

Lawyers in 2030: How will AI reshape the nature of the profession? Behold the rise of the superhuman litigator, says Alexi's Mark Doble

By Mallory Hendry 22 Oct 2024 Lawyer Mag

There's no doubt a lawyer's role will undergo significant change over the next decade or so, in large part due to the increased use of artificial intelligence. While the trend can be traced back over the past five, ten, fifteen years — and we've well surpassed the Turing Test debate over whether machines can think — we've recently reached a significant threshold.

"It's fair and appropriate to level set and say that legal tech has just begun," Doble, legal tech firm Alexi's co-founder and CEO, says. "The effect of what we've had up to now was negligible compared to the impact that this generation of technology, specifically AI, is going to have on the legal services industry."

And the future doesn't bode well for lawyers who are unwilling to take this revolution seriously. They face an uphill battle growing their business, competing in the market, and providing the quality of service society demands of legal professionals in the age of AI.

Thankfully, these reluctant few are far outnumbered by those who recognize the value of this rapidly advancing technology and are eager to see what it can do. Because it's not slowing down, its capabilities will continue to improve, and while that may impact a lawyer's day-to-day job dramatically, "we believe strongly there is and always will be a critical need for human lawyers to be involved in the delivery of legal services," Doble says.

"And it's those who embrace the change now that will be leading the industry in 2030 and beyond — that's abundantly clear."

When taking the step to introduce an AI solution into their workflow, Doble advises to approach it the same way that senior lawyers would a new student or junior associate coming aboard the firm: develop a relationship with the technology. It can be tailored to operate within the boundaries of what works for a lawyer's existing style of working and practice overall, enhancing their capabilities, not replacing them.

Lifting the lower-value and repetitive work off their plates, over time Doble predicts lawyers will become like strategic advisors to clients. More directly involved with client management and using their specialized knowledge to leverage the technology appropriately, they'll provide very specific, relationship-oriented advice to help clients achieve their objective, whether it's completing a transaction or resolving a dispute.

The technology will also make its mark on the billable hour model. If the efficiencies wrought by AI are table stakes, charging based on the time it takes to act in the best interest of the client rather than restricting upfront how long the lawyer must complete it makes sense.

"Let's see the dynamic with AI — maybe it's significantly better for the clients to not have a fixed rate. As long as there's a competitive, dynamic marketplace for legal services, the billable hour is not the culprit. The highest quality service with the lowest rate will win."

Whatever else happens in the age of AI, it will ultimately highlight the inherent differences between technology and humanity. In the nearer term, Doble points to existential concerns about the technology — such as the fact that there's no guarantee AI is always acting in the best interest of humans — that should be taken seriously.

Until there can be confidence that AI is aligned with us as it operates in the world and in various industries, the human element will remain indispensable especially when it comes to protecting fellow humans' rights. At Alexi, the team believes in the critical role of the human lawyer, and they're building tools to support them.

"Our products are specifically designed to allow our customers to be superhuman litigators who provide incredible service that wouldn't be impossible without our powerful AI technology," he says, adding that AI is in no way a threat to a lawyer's role or in any way restricting them — in fact, it's the opposite.

"It gives you superpowers, it really does. So don't go into this next chapter skeptical and reluctant, because you won't find all the ways these tools can benefit you and your clients. Go into it curious, open minded, and optimistic and you'll undoubtedly find ways to transform your practice."