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## Will AI Rush in a 'Skills Renaissance' in Law?

There's a technology revolution underway in law. This week's AI roundup explores, what does the future hold for the lawyer?

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What's the deal with young people these days? Well, in the context of lawyers, the young are leading the way with technology. A recent [Reuters](#) blog pegs the innovators' age range between generations Y ([born mid-70s to early 2000s](#)) and Z ([the 90s – 2000s](#)), within which lie the individuals that are transforming the future of legal services.

And nothing looks to impact law more significantly in the coming decade than artificial intelligence (AI). The real-world benefit of its application is "continuing to explode," Reuters' Westlaw product management senior director Erik Lindberg said in the blog. Using it, attorneys stand to "make more informed decisions and have more confidence."

However, not everyone is on board with the change, and age for some can be an indicator of stance. Veteran attorneys, Lindberg says, have up until now "been successful without cognitive computing or artificial intelligence, so they may question, why change?"

In fact, now may actually be a great time to be a younger lawyer, especially if you grasp technology. In a [Legal Cheek](#) Q&A, Luke Scanlon, head of Pinsent Masons' "fintech propositions," said that for junior attorneys, "AI will mean more of a focus on interesting work for lawyers and less time spent on mundane tasks."

At the same time, this could have considerable implications for the typical job description of the lawyer. According to Scanlon, law students with "coding or data analysis skills are going to be in high demand, because these are areas where the legal profession has an opportunity to build on what it currently offers."

In the same Q&A, Pinsent Masons' director of knowledge and innovation delivery David Halliwell suggested considering the "huge" amounts of data generated by organizations everywhere, and how these groups will want to leverage their data behind decisions. Therefore, he said, "I think we'll see a lot more coming together of the provision of legal advice and data analysis," and that in hiring "certainly I'd snap up the coders."

Numbers indicate a growing interest in technology as well. Citing a Fox Williams and Byfield Consultancy research paper titled “Recruitment to Robots,” the [Law Society Gazette](#) reported that 83 percent of 70 top 200 UK law firms said technology has “the greatest potential to increase profitability.” Author Joanna Goodman wrote, “One respondent referred to ‘a technological arms race between law firms, where it will be important to invest in the right products’.”

In terms of AI, she added, “AI is not just about machine-learning—there has to be human learning too.”

And for those not adopting technology at this point, it may only be a matter of time where their presence in the legal world is a thing of the past. As Neota Logic managing director in the Asia-Pacific region Julian Uebergang noted in [Lawyers Weekly](#), AI “builds efficiency between the client and the firm,” and benefits are greater than the negatives in its implementation.

“Artificial intelligence has this connotation that robots are going to take over everybody's jobs. That certainly isn't going to happen,” he continued. Speaking about a Lawyers' Weekly forum at which he's speaking, “I really want people to understand how technology helps with innovation and efficiency, rather than taking over people's roles.”

Part of getting potential adapters beyond anxiety may lie in doing away with the buzzwords surrounding AI in law. Another [Lawyers Weekly](#) article discussed the view of Hive Legal's Jodi Baker that there isn't enough being done to aid business and law firm leaders in understanding how their industries are changing, and how they fit into a bigger picture of inevitable technological disruption:

“The demands on [lawyers] are so significant that even finding the head space to understand the technologies available to them and then think about which ones are relevant, and get to the point where they pick up the phone and buy a service, is hard.”

It's important to note that not all of the legal world is falling behind in tech advancement. [The Global Legal Post](#) points to Northern Ireland as a hotbed for legal technology, where Ulster University has founded the Legal Innovation Centre, bringing together computing and law students to work on legal informatics. The university also has an Artificial Intelligence Research Group.

In New Zealand, meanwhile, the law firm Chapman Tripp and [Institute of Directors in New Zealand](#) collaborated on a paper to highlight challenges and opportunities presented by AI, reported [CIO](#). Citing the report, it said:

“Just as the Industrial Revolution reduced the demand for human labour in manufacturing and agriculture, AI technologies have the potential to reduce the need for skilled professionals in service fields that have been largely insulated from disruption, such as finance, accounting, law and medicine.”

In the U.S., some companies are making great strides in implementing AI to address some of the day's biggest challenges. For example, this week OutsideIQ announced its [DDIQ](#) solution, which automates anti-bribery compliance for enterprises. Similarly, UK company RAVN Systems announced a partnership with U.S. legal services provider Fireman & Co to bring to the North American market an AI-powered [search tool](#) for enterprises. Law firms are dabbling with machine

learning technology as well, with [Paul Hastings](#) announcing its building of a team of data scientists, e-discovery professionals and mathematicians to create a tool for culling through millions of documents.

And while ambivalence still surrounds the changes and challenges rendered by AI in law, the industry is starting to come around to the reality of today. As [Forbes](#) recently put it, “While this ‘rise of the machines’ in the legal sector is a disruption viewed negatively by many in Big Law, others around them are seizing the opportunity.”

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