



CASE STUDY / BRISTOWS LLP

# How Bristows refreshed its AI strategy to meet the demands of 2026

An independent view of the legal AI market, a firmwide strategy delivered within a working week, and a framework built to outlast any single tool.

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CLIENT	<b>Bristows LLP</b>
SECTOR	<b>IP &amp; Technology Law</b>
ENGAGEMENT	<b>AI strategy</b>
YEAR	<b>2026</b>

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## 01 Our client

Bristows LLP is the world's leading specialist law firm for clients that innovate. Headquartered in London with offices in Brussels and Dublin, the firm advises leading life sciences and technology businesses worldwide. Bristows has remained fiercely independent since 1837 and works at the intersection of law, science and technology.

In early 2026, Bristows brought knowledge and innovation together under a dedicated leader and engaged SIGNAL to build on the firm's existing AI investment and shape the next phase of client value.

## 02 Objectives

- Refresh the firm's AI strategy for 2026, building on the multi-year investment in GenAI and incorporating new thinking on tooling, governance and client value.
- Bring knowledge and innovation together under a dedicated leader, with a model that builds on Bristows' existing investment across both functions.
- Bring in an independent view of the legal AI market to pressure-test the firm's thinking and accelerate decision-making.
- Establish a strategy framework designed to outlast specific tools as the market matures, with the operational and governance layer to support it.
- Deepen Bristows' leading position with clients on measurable, transparent AI-augmented value.

## 03 Outcomes

01

### Strategy in a working week

A firmwide AI strategy delivered within a working week of the workshop.

02

### A durable framework

Anchored in client value, with principles for portability, observability, measurement and governance that protect the firm and its clients as the market evolves.

03

### A deployment plan

Builds AI adoption across practice groups, seniority levels and persona types, for maximum coverage and demonstrable client value.

04

### Accountable through delivery

SIGNL retained through delivery, accountable for outcomes alongside the AI committee.

## 04 The context

Bristows has been investing in AI for a number of years. BristowsGPT, a secure GPT environment, is live across the firm, and a series of practice-area specific AI solutions have been built alongside it. By early 2026, the firm was ready for the next stage: a strategy that could carry that investment forward and define how Bristows would deliver client value through AI at scale.

Bristows wanted an independent view of the legal AI market to pressure-test the firm's own thinking and move at the pace the market demands. Stuart Print, newly appointed Head of Knowledge & Innovation, set the brief with Phil Wood, the firm's IT Director, and Vik Khurana, co-head of the firm's Technology sector and a leading AI Partner, who advises some of the world's leading AI developers on product launches. Bringing knowledge and innovation together under one roof allowed the firm to produce a strategy it could act on quickly.

**SIGNL is a rare combination: a wide view of the market with technical and operational expertise, which is what lets us move quickly.**

STUART PRINT, HEAD OF KNOWLEDGE & INNOVATION, BRISTOWS LLP

## 05 The approach

SIGNL ran a focused engagement with Bristows' AI team at the end of April. David Malkinson, SIGNL's founder, led the workshop personally. The assessment was delivered within the working week.

The framework SIGNL delivered rests on a small set of firmwide principles, designed to hold whatever the AI market does next. R&D sits at the centre of the model, with Bristows building its own AI capability and the IP that comes with it. Portability protects what the firm builds, so prompts, skills and captured judgement live in formats Bristows controls. Measurement turns the work into evidence the firm can put in front of clients, with observability across the AI estate and governance that operates above any single department.

With AI moving at pace, the temptation is to lock into multi-year vendor contracts. At Bristows we stripped it back to fundamentals: adoption built around measurable client value, a deliberate mix of build, buy and rent decisions matched to each use case, and an operational and governance layer above all of it. The result is a strategy that will survive any one tool.

DAVID MALKINSON, FOUNDER, SIGNL LTD

## 06 Where Bristows is now

Bristows is in execution. The firm has a renewed framework, principles for testing every new tool decision, and a deployment plan that builds adoption across practice groups, seniority levels and persona types.

The firm's culture is the structural advantage that makes this work scale. Bristows doesn't work to billing targets, an approach the firm describes as rare and as one that defines the quality of its advice. The model ensures clients get the right combination of experts working as one, taking the time to find the right answer. It also gives the firm room to keep doing what Bristows has done since 1837, advising clients on new technologies and ideas as they emerge. That is part of what makes the firm distinctive in the AI conversation.

Bristows brings genuine judgement on what AI can and cannot do into the client relationship, grounded in the firm's own evidence and its own principles. The work continues with SIGNAL alongside the Knowledge & Innovation team through delivery.

David and I share an approach: move at pace in the right direction, do it once and do it right. We're running the AI agenda against this framework, and SIGNAL remains accountable through delivery as well as strategy. That's the engagement model I'll keep coming back to.

STUART PRINT, HEAD OF KNOWLEDGE & INNOVATION, BRISTOWS LLP

### ABOUT BRISTOWS

Bristows LLP is the world's leading specialist law firm for clients that innovate. A European-headquartered hub for litigation, transactions and advice worldwide, with offices in London, Brussels and Dublin, Bristows has remained fiercely independent since 1837. The firm advises leading businesses on the most complex legal questions in life sciences, technology and innovation.

[bristows.com](https://bristows.com)

### ABOUT SIGNAL

SIGNAL is an independent legal technology consultancy that works with law firms and corporate legal teams on AI strategy, governance and execution. SIGNAL operates in short, high-density engagements and stays accountable through delivery.

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