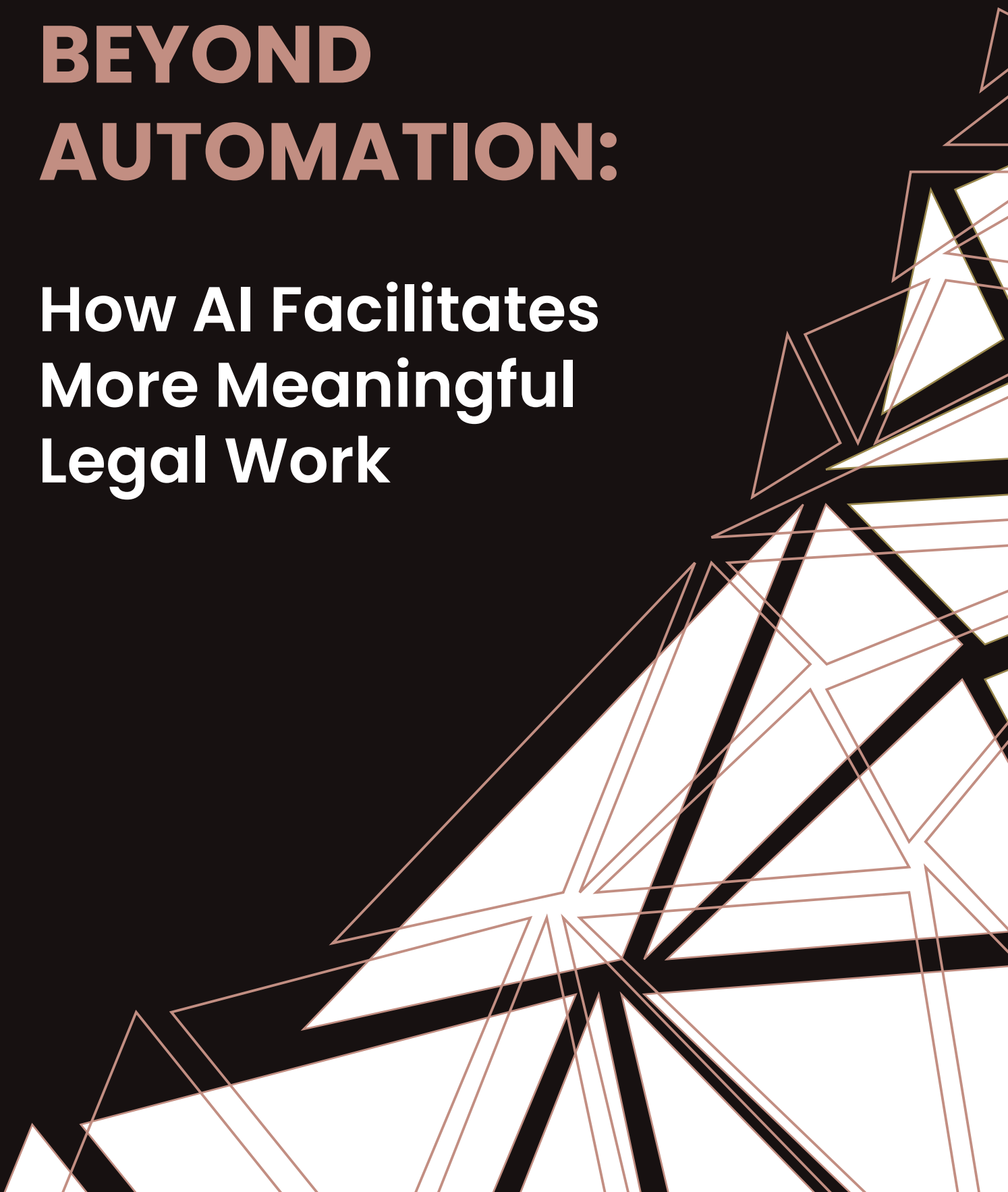


LEGALTECHTALK

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LEGORA

BEYOND AUTOMATION:

**How AI Facilitates
More Meaningful
Legal Work**





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Foreword

As artificial intelligence rapidly redefines the landscape of legal services, the most critical question is not if legal teams should use these tools, but how and when AI should be used in ways that elevate our distinctly human value. For lawyers, the promise of AI lies not in automating their judgment, but in amplifying their capacity, sharpening their insight, and freeing them to focus on steering the work that demands creativity, empathy, and ethical nuance.

