

## Law Firms Seek AI Experts to Meet Growing Client Demands for Efficiency



Law firms are undergoing a significant transformation as they adapt to the growing demand from clients for efficient and cost-effective legal services. To meet these changing needs, law firms are increasingly seeking out experts in artificial intelligence (AI) and related fields such as chatbots, data scientists, and software engineers. This trend has gained momentum over the past six months and shows no signs of slowing down.

Chris Tart-Roberts, the head of the legal technology practice at Macfarlanes, notes that law firms are advertising for AI experts "more than ever before." The competition for lawtech talent has been intense for some time, reflecting the urgency within the legal industry to leverage technology effectively.

The rise of generative AI and machine learning has played a pivotal role in driving the demand for advanced technology in the legal sector. Law firms are assembling teams to explore the possibilities of utilizing generative AI across various practice areas. However, alongside the excitement surrounding this technological revolution, there are also concerns about potential job displacement. A recent study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania highlights the vulnerability of legal services to ChatGPT-style software, raising fears that AI could replace a significant portion of junior lawyers' repetitive tasks.

Generative AI technology possesses immense potential for streamlining time-consuming legal work. Its ability to instantly analyze vast amounts of data, predict successful legal arguments based on past cases, and generate tailored questions for depositions makes it particularly well-suited for the legal field. Acknowledging these advantages, Allen & Overy, one of the UK's top law firms, introduced a chatbot earlier this year to assist lawyers in drafting contracts and client memos. Other firms, like Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, have initiated trials of legal AI "assistants" like Casetext Inc.'s CoCounsel.

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Law firms are making strategic hires and promoting existing staff in response to the growing demand for technology expertise. Travers Smith, based in London, recently promoted a software engineer to the position of AI manager and is actively developing a custom AI model. Similarly, Liverpool-based firm Weightmans hired two junior legal engineers to meet the increasing client demand for tech proficiency. At Macfarlanes, a senior team member is pursuing a master's degree in AI at the University of Cambridge. Allen & Overy plans to expand its team of lawyers and developers by recruiting more data scientists, aiming to enhance their AI-powered software's capabilities in drafting contract clauses and facilitating negotiations.

This shift in the legal landscape is not limited to law firms alone; it is also influencing law school curricula. The University of Liverpool, for example, now offers modules that educate students on how to interact with legal tech tools. Katie Atkinson, the dean of the school of electrical engineering, electronics, and computer science, emphasizes that the integration of technology does not entail a complete replacement of lawyers by data scientists. Instead, it heralds the emergence of new roles within the legal profession.

According to Christina Blacklaws, a legal consultant and chair of Lawtech UK, this shift is primarily driven by client demands for more transparency and cost-effective legal services. Law firms recognize the need to deliver more value to their clients while maintaining efficiency. Consequently, they are investing in AI and other technological solutions to improve their service offerings.

Law firms are proactively adapting to the changing landscape by embracing AI and technology-driven approaches. By leveraging AI experts and deploying innovative tools like chatbots and generative AI, law firms aim to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and meet client demands effectively. This trend is reshaping the legal industry and law school curricula as the sector prepares for the emergence of new roles and opportunities in the intersection of law and technology.

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