

5 Ways Legal Operations Can Turn Internal Investigations Fire Drills into Proactive Risk Management

Presented by

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Introduction

Internal investigations, such as employee relations matters and investigations stemming from ethics hotlines, are a major opportunity for legal ops teams to not only deliver business value to the company: they represent an opportunity to deliver on senior executives' expectations to deliver AI-driven solutions.

At a growing number of major corporations, C-suite executives are demanding that their teams identify AI use cases that provide real business value. For example, in a recent email, [Duolingo's](#) co-founder and CEO Luis von Ahn explained that the company is "AI-First" and is rethinking much of how the platform works, including replacing contractors with AI. Similarly, [Shopify](#) CEO Tobi Lütke recently dictated that no new hires are permitted unless AI cannot perform the role.

Law departments and legal operations teams are not exempt from this pressure to find ways to use AI wherever possible. For many, internal investigations may provide the perfect opportunity, especially as the number of investigations is on the rise. **According to a 2025 [Association of Corporate Counsel survey](#), nearly 45% of chief legal officers say they are seeing an increase in the amount of internal investigations they handle.**

Many companies with over 1,000 employees have built complex processes that prioritize the defensibility of an investigation if the matter later goes to litigation, but without much thought given to time efficiency, consistency, and cost. **Often these workflows, created during an urgent inquiry and never revisited, operate like a fire drill and are ripe for the kind of process and technology improvements that legal ops professionals are able to deliver.**

This paper explores how legal operations professionals are uniquely equipped to elevate the internal investigations process to be more efficient, strategic, and cost-effective, thanks to their deep expertise in process design, technology, and cross-functional collaboration. Here are five ways legal ops professionals can help, whether the investigations function reports into Legal, Compliance, HR, Internal Audit, or somewhere else in the organization.

1. Streamlining Intake and Triage Workflows

By leveraging process and technology, legal ops professionals can help implement structured intake mechanisms—including automated reporting portals or issue classification tools—to ensure allegations are routed correctly and handled consistently.

Standard forms and questionnaires can bring clarity to what qualifies as an “investigation-worthy” matter and help triage based on risk, jurisdiction, and required stakeholders. Efficiency can also be improved through automations and integrations with reporting tools (such as Navex), HR systems (such as Workday), and document management systems or e-discovery review platforms (such as NetDocuments and Relativity).

Impact: Faster response times, better prioritization, more consistency, fewer missed red flags.

2. Bringing Structure to the Investigation Lifecycle

Investigations often suffer from inconsistent documentation, unclear ownership, and ad hoc timelines. Legal ops can define standardized phases (such as intake, planning, fact-finding, resolution, and closure), assign roles, and set benchmarks for each stage—bringing project management discipline to the function.

Impact: Efficiency improvements at each step, as well as a roadmap to enable implementation of AI tools; reporting frameworks to ensure consistency across investigators and functions.

3. Reducing Costs by Analyzing Opportunities for Savings at Each Stage of the Workflow

Internal investigations can quickly become expensive, especially when companies bring in outside counsel for routine tasks. Once the workflow is mapped out, legal ops professionals can build clear protocols for when and how external resources are engaged, maximizing the use of internal staff, and using outside counsel guidelines to reduce billable review time. They can also negotiate budgets and rates and leverage internal data to track and forecast investigation-related spend.

Impact: Better resource management of in-house and outside counsel, as well as other legal professionals; reduced and more predictable budgets.

4. Ensuring Consistency Through Templates, Technology, and Protocols

Legal operations professionals can document playbooks and interview templates, and then introduce responsible AI and other tech tools to streamline the creation of consistent work product by all investigators and better handle increasing workloads with current headcount.

Impact: Improved quality and defensibility of investigations, better ability to withstand regulatory or litigation scrutiny, documented evidence to support investigative conclusions.

5. Driving Cross-Functional Collaboration and Reporting

Investigations often require coordination between Legal, HR, Compliance, and Security—and ultimately reporting investigation results up through leadership. Legal ops professionals are natural connectors—they can facilitate communication, ensure alignment on privilege, drive escalation protocols, and produce metrics that inform leadership and board-level reporting.

This can play a major role in avoiding “nuclear verdicts” down the line where senior leaders could have flagged where a stronger response to an investigation is needed to avoid litigation.