At Legora, we're fortunate to work with very forward-thinking firms and individuals who are not just exploring what AI can do, but actively shaping what it should do. This report captures a cross-section of that exploration. From managing incentives that can work against innovation (and are often baked into billable hours), to watching partners lead the charge in AI adoption, to the build-versus-buy crossroads every firm must now navigate; these tectonic shifts will be defining legal services for decades to come.

The reality of AI in law isn't just about faster document review or more accurate translations. It's about transformation at the systemic level. When we focus only on task automation, we miss the forest for the trees. The real value comes from reimagining entire legal workflows: from insight to advice, from diligence to delivery.

Working at the cutting edge of legal AI, we've seen several patterns emerge. The first is that the firms winning with AI are those who are treating it as a strategic lever and not as a side project. Second, the return on AI investment shouldn't be measured just in time saved. It must include the quality of work being delivered, client experience, and competitive positioning. And third, and perhaps most importantly, is that AI is revealing the true structure of legal work: what's meaningful, what's mechanical, and what's mission-critical.

This report is a snapshot of the legal AI journey. It highlights the questions many lawyers are wrestling with, and the opportunities to seize. It's about reimagining how the next generation of lawyers can be trained, to continue building trust with clients, and upholding the principles that define the legal profession, even as its operating model is reshaping.

For building the future of legal work, it's both a mirror and a map.

Let's get to work!

By Max Junestrand, CEO & Co-Founder of Legora

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Chapter 1:

Foundations First – The Practical Starting Points

How do we design legal work to be AI-ready?

To begin reaping the benefits of AI, the legal industry must first look inward. Firms must thoroughly understand their existing workflows and identify the repetitive, high-volume tasks that are ripe for automation. This requires humility, discipline, and a willingness to invest time in foundational work before chasing big wins.

The enthusiasm around generative AI is palpable, but behind every successful implementation lies a disciplined commitment to the basics: understanding workflows, defining the right problems, and choosing tools that solve them meaningfully.

Max Junestrand cuts straight to the core of where most firms should start:

“

*The thing AI is best at is reading.
That's why we started with reviewing.*

MAX JUNESTRAND

CEO & Co-Founder of Legora



This observation reveals why document-heavy processes like contract review, due diligence, and legal research have become the natural entry points for AI in legal practice. These tasks are repetitive, rule-based, and generate immediate value when automated effectively.

Yet many firms struggle to move beyond these basic applications. **Daryl Shetterly** captures this challenge:

“

We're translating, summarising, doing the basics—because we haven't integrated AI holistically yet. If the only thing you have accessible is a chatbot, you're still capped on what you can achieve.

DARYL SHETTERLY

Managing Director, Orrick Analytics



The key insight here is that successful AI adoption requires systematic integration rather than point solutions.

Firms that limit themselves to basic chatbot implementations will inevitably hit ceiling effects, while those that invest in comprehensive workflow redesign can achieve transformational results.

This foundation-building phase demands a different approach to thinking about legal work. Rather than simply asking “What can AI do?” successful firms are reframing the question entirely.

User-centred design principles prove particularly valuable during this phase. Organisations that involve end users in identifying problems and evaluating solutions achieve higher adoption rates and better outcomes.

Rohit Shukla exemplifies this approach:

“We built widgets around specific pain points users gave us. That drove adoption.”

This methodology ensures that AI implementations connect with lawyers’ actual work experiences rather than abstract technological possibilities. When people can see direct value in their daily work, adoption becomes organic rather than forced.

The accessibility factor cannot be overstated in successful AI implementation. Complex deployments may impress technologists, but they often fail to gain traction with busy lawyers who need immediate, obvious value.

Tom Slate describes this crucial threshold:

“The first prompt you try—that moment where you realise it’s quicker than Googling.”

This moment of recognition represents the tipping point where technology adoption becomes inevitable. When AI tools are genuinely easier and faster than existing alternatives, adoption happens naturally without extensive change management programmes.

