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Integrating Technology with Law

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ABSTRACT:

The legal industry has transformed from a closed profession into a global business enterprise over the last five decades. Recent years have seen legal technology, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, drive significant changes. These changes encompass not only how legal work is conducted but also the nature and volume of legal tasks and communication within the legal profession and with clients. Legal technology, often called legal tech, includes technologies and software that have substantially altered the delivery of legal services. It aims to simplify legal practices for attorneys and legal professionals while providing greater access to legal expertise and justice for clients. In India, online court proceedings became common during the pandemic, illustrating the legal sector's adaptability to technology. Legal tech has increased efficiency in legal offices, streamlined clerical work, improved billing transparency, and enhanced communication between lawyers and clients. This article discusses technology's impact on the legal profession and highlights five key areas: automating repetitive tasks, revolutionizing legal research, optimizing resource management, reducing the risk of errors, and enhancing transparency between lawyers and clients. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the importance of assessing needs, researching available solutions, and proper planning when integrating legal technology in law firms. As technology continues to shape the legal industry, embracing these advancements can lead to improved efficiency, better client service, and a more transparent legal landscape.

INTRODUCTION:

In the span of the last fifty years, the industry of law has gone through a fundamental and significant metamorphosis. Which was at one point assumed to be a water-tight profession has now turned out to be a global enterprise market. There are indeed a lot of reasons supporting the shift of unparalleled proportions in the legal market; the one that has made the greatest impact in the last decade or so is none other than legal technology and the perks that come along with it.¹ With the start of the pandemic (COVID- 19) the world has become more reliant on technology. With the change of this immense proportion, it would only be natural to assume that the world of law is changing with it. Here in India, we have seen that court proceedings are being held via online meeting platforms, at least during the period of the pandemic. The influence of technology isn't just limited to the work that gets done in corporate law departments and Legal Firms but also the type and volume of work that is being executed — as well as how legal professionals and lawyers communicate with one another and their clients².

¹ Raoul Mills, 'Three Ways Technology is changing the Business of Law', attorneyatwork, (Sep. 2, 2023, 9:29 AM), <https://www.attorneyatwork.com/technology-and-law/>

² *Id.*, at 868.

Technology has evolved and it has presented opportunities for sharpening our processes, better-serving clients, and rethinking traditional models — which again are all critical elements of propelling the legal field forward³.

Defining Legal Technology: Transforming Legal Services:

But what exactly is legal Technology? “Legal technology (usually called Legal tech) refers to technologies and software that substantially changes the way we use legal services in our daily lives”. In broader terms, it represents the set of technologies that⁴ –

- Eases the practice of law for attorneys and legal professionals, and
- Enables customers to access legal competence or justice”⁵

Technology in the field of law has increased the efficiency of legal offices and the productivity of clerical workers. Plus, with the incoming of legal technology, transparency between clients and legal firms has increased. Clients now have a much clearer picture of the fees that they have to pay and the spending in other areas. They can keep a keen eye on their case and also track the day-to-day progress of the lawyer⁶.

2017 Law Firm Flexibility Benchmarking Survey tells us that 64.7% of legal firms allow their associates to telecommute. This particular setup helps in the remote work of lawyers while specializing and expanding the ways their communication is done with each other and also with clients.⁷

Enhancing Legal Productivity Through Technology:

These tools have enabled lawyers to increase their productivity. Lawyers can now communicate with clients wherever and whenever they feel, that there is a need to do so. In the legal sector, productivity has grown as a result of technology. Law businesses and legal practitioners may boost productivity by streamlining processes, reducing manual activities, and utilizing a variety of digital tools and software solutions.

Five of the most important points will be discussed here in detail. The next topic that will be discussed in the latter part of the blog is on procedure to start incorporating the latest technology in a law firm.

