

Technology Continues Changing the Legal Industry



Summary: *The changes in the legal industry over a number of years has placed an emphasis on technology and clients instead of the attorney.*

Lawyers need to have a few more tricks up their sleeves than they used to. Lawyers were able to get away with just needing clients, licensure, and their legal knowledge to be a good lawyer. Really successful lawyers would add in specialized skills and expertise, intellectual and people smarts, and oratorical and writing proficiency to put them in the position of a trusted adviser.

In today's market, attorneys need all of those tools plus more to stand a chance in the industry. Not only do attorneys need to have clients of their own, they have to be able to keep those clients. Law firms were the ones responsible for providing and delivering legal services. Their top attorneys would be part of the team. Law firms began to see a change in this dynamic when Finley Kumble offered signing bonuses and huge contracts for top attorneys. This change developed a new way of viewing and treating rainmaker attorneys.

Around this time, American Lawyer introduced their "AmLaw 200" survey list where they released law firm financial information such as profit-per-partner. The survey pointed out financial differences between law firms. In-house counsel also underwent changes during this time. With the move of BigLaw attorney Ben Heineman to GE, he helped add some prestige to corporate counsel positions.

The next big change that law firms experienced was the type of work they did. Law firms completed all the legal work themselves. However, over time, labor and technology drove a shift into the work law firms did. They realized they did not have to do everything themselves. They were able to rely on technology for an automated delivery of information and data. With a 2016 Deloitte study predicting that around 114,000 legal jobs will be replaced with automated technology over the next 20 years with 31,000 legal jobs having already been replaced, it is not a big surprise that technology is taking a hold of the industry.

The third change was a further shift in how technology worked inside of law firms to enhance efficiency, quality, and cost. Many legal tasks were so repetitive in nature that an automated process could be developed to streamline the task. Law firms realized the future of their firms and the best way to keep costs down was to invest and make technology a bigger part of their everyday work. Unfortunately, there is a lot more that law firms could do to encourage more technological advances and uses in the legal industry.

Legal clients still pay top dollar for legal talent but they know they are getting specialized legal expertise and skills. However, clients are still interested in discounts, caps, and other alternative fee arrangements and with clients ruling the stage, law firms are willing to cater their clients' demand. Technology is the best way for law firms to address this desire. Large law firms have started to take advantage of A.I. legal tools like Ross Intelligence. Small and solo law firms have not been so quick to turn to automated legal technology platforms to meet their clients' demands yet.

How do you think solo and small law firms can take advantage of technology the best needs their clients' needs? Tell us your thoughts in the comments below.

To learn more about A.I. technology, read these articles:

- [Will Artificial Intelligence Replace Lawyers and Paralegals?](#)
- [Why Lawyers and Other Industries Will Become Obsolete: You Should Stop Practicing Law Now and Find Another Profession](#)
- [New Study Concludes Robots Will Not Take Lawyer Jobs Any Time Soon](#)

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