Five ways a law firm can build a living structural map of their matters

To navigate complex transactions and client structures at deal speed, you first need a living map. Discover five ways to build one, and the pros and cons of each.

Option 1: Do it the old way: Spreadsheets + PowerPoint/Visio

Still the default for most firms. A collection of Excel schedules, PDFs, and static structure charts passed between fee earners, document production teams, and clients.

Pros	Cons
• Everyone already knows how to use it • Zero procurement friction • Flexible (in theory) • Cheap in the short term	• Not a "map", it's a snapshot outdated the moment the transaction evolves • High risk of missing entities, intermediate holdcos, or parallel structures • Impossible to validate completeness or reconcile structures vs. legal documents • No way to link entity data → ownership → reporting or compliance rules • Rebuild required every time deal terms change • Zero auditability • The #1 cause of AML due diligence gaps and structural errors on closing

Who chooses this?

Firms that assume the pace of client work or regulatory scrutiny won't demand better. It will.

Option 2: Build an in-house solution using entity management systems (e.g. Athennian, Blueprint, Diligent)

The "our entity management system will handle it" route. Useful for corporate governance. Less useful for live transaction structures.

Pros	Cons
• Entity data already captured in one place • Compliance and filing workflows built in • Reliable for routine corporate governance • Consistent with firm data standards	• Org chart modules show hierarchy, not complexity • Can't model transaction step sequences or scenario alternatives • Doesn't reflect economic interests, cash flows, or security packages • Still mostly static - not built for deal-speed iteration • Expensive to licence and slow to configure for complex matters • Data must still be manually verified and updated • Not designed for cross-matter structural analysis or client advisory

Who chooses this?

Firms that conflate entity governance with structural intelligence. Knowing what entities exist is not the same as understanding how they connect.

Option 3: Outsource diagramming to document production or external paralegals

The "someone else will draw it" route. Reduces visible fee-earner time in the short term, but creates a bottleneck in fast-moving transactions.

Pros	Cons
• Frees senior lawyers from formatting • Consistent output quality (at least initially) • Reduces time-on-task visible to clients • Familiar workflow for many firms	• Deliverables are static, PDFs and PowerPoint slides • Immediately outdated as deal terms or structure evolve • Turnaround time creates friction in fast-moving transactions • Knowledge doesn't transfer to the legal team or the matter file • No living model, just a well-presented snapshot • Creates version control problems across the matter team • Fee earners still need to check, correct, and re-brief every revision

Who chooses this?

Firms that solve the wrong problem. The issue isn't who draws the diagram, it's that the diagram can't keep up with the deal.

Option 4: Use practice management or DMS visualisation modules (e.g. iManage, HighQ, NetDocuments)

Some practice management and document management systems offer basic visualisation or org chart features. Useful for document storage, less useful for structural intelligence.

Pros	Cons
• Data already sits in familiar systems • Comfortable for fee earners • Low incremental effort • Better than nothing	• Shallow representation, can't model ownership chains, security packages, or step sequences • Limited or no scenario modelling capability • Doesn't reflect counterparty relationships or economic flows • Still mostly static • Can't serve as a structural record for AML compliance or transaction reporting • Systems prioritise document management, not structural understanding • Outputs are not client-ready without significant manual formatting

Who chooses this?

Firms that assume a system of record equals a system of understanding. It doesn't.

Option 5: Use a Data-Driven Visual Workspace (e.g. StructureFlow)

A platform built specifically for structural complexity in legal work, where entity data → relationships → ownership → step sequences combine into one connected, living model.

Pros	Cons
• Automatically converts documents and data into a visual map, get started fast	• Requires adoption across the matter team (new way of working)

Option 5 (continued)

Pros	Cons
• Integrates with Companies House to surface live entity data • Reveals every entity, relationship, ownership chain, and structural dependency • Makes gaps, missing entities, and inconsistencies visible before they become problems • Easy to update - once created, the model stays current as matters evolve • Supports step plan sequencing, scenario modelling, and multi-party views • Creates a single source of truth for legal, compliance, and client teams • Reduces AML and due diligence friction • Gives defensible proof of structural analysis for regulators and courts • Built for exactly the complexity modern transactions require	• Some upfront onboarding and initial mapping effort • Becomes the system of structural truth, which means you need to maintain it (though maintenance is far easier than any alternative)

Who chooses this?

Firms that want continuous structural clarity, defensible due diligence, and a lasting competitive edge, not a scramble every time a client asks "what does the structure look like now?"

StructureFlow is a data-driven visual workspace that gives dealmakers and advisors the clarity and confidence to master complexity and win the room. By connecting every entity, relationship, and dependency into a single living model, StructureFlow reveals everything you need to know in one interface - how everything fits together, how it moves, and how to control it.

Because if there's one thing you need to know, it's everything.

Book a demo or find out more here.

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