Organic adoption patterns often prove more sustainable than mandated deployments. **Enrique Ascanio** observed this pattern:

“We started bottom-up with Copilot. Now users are pushing us.”

This evolution from tool deployment to user demand represents the ideal trajectory for AI adoption. When lawyers start requesting more AI capabilities rather than resisting them, the organisation has successfully navigated the most challenging aspect of technology transformation.

The foundational phase also requires realistic expectations about AI capabilities and limitations. **Ilona Logvinova** offers a framework that helps manage these expectations:

“Treat AI like a junior associate. Invest in its growth.”

This analogy helps lawyers understand both AI’s potential and its limitations. Like a junior associate, AI requires training, clear instructions, and ongoing development. It can handle routine tasks effectively but needs supervision and guidance for complex work.

James Touzel emphasises how generative AI creates new opportunities:

“What’s new is the power of GenAI to accelerate drafting, summarising and analysing legal documents.”

The evolution from traditional AI to generative AI represents a quantum leap in capability that opens entirely new use cases for legal practice. However, this expanded capability also requires more sophisticated approaches to quality control and risk management.

Helder Santos advocates for ambitious thinking about AI's potential:

“

*It's not just about efficiency—
it's about re-engineering legal
workflows to be more innovative,
scalable, and client-centric.*

HELDER SANTOS

Global Head of
LegalTech &
Innovation at
Bird & Bird



“

*If you stay with baseline stuff,
you'll get baseline results.*

ILONA LOGVINOVA

Director of
Practice Innovation
at Cleary Gottlieb



This perspective pushes beyond mere automation to consider how AI might enable entirely new approaches to legal service delivery. Rather than simply making existing processes faster, the most transformative implementations reimagine how legal work gets done.

The firms that will thrive in the AI era are those that resist the temptation to implement AI superficially and instead commit to the disciplined, methodical work of building proper foundations for sustainable transformation.

Chapter 2:

People, Not Just Platforms –

Navigating Adoption & Expectations

What does real value from AI look like, beyond cost savings?

AI tools are only as powerful as the people who use them. The gap between AI capability and real-world adoption is fundamentally a human challenge that requires as much attention to psychology and culture as to technology and training.

The legal sector must recognise this reality and shift focus from features to feelings—how lawyers experience change, how confident they feel using new tools, and how they learn to integrate AI into their professional identity.

The human dimension of AI adoption involves addressing fundamental questions about professional identity, value, and relevance in an AI-driven world. Many lawyers harbour concerns about whether AI will make their skills obsolete or reduce their value to clients. These concerns are neither irrational nor temporary—they reflect genuine anxieties about professional purpose that must be addressed directly.

Successful AI adoption strategies recognise that technology resistance often stems from deeper fears about professional relevance rather than simple reluctance to learn new tools.

When people understand how AI enhances rather than replaces their capabilities, they become enthusiastic adopters rather than reluctant participants.

The most effective implementations begin with clear strategic communication about why change is necessary and how it benefits both the organisation and individual professionals. Without this context, AI adoption feels like change for change's sake, leading to resistance and poor outcomes.

James Touzel emphasises the importance of this people-centred approach:

“It’s all about the people. Framing problems and solutions around use cases that are valued and mean something to colleagues.”

This approach ensures that AI implementations connect with lawyers' genuine needs rather than imposing technological solutions that may not address real problems. When technology serves clear professional purposes, learning and adoption happen naturally.

Expectation management emerges as another critical factor in successful adoption. The legal profession's natural scepticism toward new technology can be either an asset or a liability, depending on how expectations are set and managed.

Lena Haffner provides important perspective on managing expectations appropriately:

“

People expect magic, but it's really about productivity hacks—speeding up drafts, starting from something, not nothing.

LENA HAFFNER

Innovation Manager at
Norton Rose Fulbright LLP



This honest communication about AI capabilities helps lawyers develop appropriate mental models for how and when to use AI tools effectively. When people understand that AI excels at accelerating routine tasks rather than solving complex problems independently, they can integrate it more effectively into their workflows.

The complexity of organisational change extends beyond individual tool adoption to encompass broader process and cultural shifts. Successful AI implementation often requires changing how work gets done, not just what tools are used.