Impact: Better alignment on appropriate actions, more trust among stakeholders, stronger visibility into trends and systemic risks.

A Legal Ops Win: Investigations as a Viable and Valuable Use Case for Piloting AI

Internal investigations provide a defined use case where AI can provide value in terms of workload efficiency, cost savings, and risk reduction.

Integrating AI into the internal investigations process allows legal operations professionals to dramatically increase the accuracy, transparency, and efficiency of their work. AI tools can securely analyze large volumes of documents, build hyperlinked timelines, and generate investigation reports that link every finding directly to supporting evidence—making reviews faster and conclusions more defensible.

By enhancing investigations with verifiable, evidence-backed outputs, investigations teams can respond to issues like EEOC and demand letters with greater speed and confidence, while also reducing dependence on costly outside counsel. Secure, enterprise-grade AI solutions ensure compliance with privacy standards and protect sensitive data, while empowering legal ops to proactively identify weaknesses, support fact-driven decisionmaking, and ultimately protect the organization from high-stakes regulatory and litigation risks.

Impact: More defensible investigation reports, reduced outside counsel spend, protection for litigation and regulatory risks - and an AI win for Legal Ops.

Case Study

Using Clearbrief AI to Create Timelines and Build More Defensible Investigation Reports

Working closely with the investigations leaders at a Fortune 20 company, Clearbrief created tools to streamline the steps of their existing global investigations team workflows, resulting in hyperlinked findings that leadership can easily review for improved understanding of the evidence. The process lives inside Microsoft Word, allowing investigators to continue to work efficiently without flipping between tools.

Using Clearbrief, the team can now import small to massive volumes of source data and instantly create a hyperlinked timeline in Word with links to all the source documents neatly organized by date. All of the data used with Clearbrief can reside within the organization's own cloud. Should the team prefer, there is the option to generate a shorter, curated timeline that just displays events relevant to a certain theme or topic.

Once the investigator reviews the timeline output according to the investigator's typical workflow, the investigator clicks a button in Clearbrief to turn the timeline into a customizable internal investigations report tool to match its preferred formatting. That allows the investigators to edit the timeline, review the evidence, and turn their findings into a report in a few hours instead of days—all from right inside Word.

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Word interface with the Clearbrief application overlaid. On the left, a report titled 'Generated by Clearbrief' is visible, containing a table with the following data:

Generated by Clearbrief - Delete this note after this text has been reviewed for accuracy.	
Complaint Name	Employee #2 Complaint
Date Complaint Made	0214YYYY
Complaint Type	Harassment
Subject(s) of Complaint	Governor John Smith
Location of Incident(s)	Office
Incident(s) Date/Time	0214-2017
Report Prepared By	Jane Doe
Date of Report	

Below the table, there is an 'I. Executive Summary' section followed by a paragraph of text. Below that is an 'II. Details of Complaint' section with another paragraph of text.

On the right side of the screen, the Clearbrief interface is active, showing a search bar with the source 'kalin transcript 1108 2021.pdf'. Below the search bar, there is a 'Your Cites' section with a list of citations, including 'kalin transcript 1108 2 021 89 17-19'. A 'Suggestions' section is also visible, listing various report templates like 'InvestigationReport at 4', 'InvestigationReport at 69', etc. The main document area on the right shows a transcript snippet with dialogue between a witness and a questioner (Q).

The resulting reports also include confidential hyperlinks to the evidence so that supervisors and reviewers can easily see and review the facts behind the conclusions for risk management purposes. Clicking a link brings up the source document alongside the report, making risk analysis easy and efficient.

Clearbrief not only standardizes investigation reports, it makes it significantly easier to share the underlying evidence with the organization's general counsel and other stakeholders, enhancing defensibility should the investigation later become litigation.

The company's outside counsel are also already using Clearbrief (it has been adopted by litigators across the AmLaw 200), so they are also able to get up to speed quickly on an issue that is moving towards litigation, spending significantly fewer (expensive) hours hunting for evidence as all sources are at their fingertips.

If the litigation continues, the in-house team managing the case can continue to collaborate with counsel on any drafts easily from inside Word with all sources visible in Clearbrief.

Transform your internal investigations from reactive to proactive.

See how AI-powered timelines, reports, and review tools in Microsoft Word are helping Fortune 500 legal ops teams streamline high-stakes investigations.

Schedule a demo:

Email: hello@clearbrief.ai