



CASE STUDY · SIMMONS & SIMMONS

How Simmons & Simmons offloads complex drafting and review to supervised agents

Inside one of the largest international law firms, deep-dive on how and when they use AI agents.

1,000+ Lawyers

23 Offices

Building with Flank
since 2025

01 · INTRODUCTION

Status quo

Simmons & Simmons is an international firm of more than 1,000 lawyers across 23 offices. Its Applied AI Team, the firm's legal engineering function, is led by partner Lucy Shurwood. Flank has worked with the firm's UK and Middle East practices since 2025.

Simmons calls its approach to AI "build and buy." The buying is what every firm of its size now does. The building is where Simmons pulls ahead. Percy, its in-house platform, is used by nearly nine in ten of its fee earners and won at the FT Innovative Lawyers awards in 2025. And for work that needs an agent rather than an assistant, the Applied AI Team builds on Flank, both for the firm's lawyers and behind services the firm sells to its clients.

When document automation isn't enough

Document automation has been around for eons. Answer a questionnaire and a template assembles itself the same way every time. That works well, until what arrives doesn't fit the questionnaire. Or when the template has no way of collecting sufficient context to inform critical decisions.

Simmons' hardest drafting turns on who sent the instructions, and on qualitative input no questionnaire has a box for. Every change in the firm's positions means rebuilding that logic, so templates decay. And everything around the draft stays manual: gathering answers from emails, the CRM and the matter file, chasing what's missing, filing the result, sending it for signature. That is the work around the work: expensive people doing inexpensive things.

General assistants don't close the gap either. One reliably stops around sixty pages; Simmons routinely works past ninety. The firm's agents sit in that gap, reading what arrives, applying the firm's positions, and asking when something is missing.



There is a blurred line between using AI to draft and document automation. We have had document automation for many years. People sometimes think that you can just give something to AI and it can draft itself, and that if you give it the same job again it will draft the same thing. It is probabilistic rather than deterministic.

Ali Chaudhry · Senior Legal Engineer, Simmons & Simmons

Knowing when a task needs an agent

Five main criteria decide when a Flank agent should be leveraged for a task rather than a more generic AI assistant. Currently, these tasks are focused on document drafting and document review.

- **When the document is very long, or the logic behind it is deep**

Flank agents are particularly strong when document runs to dozens or hundreds of pages, or its structure is conditional: clauses that depend on other clauses, tables whose shape changes with every sender, positions that must hold from page four to page ninety.
- **When multiple sources of information need to be connected**

Flank agents can join the dots. What the task needs sits in more than one place: an email thread, the CRM, the playbook, the template, the matter file. Some of it is often missing, so the work depends on noticing what is absent and asking for it rather than filling the gap.
- **When it involves a detailed review against the firm's own positions**

Flank agents are specialised at navigating and applying highly complex, lengthy playbooks. So they're strong when the task is not answering a question about a document but marking it up: applying the firm's playbook clause by clause, explaining each position taken, and returning a redline a lawyer can work from.
- **When no new system should be implemented**

Flank agents are designed to be invisible. They're suitable when the people who need the work won't adopt a new tool for it. The task has to arrive and come back through systems they already use, such as email, the way they would hand it to a colleague.
- **When the system needs to be supervised and auditable**

Flank agents ensure they support human accountability, so when a human must be able to check, before anything is sent, that's a job for a Flank agent. Flank agents ensure that the right template and positions were applied and that conflicts and gaps were surfaced, and to show afterwards how the document was produced.

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Every tool has its strengths, but Flank applies Simmons know-how directly within the document review process, helping us work more efficiently without changing how we work.

