Amplify 2026

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The budgeting journey

Finding predictability in an unpredictable world

Moderator: Augustin (Ziggy) Cal

Wolters Kluwer

ELM Solutions



Speakers



Eliana Toledo
Project Manager,
Legal Business
Management
Marsh



Debbie Siedlecki
Senior Manager,
Legal & Compliance
Abbott



Dawn Hamm
Senior Manager,
Legal Operations
Altria



1 in 5

Outside-counsel matters stay within budget

Source: Gartner, December 2025

Show of hands

Raise your hand. Keep it up as long as the answer is yes.

1. We budget legal spend.
2. Our law firms help build those budgets.
3. We revise them during the year.

Three organizations, three approaches

Same goal: Visibility and confidence in legal spend

	Marsh *Getting started*	Abbott *Building collaboration*	Altria *Standardizing*
Who owns it	Attorneys review; central budget coordinator	Attorneys align; Legal finance approves	Practice areas own budgets; GC approves
How centralized	Central coordination, tied to cost centers and linked to matters	Legal Finance embedded with legal ops	Legal ops is the central hub
Law firms' role	Submit matter budgets; no budget, no invoice*	Ongoing back-and-forth with firms	Managed internally; not shared with firms
Cadence	Annual (life-of-matter for select)	Annual, updated quarterly	Revised 8x a year

**On selected matters today; goal is all matters in 2027*

When the budget is wrong, what happens next?

1. **Reopen it**
   Marsh: Firms resubmit; Legal absorbs the change
2. **Document it**
   Abbott: Assumptions stored with every budget
3. **Revise it**
   Altria: Reforecast 8 times a year





Should law firms see your budget?

- **Altria: K**eep it internal
- **Abbott: B**uild it together
- **Marsh: N**egotiate toward it

Show of hands

Do you share your budget number with your law firms?

? Panel predicts first, then hands up



2x

Lawyers who actively manage matters are twice as likely to stay within budget

Source: Gartner, December 2025

A wrong budget isn't a failed budget.

It's the start of the conversation.