



Next gen lawyers in the AI era

As Artificial intelligence reshapes legal work, experts tell *MAG* why the legal profession must rethink how young lawyers are trained: not to use tools faster, but to preserve judgement, responsibility and trust

by claudia la via

Artificial intelligence has already entered the daily mechanics of legal work. It can accelerate research, drafting, document review, summaries, contract analysis and knowledge management - the same tasks that have long shaped the learning curve of junior lawyers.

The question is not whether young lawyers will use AI. They will. The issue is how they can use it consciously and responsibly, without outsourcing legal reasoning, judgement, independence and the ability to advise under uncertainty. MAG looked at how the training of the next generation of lawyers is evolving within the Swiss legal ecosystem. The answer emerging from law firms, academies and legal tech initiatives is not less training, but broader and more deliberate training.

THE REAL GAP IS JUDGEMENT

For **Fatih Şahin**, partner and AI leader, Tax & Legal services at PwC Switzerland, the main skills gap is not simply technical. «The real gap is judgement: knowing when an output is reliable, where professional responsibility still sits, and what AI might miss», he says. This is also the logic behind PwC Switzerland's Legal AI Academy. «We don't teach lawyers how to use only AI - we teach them how to remain lawyers when working with it: through competence, confidentiality, supervision, and sound professional judgment», Şahin says. Prompting matters, but it cannot be the whole answer. Lawyers must decide whether AI is appro-



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prate for a task, operate within governance and confidentiality boundaries, and assess the output with the same rigour they would apply to any legal work they sign. As Şahin puts it: «If a lawyer cannot explain why they trust an output, they should not rely on it».

PROMPTING IS LEGAL METHODOLOGY

Karin Mülchi, specialist in AI and legal tech, founder of Bridge Legal group and program director and lecturer of the CAS AI law & legal tech at ZHAW, also warns against reducing AI competence to tool operation. «From my perspective, the skills that matter have very little to do with knowing which button to press», she says. For Mülchi, lawyers must learn to question AI output as they would question a junior associate's memo or an opposing expert's report: where does the information come from, what is missing, and what may be wrong despite sounding confident. The same applies to prompting, which she describes not as a technical trick, but as a form of legal methodology.

«Good prompting is not a trick. It is the ability to break a legal problem into its components, articulate the relevant facts, identify the applicable framework, and define what a useful answer actually looks like», she says. In this sense, «AI simply makes the gap visible».

David Rosenthal, partner at Vischer, pushes the point further. In his view, the idea that lawyers should merely assess AI output after it has been generated is too limited. «The concept of critically assessing AI output is wrong - we lawyers must control the generation of such output from the beginning, and this requires far more than just drafting the right prompt», he says. His position shifts the discussion from ex-post review to process design: lawyers need to understand how an AI answer is generated, which resources it draws on and whether AI use makes sense for that matter.

For Rosenthal, this also means that training cannot be separated from experimentation. Law firms are not only learning how to use AI. They are learning how to redesign parts of their own business and client service models.

«This is not just about training», he says. In his view, firms need to learn by doing, testing what



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works and what does not, and identifying the areas where AI actually makes business sense. The aim is not to use AI everywhere, but to understand where it can genuinely improve legal work and where it cannot.

RESPONSIBLE ADOPTION

Daniel Brugger, senior legal AI advisor at Lenz & Staehelin, also frames responsible adoption as something broader than tool selection. «Selecting compliant tools is only the first step. The harder

work follows», he says.

For a leading law firm, this means rethinking workflows, modernising knowledge and data management, and building new AI-driven services and products while preserving the lawyer's ultimate responsibility. At Lenz & Staehelin for example, he explains, training includes mandatory onboarding for new joiners, recurring AI talks and working sessions differentiated by seniority and practice group.

The point is clear: AI adoption is not only a technology project. It is also an organisational and educational one. «Tools alone do not transform a law firm. People do», Brugger says.

AI literacy should become part of the standard professional training of every young lawyer, but it does not replace legal expertise. «Substantive legal expertise remains the foundation», he says. What changes is the competence profile: the focus increasingly moves from producing legal work products from scratch towards verifying, refining and curating AI-generated output. Yet «judgement, professional ethos and interpersonal skill remain distinctly human - and become the real differentiator».

KNOWLEDGE AS A COMPETITIVE ASSET

If AI tools become widely available, the difference between law firms will not lie only in access to technology. It will lie in the quality of the knowledge on which that technology can work. This is the point made by **Camillo Devecchi**, counsel at MLL. «AI makes knowledge management more important than it has ever been», he says.

«What creates the real difference in quality is not the tool, but the underlying resources», Devecchi adds. «The competitive edge lies in curated knowledge, not in the software licence».

Past matters, templates, practice notes, precedents and accumulated experience become strategic assets. This also changes training. Internal education can no longer be purely legal. It must teach lawyers how to solve a matter efficiently by combining human input, AI, legal resources and professional judgement.

THE APPRENTICESHIP PARADOX

The most delicate issue is the development of junior lawyers. AI can produce first drafts, research

notes and summaries with impressive speed. But those are exactly the tasks through which generations of lawyers learned to read, structure, compare, draft, revise and build legal instinct. For Mülchi, this is the hardest training challenge facing law firms and legal departments. Understanding technology, managing governance and critically assessing outputs are real issues, but preserving the development of legal judgement is more difficult.

«If I had to choose one, it is preserving the de-



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velopment of legal judgement among younger lawyers», she says. The problem is structural: «Legal judgement has traditionally been built through repetition of exactly the kind of work that AI now performs in seconds». This creates a paradox. The same tools that make junior work more efficient may weaken the apprenticeship model that produces the senior lawyers of the future. The solution is not to keep young lawyers away from AI, but to redesign their exposure to substantive work: more comparison between human and AI outputs, more evaluation, more reasoning, more situations in which they must defend a legal position and explain why an answer is wrong or incomplete. In Mülchi's words: «That is not a technology challenge. It is a didactic one».

Devecchi reaches a similar conclusion from the law firm perspective. «AI offers no shortcut for building experience. That is the central point, and everything else follows from it», he says. The risk, Devecchi argues, is that junior lawyers may rely too heavily on polished AI-generated output without engaging deeply with the substance. That may produce acceptable work in the short term, but it will not build the instinct and depth of understanding that distinguish a strong lawyer five or ten years later.

TRAINING AS A PERMANENT DISCIPLINE

The training of the next generation will have to operate on several levels: legal methodology before practice, structured programmes on governance and confidentiality after entry into the profession, and supervised experimentation on the job. But formal training will not be sufficient. The most important learning will still happen through real matters, if deliberately designed: structured debriefings, comparison between AI-generated drafts and human reasoning, and a culture in which junior lawyers are expected not only to deliver an answer, but to explain the process behind it.

AI will not make legal training less important. It will make it broader, more intentional and more demanding. The goal is not to train lawyers to become technologists, but to ensure that they remain lawyers in an AI-enabled profession. ■

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