Ali Chaudhry · Senior Legal Engineer, Simmons & Simmons

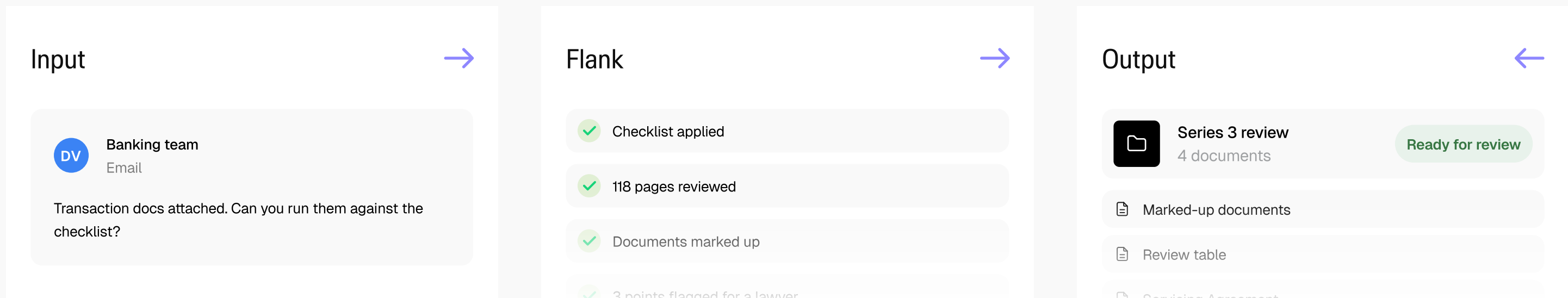
Where the determinism lives

The unlock was to stop asking the model to hold the position at all. The position already lives in the firm’s extensive playbook, written by the firm’s lawyers. The structure lives in the template that is part of the playbook. What the agent contributes is narrower, and far more useful: it reads what came in, works out which of the firm’s positions apply, and decides where they belong.

That converts the question from “Can we trust the model to draft?” into “Do we trust our own playbook?”.



How legal work moves through flank visuals



In practice

Four example workflows that the Applied AI team has built on Flank. These workflows have saved multiple hours and unlocked new productivity gains, each built after the last had proved something, and the hardest of them needed a capability that did not exist when the firm asked for it.

THE AGENT	INPUT	OUTPUT
Securitisation review for a global banking client	Transaction documents running past ninety pages, and the checklist the lawyers already work from	The documents marked up, and a table of what needs a lawyer’s eye
Complex drafting #1	Unstructured data, no two laid out alike, and the firm’s standard template	The template filled, and a question to the sender wherever something is missing
Complex drafting #2	The firm’s templates and playbook, and agreements running from 19 to over 80 pages	A draft built from the source materials, and a review of what came back
Pensions contractual terms	A trustee’s terms in a table whose shape changes every time, and the insurer’s playbook	The same document returned marked up, each position explained against the playbook

The agent asks. It doesn’t assume.

The securitisation agent tells a lawyer what to look at; it does not sign anything off. The agent asks rather than invents. The agent writes nothing that is not already in the playbook.

Asks, never assumes	Every step auditable
Missing or contradictory inputs produce a question to the lawyer by email or through a pre-filled form. The agent does not proceed on a guess.	Administrators see a full audit trail of every request, question and draft on Flank’s governance platform, so the legal function can evidence how each document was produced.

The work arrives where the team already works	The firm points one of its own mailboxes at each agent. A lawyer or client emails it much as they would email a colleague, and the work comes back the same way: a covering note, the document marked up, the open points listed. Nobody has to log in to get something done, and a practice group never has to be onboarded onto software it will never open.
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“Our lawyers really enjoy it when they interact with AI invisibly. It needs to be a tool that they do not necessarily feel like they are using.

Step 1

A lawyer emails the mailbox they already use.

Step 2

The agent applies the firm's playbook to what arrived.

Step 3

The work returns marked up, every position explained.

Step 4

The lawyer keeps the judgment, and only the judgment.

From served, to self-serve, to shaping what gets built

In 2025 Simmons & Simmons was already delivering work to its own clients on Flank agents with the help of Flank's Forward Deployed team. In early 2026, Simmons began building on Flank themselves across two streams at once: agents for the firm's internal work, and agents behind new services sold to clients.

Simmons' Applied AI team pushes Flank to its limits. Some of the firm's workflows needed something Flank had not yet released. In these cases, Simmons asked for it, and Flank shipped it. In this way, the needs of Simmons Applied AI team continues to shape the Flank roadmap. Simmons is also a beta tester for upcoming Flank features.

We are excited about the next steps of our partnership and how we get to further redefine how legal work gets done.



"It's no longer about how many hours the lawyers work. It's more about what they achieve with that agentic service and what the outputs are for clients.

Through our partnership with Flank, we've embedded agents that handle the drafting, review, and negotiation of NDAs, DPAs, service agreements, IMAs, and more. These agents are live and already delivering real impact for our teams and our clients."

Lucy Shurwood

Partner · Simmons & Simmons

