

What differentiates Trilegal from its peers is the autonomy granted to senior professionals and a collaborative environment that supports entrepreneurial practice-building. While market-wide comparative data remains limited due to the opaque nature of Indian law firm disclosures, Trilegal has achieved robust growth across topline, profitability, and headcount as evidence of its market position. In FY25, the firm posted a 28% rise in revenue and a 33% increase in profits, signalling both strong demand and operational efficiency.

We are also the country's biggest equity partnership firm. Over 50 lateral partners have joined in recent years, a movement that is unmatched in the history of the legal industry. Also, internal promotions remain rigorous, reflecting the firm's selective approach to expanding the partnership. As rival firms scale up in size and diversify practice areas, Trilegal is banking on its institutional depth and people-first strategy to maintain its competitive edge.

Succession planning is a relatively nascent concept in Indian law firms. Being a first-generation large law firm, how has Trilegal approached this challenge internally, and what lessons have you learned?

Trilegal, one of the country's leading first-generation law firms, has taken a structured approach to succession planning, an area still in its early stages across the Indian legal sector.

Succession in a people-driven business is complex, but we have deliberately moved away from a founder-led model to a democratically elected management committee, which is a milestone in our institutional journey. To cultivate future leadership, we have created multiple committees focused on strategy, legal tech and emerging practice areas, offering partners a platform to take on key roles. The firm prioritises early identification and mentoring of potential leaders and has partnered with leading institutions to support this effort. Our structured leadership processes and a strong internal pipeline are key to ensuring continuity and long-term sustainability.

(You can now subscribe to our [Economic Times WhatsApp channel](#))