Building Vincent Studio: A behind-the-scenes look with Dan Hoadley & Editha Nemsic

Written by Sierra Van Allen



Out-of-the-box AI tools deliver impressive efficiency gains, but generic solutions can't capture the specialized and unique expertise that makes elite law firms competitive. Enterprise legal teams needed AI that works their way, embedding their processes and institutional knowledge directly into the workflows.

That's why Clio built Vincent Studio, a no-code workflow builder that lets enterprise legal teams customize Vincent to reflect how *they* work—not the other way around. Vincent Studio launched in January 2026, after an intensive beta program with top-tier law firms.

We sat down with two of Vincent Studio's architects—Dan Hoadley, Senior Director of Product Management, and Editha Nemsic, Development Manager for Forward Deployed Engineering—to understand how they built fully customizable AI for lawyers.

The Vincent Studio enhancement

Enterprise customers were already using Vincent's workflows successfully, but large law firms and corporate legal departments wanted the ability to embed their own processes directly into AI-powered tools.

"We knew very quickly from talking to Vincent customers that there were lots of capabilities they wanted to have that Vincent, in principle, could do out of the box," Dan explains. "But these customers were keen to be able to execute these workflows in a way that really carried the flourish that they wanted to put onto it. Not only did they want to build very bespoke things inside Vincent, but they also wanted to be able to rerun these workflows again and again and again in a really consistent way."

Watching how lawyers' attitudes toward technology shifted in the age of AI inspired the team. "This new technology came around and lawyers went from zero to one hundred," Editha describes. "Now they'd like AI to do everything. But 'everything' is obviously unrealistic for any one vendor to build."

What firms really wanted was for their AI platform to capture and replicate their unique knowledge and processes. "Lawyers want their AI to reflect their expertise—those qualities that make them better than other lawyers." How can one product reflect that uniqueness? How can you infuse each firm's own knowledge into Vincent without having Clio's engineers building hundreds of workflows? The solution was to allow the firms to build Vincent workflows themselves.

Building for complexity

Building enterprise-grade software for legal work means embracing complexity rather than oversimplifying. "What lawyers do isn't simple," Editha stresses. "They go through different steps and phases to complete their work. Vincent Studio's three-tier architecture—steps, tasks, and workflows—tries to mimic how a human would do the job manually. If we had oversimplified, we would have missed nuance and complexity."

Vincent Studio's no-code approach was essential: "Vincent Studio lends itself to non-technical audiences because we were able to build an interface that doesn't need any code. Requiring people to code means they need formal education. No-code lowers the barrier of building massively—it was the only choice we had."

Co-creating with Enterprise customers

Vincent Studio wasn't built in isolation. Clio developed it through an early access beta program—a partnership approach that was, as Editha puts it, both a "win-win" and a "no-brainer."

"The best way to build a good product is to show it to your customers as early as you can. We're not building for ourselves, we're building for our customers. The sooner we show it to them, the sooner we can validate our idea, and it's better for everyone because we're going to build what they actually want."

The team kept the beta group small—just a handful of firms—in order to work intensively with each one. "We were looking for large law firms that could give us access to a broad, diverse set of practice groups because we wanted to understand how versatile Vincent Studio could be in practice. The firms we picked were top tier law firms that had both the complexity and the internal bandwidth to be useful to us as beta testers."

Beta participants were hands-on in shaping Vincent Studio, participating in weekly calls with the Clio team to provide feedback. In instances where multiple beta testers provided similar feedback, new features were implemented in as little as a week. One concrete example: the ability to add Clarification Questions came directly from beta testers. "We built the ability to hit pause, define a moment when you want the workflow to stop and ask the user a question, get that response, and complete the workflow with that user response in context." This feature has since proven integral in Vincent Studio's workflow builder.

The beta firms surprised the team with their ambition. "The beta testers really went for it," Editha shares. "They built a lot more complex workflows than I expected them to. They skipped over restyling emails or writing LinkedIn posts, and instead went straight into litigation workflows that consist of ten steps and have incredibly long, well-thought through prompts. What that shows me is they were ready; they just didn't have the platform to do it." Agreeing, Dan adds "That's why beta is so important, though. Your expectations about what customers are prepared to do might be completely wrong because you're underestimating them."

Perhaps most revealing was that beta firms built many workflows by only slightly tweaking existing Vincent capabilities. "It was more about quality control, reliability, and reassurance that their internal users are using AI in the way that the firm wants them to. If you let a general AI assistant loose in a firm, everyone can upload a contract and say, 'Analyze this for me,' but how do you ensure that you're following the same internal guidelines you would follow if you did it manually? Studio enables them to have peace of mind that the end users are using AI in line with company policy and best practices."