Daryl Shetterly captures this systems perspective:

“We talk about tech, but it’s people, process, and data. If we overhaul the process, we meet resistance.”

This observation highlights the importance of considering all dimensions of change rather than focusing exclusively on technology deployment. Organisations must carefully balance the need for process improvement with the reality of human resistance to change.

Comprehensive implementation requires structured support that extends far beyond software training to encompass skill development, mindset shifts, and cultural transformation. The most successful organisations recognise that AI literacy has become as fundamental as computer literacy was a generation ago.

Sofia Martensson

emphasises the importance of comprehensive preparation:

“

A clear structure is needed to ensure all employees have the opportunity to develop awareness and skills regarding both the potential and the risks of AI.

SOFIA MARTENSSON

Co-Head Digitalisation at CML



This comprehensive approach to capability building recognises that effective AI utilisation requires understanding both technological possibilities and professional limitations. When people understand what AI can and cannot do reliably, they make better decisions about when and how to leverage these tools.

The most effective training approaches combine technical instruction with hands-on experience, peer learning, and ongoing mentorship. Abstract presentations about AI capabilities prove less effective than practical demonstrations and opportunities to experiment with real use cases.

The question of professional value and relevance requires direct attention in any comprehensive adoption strategy. Many lawyers worry that AI will diminish their importance or replace human judgement entirely. The most successful implementations help people understand how AI enhances their capabilities rather than competing with them.

This value enhancement becomes apparent when AI handles routine tasks effectively, freeing lawyers to focus on higher-value activities that require uniquely human skills: strategic thinking, client relationship management, creative problem-solving, and ethical reasoning.

The path to successful adoption ultimately requires meeting people where they are rather than where you want them to be. **Ilona Logvinova** captures this empathetic approach:

“People are at different stages. If we want firmwide change, we need to meet them where they are.”

This human-centred approach to AI adoption determines whether technological investments deliver their promised value. Organisations that invest as much attention in their people as they do in their technology consistently achieve better outcomes and more sustainable competitive advantages.

Chapter 3:

ROI, Risk, and Strategic Positioning

Who stands to gain from AI's impact on legal service delivery?

The economics of AI adoption in legal practice extend far beyond simple cost-benefit calculations to encompass competitive positioning, client expectations, and long-term strategic advantages. Traditional ROI metrics, while important, fail to capture the full value proposition of AI in professional services, where intangible benefits like enhanced reputation and market differentiation often matter more than immediate cost savings.

The competitive dynamics of AI adoption create urgency that transcends typical investment timelines. Firms that wait for perfect ROI calculations may find themselves competing against opponents with fundamentally superior capabilities, making early investment essential for competitive survival rather than optional for operational improvement.

Max Junestrand provides a compelling framework for quantifying AI economics:

"If each lawyer saves 4 hours of unbillable work per year, that's \$5M in potential revenue. If a tool costs \$500K, that's a 10x ROI."

This calculation demonstrates how relatively modest efficiency gains can translate to significant financial impact when scaled across large organisations.

The key insight is focusing on how AI enables lawyers to spend more time on revenue-generating activities rather than simply reducing operational costs.

However, realising these theoretical benefits requires concrete plans for converting efficiency gains into financial outcomes. **Dan Wright** provides crucial perspective:

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You don't save cost unless those saved hours turn into real revenue or FTE reductions. Otherwise, you're just adding cost.

DAN WRIGHT

Partner & Director at
Osborne Clarke Solutions



This reality check highlights a common pitfall: assuming that saved time automatically translates to improved financial performance. Without deliberate efforts to redirect efficiency gains toward billable work or cost reduction, AI investments may improve quality of life without improving bottom-line results.

The strategic implications of build-versus-buy decisions add complexity to AI investment analysis. Whilst purchasing external solutions offers faster implementation, building internal capabilities may provide greater long-term competitive advantages.

Tom Slate describes a significant evolution in strategic thinking:

“

24 months ago, I said there's no way we should build our own tools. Now we're seriously considering it.

TOM SLATE

Director of Projects & Innovation at
Shoosmiths



This shift reflects growing recognition that AI capabilities may be too strategic to outsource entirely. Organisations that develop internal AI expertise often become more sophisticated users of external tools and better evaluators of new technologies.

