

The generative AI revolution: is this the biggest technological game-changer for lawyers since 'CTRL F'?

The [HSBC UK Law Firm Strategy and Investment Survey 2022](#) found UK law firms considered “peer firms with more tech-driven business models” to be the greatest potential force for disruption in terms of driving competition in the market. This reflects the ever-growing pressure on law firms to invest in technology and recently all attention has turned to generative AI technologies, such as ChatGPT.



What's the potential of generative AI in the legal sector?

Magic Circle law firm, Allen & Overy (A&O), announced in February they had partnered with AI start-up, Harvey, to launch their unprecedented legal AI platform, which assists with contract analysis, due diligence, litigation, and regulatory compliance. Harvey can also help generate insights, recommendations and predictions based on data.

The time and cost saving potential of such a technology would be music to the ears of any lawyer. David Wakeling, Head of A&O's markets innovation group, described Harvey as a “game-changer that can unleash the power of generative AI to transform the legal industry” ([The Law Society Gazette](#)).

PwC also praised the technology after announcing their strategic alliance with Harvey in March to provide their Legal Business Solutions professionals with the software. Sandeep Agrawal, PwC's Global Leader for Legal Technology, said “integrating Harvey into our day-to-day activities will free-up much needed time and resources allowing our people to focus more on innovation and value accretive tasks” ([PwC](#)).

What investments in technology is your law firm making to enhance the productivity of its lawyers?

Closing thoughts

Time will surely tell what the true potential of this technology is and whether it will be the next biggest game-changer for lawyers. Meanwhile, it's paramount decision makers consider all factors before making investments in novel technologies such as generative AI.

AI – the answer to all your law firm's problems?

Over the past two years, talent attraction and retention continues to be cited by law firm leaders as their greatest concern. This drove significant wage inflation throughout 2022 and into 2023, prompting many firms to evolve their culture through greater focus on ESG, wellbeing, office space usage and hybrid working as creative ways to combat the war on talent ([PwC Law Firm Survey 2022](#)).

The [Lawyer](#) examined associate moves (two-to-six year PQE) made in the three years to January 2023 across the Top 20 firms (excluding Magic Circle). The data showed the highest number of associate moves away from BigLaw, were neither to US firms or to other law firms at all, but to in-house positions. This speaks to a shift in attitude amongst the next generation of lawyers who value work-life balance above salary, more so than the generation before them.

But what if you could have both? With technologies like Harvey reducing the time it takes to complete a variety of tasks, lawyers could see the pressure of their jobs ease, which in turn could improve job satisfaction and ultimately talent attraction and retention within the firm.

What initiatives does your law firm implement to improve job satisfaction?

Too good to be true?

There's a lot of discussion around Harvey and the potential of other generative AI technologies to revolutionise the legal sector.

However, the technology is still novel and so caution should be exercised. According to a recent [Thomson Reuters report](#), 82% of lawyers believe generative AI can be applied to legal work, but only 51% think it should be at this stage.

A&O have stressed lawyers will still be required to review the output of the AI tool and be wary of the possibility of ‘hallucinations’ whereby the programme can produce inaccurate or misleading results ([Financial Times](#)). There are questions around the ethics of relying on a new technology in a profession, where accuracy is of utmost importance.

Additionally, cyber risk continues to increase within the sector with the top 10 UK law firms increasing spend on cyber security by 56% in 2022 ([PwC Law Firm Survey 2022](#)). The integration of AI software requires access to large amounts of sensitive data which presents challenges around data protection and minimising cyber risk.



Victoria Ritchie

Head of Professional & Business Services, HSBC UK

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