Automating Manual Legal Tasks for Increased Efficiency:

The first and arguably the most significant help technology has given is that traditionally, all the legal in-house tasks were manually performed by the firm professionals. In most cases lawyers interact with non-lawyers and professionals holding other businesses, it is also important for them to invest some time in operating the associated tasks. Of these, **63%** are repetitive to begin with and based on facts.⁸

³ *Id.* at 869.

⁴ Peeyush Singh, ‘What’s the Role of Technology in the Legal Sector’, appinventive, , (Sep. 2, 2023, 9:29 AM), <https://appinventiv.com/blog/technology-in-legal-sector/>

⁵ *Id.* at 869.

⁶ *Id.* at 869.

⁷ dfalliance, <https://dfalliance.com/2022-law-firm-flexibility-benchmarking-survey/>, (last visited Sep. 2, 2023).

⁸ Peeyush Singh, *Supra* Note 04, at 869.

Whereas in recent times legal software like word processors and eDiscovery software, in this case, takes over and performs the work automatically. This doesn't just enhance productivity but also speeds up the operational process, it also gives attorneys ample time to focus on other productive legal and professional work.⁹

Streamlining Legal Research with Digital Solutions:

Secondly, legal professionals have adjusted themselves to the use of legal sites and devices via networks and other such resources for the way they do their research they still haven't lost the habit of print products. This adds a lot of time to the research work. This is where the work of legal research solutions comes in. This helps lawyers keep themselves updated with all the changes in the rules and regulations even when they are currently not working as a professional. Digital solutions have transformed the way legal research is conducted, making it more efficient and accessible. These solutions are-

1. ***Online Databases and Search Engines.***
2. ***Keyword and Boolean Searches.***
3. ***Electronic Briefs and Case Management.***
4. ***AI-Powered Research Tools.***
5. ***Document Annotation and Collaboration.***
6. ***Real-Time Updates and Alerts.***
7. ***Remote Access.***
8. ***Cost and Time Efficiency.***
9. ***Environmental Impact.***

Empowering Senior Attorneys Through Task Automation:

Thirdly in yesteryears, the task of performing odd jobs like managing, storing, processing, and gathering titles, or the senior advocates about their everyday timetable were done by junior attorneys. This was one of the main, if not the main reasons for which they were recruited. This detaches them from the process and also leaves senior attorneys wondering how to use their talent in legal studies in a more appropriate way. Legal tech solutions can help them in this regard.¹⁰

The calendaring applications and legal title management perform all the work related to titles. It gives them an easy and swift overview of all the tasks they have to perform on a particular day. This makes it easier for senior attorneys to use the resources (here, junior attorneys) in a better and much more efficient way, which at the end of the day leads to better outcomes.¹¹

Enhancing Accuracy and Decision-Making with Legal Tech:

⁹ Peeyush Singh, Supra Note 04, at 870.

¹⁰ Mohd Aqib Aslam, Senior Advocates Section 16 Advocate Act, 1961, legalserviceindia, (Sep. 02, 2023, 9:29 AM), <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-2090-senior-advocates-section-16-advocate-act-1961.html>

¹¹ Peeyush Singh, Supra Note 04, at 870.

Fourthly, an important function of tech in the legal field is that it reduces the risk of mistakes that might be possible because of misinterpretation or overlooking of any fact or figure, eventually bringing drastic changes in their judgments^{12,13}

The technological remedies in this case make it easy to access all the details. Also, it adds the provision to use the raw power of analytics in the processing, which makes it an easy task for practitioners of the legal profession to look at any fact/evidence from various angles and utilize it in a better and much more effective manner¹⁴.

Fostering Transparency in Legal Practice Through Technology:

The fifth boon that technology gave to the world of Law was “Transparency”. A lot of lawyers even to this day, showcase the issues that the client faces in a much more complicated way than it is to earn extra profits. They purposefully refrain from disclosing that the problems they are facing are easy to solve.¹⁵ Plus, legal practice is also connected to online sources, which further makes the client doubt every lawyer they connect to.