The learning value of internal development frequently justifies investment beyond immediate ROI considerations. **Daryl Shetterly** emphasises this organisational learning benefit:

“It's helped our lawyers imagine what's possible. That cultural shift is as important as ROI.”

This cultural transformation creates value that extends far beyond any specific AI tool. Organisations that successfully develop AI capabilities often become more innovative across all areas of operation, creating competitive advantages that compound over time.

Strategic investment in AI requires looking beyond immediate returns to consider long-term competitive positioning. **Ilona Logvinova** offers a strategic perspective that emphasises this long-term view:

“Netflix was mailing DVDs whilst quietly building its algorithm. That's what we're doing now with AI—investing for future return.”

This analogy captures the challenge of investing in transformative technology whilst traditional business models remain profitable. The organisations that will dominate AI-enhanced markets are those willing to make strategic investments before competitive necessity becomes apparent.

The question of value capture adds strategic complexity that affects every aspect of AI implementation.

Enrique Ascanio poses the fundamental strategic question:

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Who captures the value from AI? The firm, the client, or the vendor? That depends on your strategy.

ENRIQUE ASCANIO

COO EMEA+ at Baker McKenzie



This strategic choice affects pricing models, client relationships, and competitive dynamics in ways that extend far beyond immediate technology implementation. Organisations that think strategically about value capture position themselves more effectively for long-term success.

The competitive pressure surrounding AI adoption has reached a critical threshold where the choice is no longer whether to invest, but how quickly and effectively to do so. When clients begin expecting AI-enhanced services as a baseline requirement, the cost of not investing often exceeds the investment required.

However, successful AI implementation requires avoiding the temptation to adopt technology for its own sake rather than solving genuine business problems. The most successful implementations maintain relentless focus on client value and business outcomes rather than technological sophistication.

Lena Haffner addresses the growing pressure for concrete measurement:

“Leadership is getting impatient. ROI must be clearer. We’re tracking how long it takes to turn AI outputs into client-ready work.”

This focus on practical metrics provides essential reality checks on AI effectiveness whilst maintaining accountability for business outcomes.

“If you don’t invest now, you’ll be sending DVDs while others are streaming.”

– **Ilona Logvinova**

“

We’re just getting our hands dirty—testing, iterating, learning. That’s how we’ll stay ahead.

ROHIT SHUKLA

Chief Digital Officer
at Khaitan & Co.



The message is clear: AI investment has evolved from optional efficiency improvement to competitive necessity. Organisations that approach it strategically, with realistic expectations and sustained commitment to client value, will capture the most benefit from this technological transformation.

Chapter 4:

Quality, Ethics, and the Path Forward

How do we ensure AI enhances rather than diminishes legal excellence?

As law firms increasingly integrate AI into their operations, maintaining the highest standards of professional excellence becomes both more challenging and more critical. The legal profession's fundamental obligations cannot be compromised by the pursuit of efficiency or technological innovation.

Quality assurance in AI-enhanced legal practice requires systematic approaches that combine robust human oversight with sophisticated technological safeguards. The most successful implementations maintain humans in decision-making roles whilst leveraging AI to provide better information and more comprehensive analysis.

The principle of human oversight cannot be compromised, regardless of how sophisticated AI tools become. Rather than replacing human judgement, AI should enhance it by providing better information whilst leaving final decisions firmly in human hands.

James Touzel describes a comprehensive approach to quality management:

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Extensive testing and configuration. Continuous feedback loops. Standards and protocols and dynamic risk management. Human review and validation.

JAMES TOUZEL

Partner at TLT



This systematic framework demonstrates that quality assurance requires attention to every stage of the AI lifecycle, from initial tool selection through ongoing operation and continuous refinement.

Training and competency development emerge as critical factors in maintaining quality standards. The most successful organisations recognise that AI literacy has become as fundamental as traditional legal research skills, requiring systematic investment in building these capabilities.

The ethical dimensions of AI implementation require ongoing attention as capabilities continue to evolve. Legal professionals must navigate complex questions about client confidentiality, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and professional accountability whilst leveraging AI tools to deliver better outcomes.

