ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Written by **Shubham Airi**

1st year student, School Of Law , Christ University B Bangalore , pursuing B.A LLB

Artificial Intelligence entails machines having the capabilities to learn, reason and perform activities in a similar way to humans. Artificial Intelligence is already disrupting most of the sectors particularly the traditional sectors such as the manufacturing and retail sectors. The legal profession is also a highly traditional sector with technology having made minimal inroads within the sector. However, this is set to change not only with multiple research efforts to see how Artificial Intelligence can be adopted within the legal profession but also several firms developing Artificial Intelligence systems to be used within the legal profession. The proliferation of Artificial Intelligence within the legal profession can be deeply startling for lawyers particularly with the fears that Artificial intelligence could lead to job loss in many sectors. This paper explores Artificial Intelligence within the legal profession as well as what lawyers can do to remain relevant even in the wake of Artificial Intelligence disrupting the legal profession.

Artificial Intelligence and the Legal Profession

The legal profession is still largely traditional with a majority of the tasks being performed by humans. Most of the law firms are underpinned by a traditional business model where a majority of the lawyers – junior lawyers and legal assistants – carry out extensive research on a subject matter, and then they hand a summarized report to a senior lawyer (Miller

and Meinzinger, 2013, 238). The senior lawyers who are usually the partners in most lawyers present the client's case in a court using the summarized report, draft a legal document on behalf of the client based on the summarized report, or advise a client on a legal transaction based on the summarized report. Due to a large amount of workload that goes into carrying out legal research, most law firms charge exorbitant fees to clients (Miller and Meinzinger, 2013, 238).

Artificial Intelligence is poised to disrupt the legal profession in that most of the repetitive tasks conducted by humans in the legal realm can now be automated. A study by Mc Kinsey & Co. reports that close to 25% of the time and tasks conducted by lawyers can be automated (Chui, Manyika, and Miremadi, 2015, n.pg). Huge profitability margins under the current business model in most law firms where most of the tasks are manual are a great deterrent to the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in the legal profession. To compel law firms to adopt Artificial Intelligence, companies selling Artificial Intelligence products for law firms are approaching clients of law firms and demonstrating to them the benefit of adopting Artificial Intelligence within the legal profession. Kira Systems, which is a Toronto-based developer of machine learning products is one such company that is demonstrating to clients of law firms the benefit of adopting Artificial Intelligence within the legal profession (Artificial Lawyer, 2016, n.pg). Thus, law firms are poised to adopt Artificial Intelligence despite most of them being reluctant to do the same today.

Areas That Artificial Intelligence Could Disrupt Today Within the Legal Profession

Artificial Intelligence will lead to the automation of many repetitive and mundane tasks within the legal profession. Legal research and due diligence where lawyers have to pore over hundreds of legal documents manually is a key part of the legal profession. The lawyers have

to skim through many documents picking case laws that are relevant to a case in hand or picking clauses that are relevant to a contract at hand (Privault et al., 2010, 260). Legal research and due diligence are areas within the legal profession that can readily be automated thanks to Artificial Intelligence. Artificial Intelligence systems have natural language processing and machine learning features that allow them not only to review multiple legal documents within a short time but also improve their accuracy every time they do so (Privault et al., 2010, 262). Further, Artificial Intelligence systems share outcomes of relevant case laws with users providing lawyers with critical facts that they can present in court.

Consulting is also another area within the legal profession that can be automated thanks to Artificial Intelligence. While consulting between lawyers and their colleagues is largely done through phone and emails, consulting between lawyers and prospective clients is largely conducted on a face to face setting. This can be addressed through law firms embracing chatbots that prospective clients can use to obtain legal advice to help them decide the legal feasibility of a case or a contract (Dale, 2016, 813). This would be cost saving for prospective clients since using bespoke chatbots would cushion them from paying consulting fees to lawyers. Chatbots would also allow lawyers to concentrate on legal cases or contracts at hand rather than meeting prospective clients for cases that may not be even legally feasible.

What A Legal Professional Can Do To Remain Economically Relevant Even In the Midst Artificial Intelligence Disrupting the Legal Profession

The core duties of a lawyer can be summed up as representing clients in court, drafting legal documents, and advising clients on legal transactions (Loughrey, 2011, 48). While a core duty of lawyers such as representing clients in court cannot be automated, a majority of the processes involved in core duties, such as drafting documents and advising clients on legal

transactions can readily be automated. Research which is usually labor intensive is a key part of most of the core duties of a lawyer. A lawyer has to pore through multiple case laws to gather facts and arguments to use in court. A lawyer also has to familiarize themselves with key clauses in contracts to draft appropriate legal documents and to correctly advise clients on legal transactions (Loughrey, 2011, 106).

To remain relevant even in the midst of Artificial Intelligence technology disrupting the legal profession, a lawyer needs to reposition themselves in a way that Artificial Intelligence compliments their work rather than annihilating it. This would involve moving from performing the often repetitive and mundane tasks within the legal profession to areas that are sophisticated and require creativity within the legal profession (Brooks, 2014, 18). Consequently, a lawyer should gradually transition from devoting their time and expertise to poring through multiple documents to gather facts and useful arguments to representing clients more in court and physically interacting with clients to write legal documents on their behalf as well as to advise them on legal transactions. A lawyer should then automate the research component of their time to ensure that they have the necessary facts and arguments to perform legal tasks that are not only highly creative and sophisticated but also ones that cannot be easily automated (Brooks, 2014, 23).

In conclusion, it is evident that Artificial Intelligence will eventually make inroads within the legal profession as it has already made in other sectors. While repetitive and mundane tasks are easy to automate, tasks that are highly sophisticated and ones that require creativity are hard to automate. Consequently, a lawyer who wants to remain economically relevant even in the face of Artificial Intelligence disrupting the legal profession should

transition from performing repetitive and mundane tasks to performing legal tasks that are

highly sophisticated and ones that require creativity.

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