



LEGAL UPDATE

The Future of Law & Technology

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Embracing the synergy of law and technology: The future of legal practice.

The rapid expansion of technology and AI-powered tools is transforming various industries worldwide, leading to a pivotal question within the legal services sector: Will the rise of artificial intelligence, automation, and digitisation make the traditional legal system and the role of legal practitioners obsolete?

While it is evident that artificial intelligence will undoubtedly permeate the legal system and streamline manual processes like discovery and due diligence investigations, rendering the role of legal practitioners obsolete is not a foreseeable outcome, at least not in the near future. The integration of AI-powered tools in document review and legal document preparation does not diminish the importance of legal practitioners' critical thinking and expertise in evaluating the recommendations generated by AI.

Admittedly, the concept of smart contracts in blockchain technology may appear to eliminate the need for legal practitioners as intermediaries in transactions. These self-executing agreements take effect when specific conditions are met, ensuring speed, efficiency, and accuracy. However, it's essential to recognize that code is deterministic, meaning a particular input will always produce the same output. This rigidity fails to address the nuanced legal concepts that cannot be easily translated into code. Nevertheless, smart contracts remain valuable for simpler, easily executable agreements.

The emergence of COVID-19 has accelerated the digitisation of legal processes and the adoption of virtual hearings. For instance, the Gauteng High Courts have implemented the CourtOnline system to facilitate the administration of legal proceedings.

As technology and artificial intelligence continue to advance across various industries, certain aspects of legal practice may become automated, enabling legal practitioners to focus more on strategic matters and legal complexities. Law practices will inevitably face pressure to embrace technology and innovation to stay ahead of the curve.

The future of law and technology is one of collaboration rather than replacement. Legal practitioners stand to benefit from leveraging AI-powered tools to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness, ultimately enabling them to provide even greater

value to their clients. By embracing this synergy, law firms can navigate the changing landscape and emerge as trailblazers in the legal profession's evolution.