The publisher model

One of Vincent Studio's distinctive features is its cap on workflow publishers. "We give builders or publishers more control, but therefore our model is that there's up to 10 individuals in a firm—those with internal expertise about how their firm works—that actually build the workflows for their end users. That establishes internal guardrails."

This limitation on publishers allows firms to fully control their quality and their processes. It also allows the Clio team to train those few people more deeply and ensure they get the ongoing support they need. Both Dan and Editha were confident in their decision to constrain the number of workflow publishers based on their past experiences working at large law firms, explaining that "letting Vincent Studio loose in a large firm would create a situation where four hundred people are writing workflows every day, making Vincent *less* usable rather than more usable."

A good Vincent Studio publisher has three things: a deep understanding of how their organization works, an existing familiarity with the ins and outs of Vincent, and the ability to enthusiastically champion Vincent Studio internally. With those ingredients, you'll have publishers that build workflows people actually want and actually use.

Vincent Studio vs. alternative solutions

The most significant difference between Vincent Studio and competing workflow builders comes down to power versus ease. "A big difference between how we've looked at this and how our competitors have, is that competitors have erred very much on the side of ease and democratization of workflow construction. We've leaned more into power and versatility. We are building a power tool."

Vincent Studio also alleviates one of the chief complaints about AI, the black box. "We're letting Vincent Studio publishers look behind the scenes a lot more than most vendors would," Editha explains. "It takes out the black box," Dan clarifies. "Or at least adds a little bit of light around it so you can see the contours."

Some firms consider hiring developers to build custom AI tools, but that path can quickly become overcomplicated. "Vincent Studio goes back to that 'build-or-buy' discussion that a lot of firms have: should I build something internally or should I buy it? We're saying, why don't you do both? Why don't you buy a product that also lets you build on top of it?"

With Vincent Studio, Clio handles the hard parts of maintaining the technology, while law firms are able to focus on the creativity and imagination of creating new workflows. "We're going to take on the maintenance and you get to worry about the fun building."

While standard Vincent and other out-of-the-box AI solutions are sufficient for many firms, they lack the complete customization of Vincent Studio. “With Vincent Studio, the user doesn’t have to upload their template every time, because the template lives within that workflow, giving it constant access to your firm’s knowledge. Whereas if you use any GenAI assistant out of the box, you have to reupload that knowledge every time.”

The future of Vincent Studio

Vincent Studio will always intentionally be a work in progress, leaving room for new capabilities as technology advances. And Vincent Studio’s roadmap embraces a future world where more law firms have their own in-house engineers and data scientists.

The upcoming enhancement the Clio team is most excited about is embedding legal research as a native workflow step. “Legal research is an upcoming step type that Vincent Studio is going to be able to use in the overall workflow. There are no other systems out there that can perform legal research on a grounded database and bring that back in a reasonable way. That’s going to be a big boost in Vincent Studio’s capabilities.”

For example, a Vincent Studio workflow built today could assist with a Motion for Summary Judgment by drafting a statement of facts based on uploaded documents, extracting key issues, and organizing supporting exhibits. Once Studio has harnessed Vincent’s legal research capabilities, this workflow could also quote and properly cite a jurisdiction-specific summary judgment standard and draft an argument in support of that standard.

Practical guidance for firms

Dan and Editha’s advice when first getting started is to start simple. “People like to start with the biggest idea they have. But I think starting small to get a feel for how it works, get a feel for the product, is the best way to go. You want to be taken through the workflow builder with a low-effort, low-risk workflow, see your result, and have that feeling of success.”

For experienced publishers identifying which processes to automate, Dan reminds us of the importance of a lawyer’s legal judgment. “Wherever we’re thinking about using AI at the moment, we should be thinking about low-stakes applications rather than high-stakes ones, unless we’ve got the resources available to balance the risk.” Beyond remembering not to automate integral decision-making processes, good workflows come from clear processes with high adoption potential.

The inside story: why customization matters

What Editha most wants enterprise decision-makers to understand about Vincent Studio is the importance of customization. “Everyone talks about customizability being important, but nobody really talks about *why*. For me, the ‘why’ became clear in the beta program. It wasn’t just ‘I want to do things my way’ because that’s what we want. It’s about creating trust in the output and creating reliability and robustness. Generative AI is amazing, but it is generative so you can’t ensure the same output every time. Vincent Studio allows people to achieve that consistency, and that in the end creates trust in the product, which then helps adoption and helps everyone. It’s about trust.”

Dan adds, “There’s a long road ahead of us. This is just the start.”

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio’s AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.