



TECHNOLOGY

Legal Services Innovator Axiom Unveils Its First AI Offering

Artificial intelligence today is like the internet in the late 1990s.

By ROBERT AMBROGI

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Since its founding in 2000 as an alternative provider of legal services to large corporations, [Axiom](#) has grown to have more than 1,500 lawyers and 2,000 employees across three continents, serving half the Fortune 100. With a reputation for innovation, it describes itself as a provider of “tech-enabled” legal services.

Given that description, it would seem inevitable that Axiom would bring artificial intelligence into the mix of the services it offers. Now it has. This week, it announced the launch of [AxiomAI](#), a program that aims to leverage AI to improve the efficiency and quality of Axiom’s contract work.

AxiomAI has two components, Paul Carr, senior executive overseeing Axiom’s AI efforts, told me during an interview Friday. One is research, development and testing of AI tools for legal services. The other is deploying AI tools within Axiom’s standard workflows as testing proves them ready.

The first such deployment will come later this month, as Axiom embeds [Kira Systems](#)’

automates the process of identifying key provisions such as change of control and assignment.

“In the context of M&As, the AI will be invisible to our clients,” Carr said. “They know they have to understand the risks that may be in those agreements. They need someone to sort that out – which agreements apply, what’s in them – in a very accurate way. And they need actionable recommendations, very specific recommendations. That’s what we deliver today, but we’ll deliver it better and faster using AI behind the scenes.”

Beyond this immediate deployment, AxiomAI will encompass a program of ongoing research and testing of AI’s applicability to the delivery of legal services. In fact, it turns out that Axiom has quietly been performing this research for four years, including partnering with leading experts and vendors in the field of machine learning.

“We’ve been watching this space for a while,” Carr said. “We’ve been testing really actively, running proofs of concept, of various AI tools over the last four years. At a fundamental level, we do believe that for a lot of legal work, AI will have really important applications and will change legal workflows into the future.”

The focus of Axiom’s AI research is, as Carr put it, “all things contracting,” from creating single contracts to applying analytics to collections of contracts. And the type of AI on which it is focused is machine learning. “We think the area that is most interesting is machine learning and, specifically, the whole area of deep learning within machine learning.”

In the case of Kira, Axiom’s testing had demonstrated that the product was ready for deployment. “We felt that the maturity of the technology – which is really code for the ability of the technology to perform at a level that makes economic sense – was such that it makes sense to move it, in a sense, from the lab to production, in a business-as-usual context.”

Going forward, Axiom plans to keep testing other AI tools in partnership with leading practitioners in the field. A key benefit Axiom brings to the equation is an enormous collection of contractual data that can be used to train the AI technology.

have a very powerful data set that we plan to use to train AI technology. What we will certainly do is train and improve that technology with our training data.”

The training that is performed using Axiom's data will remain proprietary, and Carr believes that will add greater value for Axiom's customers in the use of these AI tools.

The roadmap for Axiom's research has two tracks, Carr said. One is to explore how to go deeper and further into the M&A offering it's launching this month, in order to train AI tools to do even more of the work. The second is to consider the other use cases to focus on next.

One use case under consideration involves regulatory remediation for banks. Another would assist pharmaceutical companies in the negotiation and execution of clinical trial agreements.

Carr came to Axiom in 2008 from American Express, where he had run its International Insurance Services division and was its global head of strategy. He started his career working on systems integration design. He believes that technological *integration* takes much longer to achieve than technological *innovation*.

"You need to put in place the surrounding capabilities that allow you to take advantage of that technology and, not immaterially, you need to go through the process of change management and behavioral change," he said. "In the legal industry, that's a big deal. There's a lot that has to happen for technical innovations to be consumed."

Driving that adoption curve is the heart of Axiom's business, Carr suggests. The best way to do that, the company believes, is to combine people, process and technology in ways that allow the value of the technology to be realized. That is what Axiom now plans to do for AI.

"AI today is like the internet in the late '90s," Carr said. "I have no doubt that in a couple of decades, AI will be embedded in everything that impacts corporate America. But how it unfolds and takes shape is the stage we're in now."



Robert Ambrogi is a Massachusetts lawyer and journalist who has been covering legal technology and the web for more than 20 years, primarily through his blog [LawSites.com](#). Former editor-in-chief of several legal newspapers, he is a fellow of the [College of Law Practice Management](#) and an inaugural [Fastcase 50](#) honoree. He can be reached by email at ambrogi@gmail.com, and you can follow him on [Twitter](#) (@BobAmbrogi).

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