

How to get started with AI: get a paid version then roll up your sleeves and jump in

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

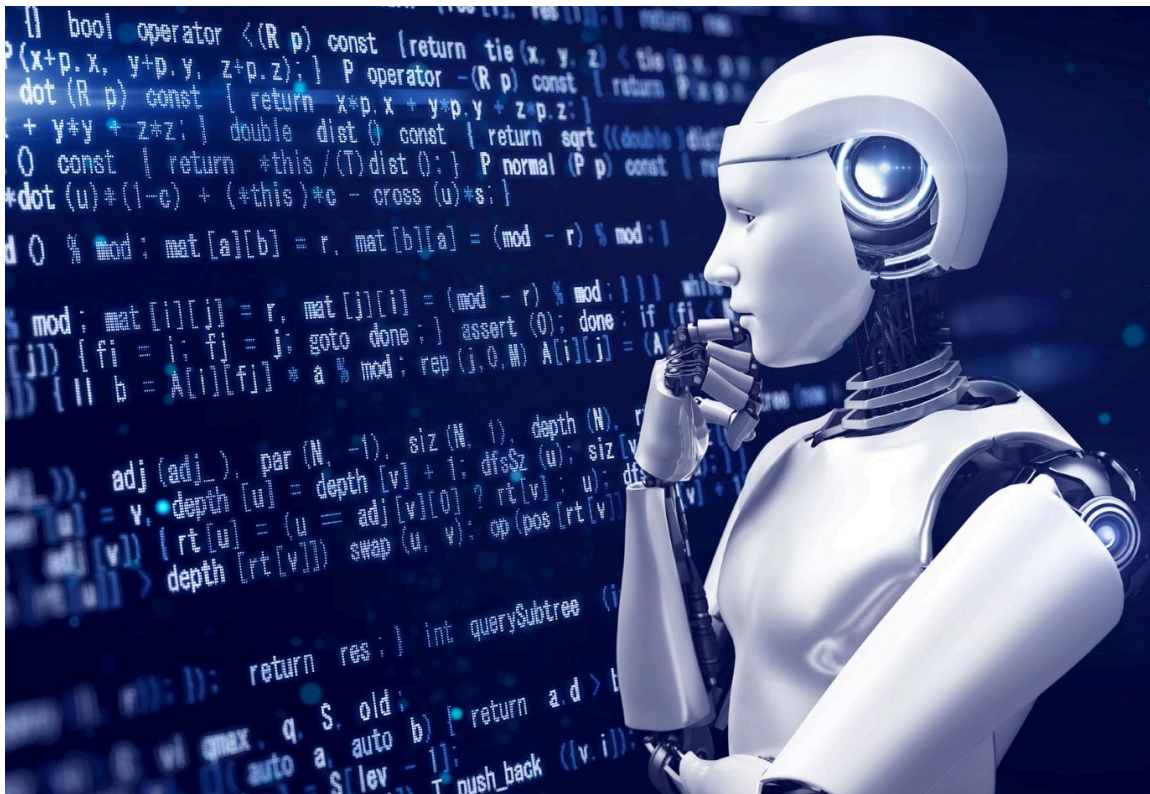
NEWS



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Neil Sands



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Chantal McNaught

Artificial Intelligence (AI) experts have highlighted the tension lawyers face between adopting the era-defining technology and the obligation to protect sensitive data uploaded to AI servers.

The dilemma was discussed at TLANZ's *Burning Issues* conference last week, when Chantal McNaught from the TLANZ Technology & Law Committee hosted a panel on generative AI at work.

McNaught described AI as “amazing, astounding, terrifying technology” that raises important questions of accuracy and accountability for the legal profession.

“It’s increasingly being used within the legal profession context for drafting, for research, for document review and even legal strategy,” she said. “But important questions obviously remain.”

Jin Park, a staff barrister at Auckland-based firm Catherine Stewart Employment Law, emphasised that AI is here to stay, likening it to utilities such as electricity, water and gas. “It’s not a gimmick, it’s not a fad, it’s not a trend that’s going to disappear... the common saying at the moment concerning generative AI is that ‘no, generative AI is probably not going to

replace your job, but someone who can use generative AI probably will," he said.

'Have a play'



Jin Park

Park said efficiency gains from AI could be a game-changer for law firms, particularly those working on fixed-term arrangements, and reduce clients' bills.

He cited his own experience recently using AI to analyse and produce a spreadsheet on 18 months' worth of payroll records. AI completed the task, which would have taken hours manually, in just three minutes.

"My burning issue is acceptance of AI and developing literacy towards it, because it's not going to leave... [we need to] jump on it to ensure that everybody knows how to make use of something, rather than incurring unnecessary billing that could potentially damage client relationships and access to justice."



Josh McBride

Josh McBride, a barrister at Richmond Chambers, also urged lawyers to familiarise themselves with using AI, saying there was too much misinformation from so-called experts on platforms such as LinkedIn that were deterring lawyers from using the technology.

"It's very confusing, because you're sitting there being told by specialists 'whatever you do, don't put anything into ChatGPT, or you'll be struck off next week'... My take for all of you is roll up your sleeves, get a paid version (of AI) and start playing around with it... Let's get out of having these high-level discussions about how it might work at a policy level and actually start using some tech and having a play with it."

'Tick the button'

McBride recommended starting on the major general AI products – also known as Large Language Models (LLMs) – such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini or Grok, before using specialist legal ones.

However, he said users should be careful to check terms and conditions in order to select options that maximised the security and confidentiality of any data uploaded.

“With some of the LLM models, you would say their motivation is getting as much data as they can off you and training off it. So you have to opt out if you don’t want them to do that. You have to tick the button, otherwise they’ll grab it and start training off it.”



Edwin Lim

Edwin Lim, a partner at Hudson Gavin Martin, said it could be difficult to keep up with the terms and conditions imposed by AI providers because they were constantly changing.

He also questioned predictions that AI use will result in massive savings, pointing out that subscription costs for specialist AI models were expensive and needed to be included in a practice’s budget.

Park said it was important that clients were notified and approved AI usage on their cases, both for transparency and in case there was a data breach.

“You have to be proactive and minimise risk in case there is a breach at some stage... Embed those clauses that could essentially just say ‘we may, during the course of the services that we provide, use generative AI to review your documents’, and explain what steps we’ve taken as a practice to ensure that their data remains safe. That’s due diligence... and I think that’s really required our letters of engagement.”

Lim did not believe AI would replace lawyers, but he said it could mean fewer lawyers, and it also raised questions about how young lawyers are trained.

“I don’t think it will take over the role,” he said. “It will give us more accurate answers, so that we can work on the more strategic, more nuanced stuff.”

