

Four Practical Benefits of AI in Corporate Legal Operations

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There are a number of manual operational tasks corporate legal departments need to perform each day. Let's say someone on your team needs to create a contract. They refer to a template, pull clauses from other agreements, dot all the I's and cross all the T's. Sounds simple, but it is a time-consuming affair that eats up hours that they could otherwise spend working on more profitable tasks.

Now, imagine another way: The contract is automatically generated by an intelligent machine. The machine works with standard terms and is told what the agreement needs to include. And then, after the machine creates it from pre-approved language, an attorney reviews and finalizes, saving countless hours and delivering value to the client faster.

This is just one of many examples of how artificial intelligence (AI) [can and will transform corporate legal departments](#). And yet, many attorneys misunderstand AI, assuming it's something for sci-fi shows or a technology that is coming to take their jobs.

With that in mind, let's outline a few basics – four things everyone should know about AI and its impact on CLDs, now and in the future.

1. AI is not new.

Fifteen years ago, AI was for big, hairy, audacious projects, or, as I like to call them, moon shots. Now, though, AI is everywhere, including legal operations. Walking around the [CLOC 2018 Institute](#), you couldn't swing a cat without hitting a vendor leveraging it or a presenter talking about it.

The technology that's under the hood of AI is not new, but its current level of accessibility is unprecedented. For example, I can download open source software from Google called TensorFlow and access a huge palette of machine learning algorithms. I can run those algorithms against my data without having to understand any of the math that makes them tick. I just need to know which ones to use. I can even leverage machine learning as a service, choosing from a number of highly prominent technology providers. It's never been easier to incorporate AI into your important business processes than it is today, and this new era of accessibility for AI brings with it opportunities.

As a result, AI doesn't have to mean a trip to the moon anymore. It can mean a trip to the grocery store.

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2. You might already be using it (but you could still use it more).

Don't believe that AI has been around for a while? You may be using it without even realizing it. Legal professionals have been using e-Discovery technology and machine learning-based predictive coding for years – a practice that is sure to continue and grow.

Certainly, this new era of AI accessibility has spurred an emerging suite of solutions that look to automate the business and practice of law. Contract management, to return to our initial example, is ripe for technological assistance. In addition to creating contracts, AI can manage the overall workflow of requests, handle risk reviews and internal approvals, and more. AI can also enhance e-Billing practices through automated monitoring of potential guideline violations and bill discrepancies, replacing a time-consuming process that has traditionally fallen to members of the corporate legal team. Machine learning can help legal departments compare how invoices are being reviewed and approved based on corporate legal guidelines. Or, it can automate the process of taking content from a plain old PDF and getting it into the right structured format that can be used for an e-Billing system.

So, while you might already be using AI, you likely could, and probably should, be using it more.

3. It doesn't have to be perfect.

Understanding how AI can be applied is only the first step, though. Implementing it is another ballgame.

The best tactic is to avoid striving for the perfect solution to all your challenges. If that is a prerequisite, you'll never do anything. Instead, start with your most significant issues. Identify the ones you want to solve. Then, create a portfolio of initial targeted AI efforts. Mix some grocery store trips – low risk, executable tasks that can be automated with incremental value – with some moon shots – more experimental endeavors with longer time horizons and higher risks but game-changing payoffs.

Once you have a spectrum of problems outlined, find some support. You may need to focus on data cleanup prior to implementing AI; your solution provider should be able to help with that. On top of that, make sure you have the operations staff in place to manage, define and measure the automation process.



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4. It's about helping humans, not replacing them.

When Google Assistant smoothly made a highly publicized [hairstresser appointment](#) recently, many people complained the technology was unsettling because it sounded too human. You might hear similar rumblings as you implement AI within your legal operations. There is an underlying fear that people are going to lose their jobs to robots. But, AI in practice is really more like Steve Austin in *The Six Million Dollar Man* than Dolores in *Westworld*; it's man **and** machine, not man vs. machine. The goal is to make processes more efficient and improve output.

Even with an example like contract creation, an attorney is still supervising the process and making adjustments as needed. The goal is for AI to provide streamlined information to lawyers and legal operations professionals – information that helps people do their jobs more efficiently. This allows for improved productivity for both legal and legal ops staff, which also drives significant time and resource savings.

But the real benefit of AI is not just in output and cost savings. It is in its value. As legal departments are expected to become value centers in the organization, simplifying routine tasks enables highly skilled legal professionals and legal operations experts to spend far more of their time focused on delivering the results on which they are actually being measured.

About the Author

Matt Kivlin leads the Product Management team responsible for identifying, prioritizing and validating offerings in Wolters Kluwer's ELM Solutions' core markets. In this role, he oversees the product portfolios for corporate legal departments and insurance claims defense organizations.

With a strong history of incubating and launching successful new products, he has a proven track record for product strategy, new solutions definition, cross-functional alignment, and exceeding customer expectations. He can be reached at matt.kivlin@wolterskluwer.com.