This situation was made better with the help of the best “legal practice management solutions” and other such technological offers. These technical remedies have produced a marketplace where clients have run into the profiles of the most efficient “legal professionals” in the legal industry.¹⁶ The clients can connect with various other attorneys and remain in touch with them in real-time, and also get acquainted with the basic requirements of law.¹⁷ The incoming of technology in law also helps in the Introduction of new legal products/services, higher convenience, enhanced customer experience, faster information processing, and even more collaboration among lawyers, just to name a few.

Implementing Legal Technology: Key Steps for Success:

As to the second part of the blog, not just discussing solutions but their implementation is also a necessary part of it. One may easily feel overwhelmed when looking at legal solutions. However, it will be much easier once these fundamental steps are followed

The use of legal technology is a transformational process that may improve the efficacy and efficiency of legal departments and law firms. However, meticulous preparation and execution are necessary for a successful adoption. Some of these are -

- **Assessing one's needs:** Making sure of the technology that fits one's firm's situation. We have to ask ourselves: What work is done in a law firm and how is it done? What is the reason behind a lawyer's unnecessary stress? Is there a different way to do something and what is it? What is one's chief priority?

¹² Prof Maxi Scherer, “Artificial Intelligence and Legal Decision-Making: The Wide Open? Study on the Example of International Arbitration, p.10, 2-32, 2019, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3392669,

¹³ Peeyush Singh, What's the Role of Technology in the Legal Sector?, (Sep. 2, 2023, 9:29 AM), <https://appinventiv.com/blog/technology-in-legal-sector/>

¹⁴ *Id.* at 871.

¹⁵

nludelhi,

<http://www.nludelhi.ac.in/download/publication/2015/Access%20to%20Legal%20Informationa%20and%20Research%20in%20Digital%20Age.pdf>, (last visited Sep. 02, 2023).

¹⁶ quora, <https://www.quora.com/What-softwares-do-Indian-lawyers-and-law-firms-typically-use>, (last visited Sep. 2, 2023).

¹⁷ Peeyush Singh, *Supra* Note 04, at 871.

- **Researching legal tech solutions:** There's an immense amount of legal technology options. We have to scrutinize what technology is available in the market and get the opinion of your network on what they use. Talking to the people who know can provide better insight rather than just getting product demonstrations.¹⁸
- **Planning before installation:** Investing in a new legal tech and investing is a big project. One may need external help to get the firm set up, run, and maintain the new solution. Hiring someone who can properly implement it and teach the firm how to use it is an important task.

Plus, the latest technology demands technical and administrative work to set up and get it running. Ensure the employees can adapt to the new product by communicating what the latest technology is. Also explore the new processes or changes, and the advantages that come with the solution¹⁹

CONCLUSION:

If these points are taken into consideration it will help guide a firm or an attorney towards the perfect solutions. It will also help the new legal technology to be implemented in a much smoother manner.²⁰ As these solutions tend to get expensive, one has to make sure that they efficiently prepare and execute the transition to a new world of law. As hinted earlier the legal industry is driven by technology more so now than ever before. These new technological solutions can help one to get things done easier, to serve clients more efficiently, to use junior attorneys more efficiently, etc. For clients, it will help to understand the process of law better and catch the foul play of the attorneys to unnecessarily complicate the cases. The legal sector is going through a significant shift, which is partly due to technological improvements. Today's legal professionals are utilizing digital technologies to improve their practices in a variety of ways, which eventually results in more effectiveness, better client care, and more openness in the legal system. As technology continues to evolve, its impact on the legal landscape is poised to grow, further enhancing the practice of law and access to justice for all.

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¹⁸ Peeyush Singh, Supra Note 04, at 872.

¹⁹ 'Technology in Law is the New Norm', Thomson Reuters', (Sep. 2, 2023, 9:29 AM), <https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/technology-in-law-is-the-new-norm/>

²⁰ Peeyush Singh, Supra Note 04, at 872.