Transforming professional roles and client relationships

The integration of AI into legal practice is fundamentally reshaping both professional identity and client relationships. This transformation requires lawyers to develop new competencies whilst maintaining the human skills that clients value most: strategic thinking, ethical reasoning, and relationship management.

The most successful legal professionals embrace this evolution as an opportunity to focus on higher-value activities rather than a threat to their professional relevance. AI enables lawyers to spend less time on routine tasks and more time on strategic thinking and complex problem-solving.

James Touzel describes this professional evolution optimistically:

“More lawyers, who are even more highly valued. With AI doing the heavy lifting it creates an opportunity for lawyers to be even more highly valued.”

This perspective challenges common fears about AI displacing legal professionals, suggesting instead that AI enables lawyers to focus on the aspects of their work that clients value most highly.

The development of junior lawyers in an AI-enhanced environment requires particular attention to ensure that new professionals develop essential skills whilst leveraging technological capabilities. However, this evolution doesn't mean abandoning traditional legal skills.

Sofia Martensson provides insight into how junior development might evolve:

“Junior colleagues could help develop templates for specific use cases and test the tool’s performance, thereby gaining unique insights into complex processes.”

Client relationships in the AI era require new levels of transparency, collaboration, and technological sophistication. Clients increasingly expect their legal service providers to leverage AI effectively whilst maintaining personal attention and professional judgement.

The competitive pressure has reached a threshold where AI capabilities are becoming prerequisites for client consideration rather than differentiators for selection. Organisations that cannot demonstrate sophisticated AI integration risk losing clients to more technologically advanced competitors.

Helder Santos emphasises the importance of transparency in client relationships:

“Clients want to understand how we utilise AI and co-create with us.”

This transparency requirement represents a significant shift from traditional legal practice, where specific methods used to deliver services were often invisible to clients.

The path forward

The future success of AI in legal practice depends on organisations' ability to integrate technological capabilities with human expertise in ways that enhance rather than compromise professional excellence. This requires sustained commitment to quality, ethics, and client value.

The most successful organisations approach AI as a long-term capability development initiative rather than discrete technology deployments. They invest in building internal expertise, developing quality assurance processes, and creating organisational cultures that embrace both innovation and professional responsibility.

Strategic implementation requires avoiding the temptation to adopt technology for its own sake. The organisations that achieve the greatest long-term value maintain relentless focus on client outcomes and professional excellence.

The structured approach to AI development that begins with pilot projects and scales based on demonstrated success provides a framework for managing risk whilst building capabilities. This methodology allows organisations to learn and adapt whilst avoiding costly mistakes.

The path forward requires balancing ambitious vision with practical execution, recognising that AI transformation is a marathon rather than a sprint. Organisations must invest in capabilities, culture, and change management whilst maintaining focus on fundamental professional responsibilities.

Most importantly, success requires recognising that AI technology succeeds or fails based on human adoption and organisational alignment. The firms that will thrive are those that invest as much attention in their people and processes as they do in their technology.

Actionable Insights

- 1. Start with process mapping before tool selection.** Understand workflows and identify specific pain points where AI delivers meaningful value.
- 2. Focus on user-driven implementation.** Build solutions around problems lawyers actually experience rather than imposing technology solutions.
- 3. Invest heavily in training and change management.** Technical deployment is only the beginning; sustained success requires comprehensive people development.
- 4. Maintain human oversight in all AI applications.** Use AI to enhance human judgement, never to replace professional responsibility.
- 5. Set realistic expectations about AI capabilities.** Position AI as productivity enhancement rather than magical problem-solving.
- 6. Develop quality assurance frameworks specific to AI.** Traditional quality control methods may not adequately address AI-specific risks.
- 7. Engage clients transparently about AI utilisation.** Build trust through open communication about how AI enhances service delivery.
- 8. Balance build vs. buy decisions strategically.** Consider long-term competitive positioning alongside immediate implementation needs.
- 9. Create feedback loops for continuous improvement.** AI implementations should evolve based on user experience and outcome measurement.
- 10. Establish clear ethical guidelines for AI use.** Ensure all implementations align with professional responsibilities and organisational values.

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