

[Home](#) > [Publications](#) > [YourABA](#) > [2017](#) > [September 2017](#) > [7 Ways artificial intelligence can benefit your law firm](#)

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## 7 Ways artificial intelligence can benefit your law firm

September 2017 | Technology Translators

by Avaneesh Marwaha

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Have you heard the buzz? Artificial intelligence is taking the legal world by storm—and lawyers are embracing the change, despite their traditional resistance to technology.

In today's world, data is growing explosively. While that massive store of data contains correspondingly voluminous and useful information—especially for the practice of law—it also takes massive time to analyze. And then there's the monotony, boredom and frustration felt by humans who are trying to plow through a Sisyphean task, and the ever-increasing need for speed in response to client, court and regulatory agency demands. Together, these challenges add up to a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to maintaining a smart, functional legal practice—at least for mere mortals who occasionally have to stop to eat and sleep.

Thankfully, computers are evolving just as quickly as the data boom, and they're here to save us from ourselves. Artificial intelligence, or AI, refers to computer software and systems that don't just do tasks they've been programmed for in advance—they actually *learn* as they go, improving their performance through feedback. These programs can quickly learn to complete data-intensive tasks that were previously relegated to bored and weary humans. By recognizing patterns in the relationships between words or data points, computers learn how to identify relevant information, recognize mistakes and spot inconsistencies—all faster, and usually better, than humans do.

What does all this mean for lawyers? The primary areas where AI is being applied in the law, so far, include the following broad categories:

- review of documents for discoverable or otherwise relevant information, generally referred to as technology-assisted review (TAR).
- legal research through automated searches of a universe of case law and statutes.

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- contract and legal document analysis.
- proofreading, error correction and document organization.

How can your law firm benefit from these AI applications? In this article, we'll discuss the seven top benefits of applying AI solutions in law firms. As you'll see, these benefits are all interrelated. It's easy to recognize how saving time can save money—but spending less time on mundane tasks can also save lawyers' creative energy and reduce their stress. Together, more creativity and less stress make lawyers more productive, letting them complete work faster, which in turn saves time—and the entire process starts over.

When analyzing how AI can benefit your law firm and your legal practice, be sure you're thinking holistically and identifying all of the potential benefits. (You may find some benefits, unique to your practice area or your firm, that we didn't call out in this article.)

**AI saves time.** The biggest, most obvious benefit to AI applications is time savings. Computer systems can analyze more information, more thoroughly than humans can, in a tiny fraction of the time. For example, one of our users reported that she spent an hour proofing a document and then ran the original through AI software as a test. In less than a minute, it found and fixed all the errors she had painstakingly identified. This benefit applies to all types of AI applications. Computers can quickly:

- search through and identify discoverable or potentially relevant data of all forms and file types
- conduct legal research that would take a skilled attorney days to complete
- analyze contracts and other documents for errors, missing information and inconsistent language.

Obviously, those time savings can translate into monetary savings, since less attorney or staff time is involved in finding answers and identifying mistakes. Those savings can quickly make up for the cost of new technology and thereafter can be passed along to clients.

**AI allows earlier (and more accurate) risk assessment.** TAR tools, including predictive coding, can be used to review information in real time. This allows lawyers to identify potential risks earlier, advise clients wisely about their exposure and head off legal problems before they even occur. When a lawsuit has been started, or even merely threatened, these smart solutions allow law firms to quickly identify relevant information and to define the universe of data and custodians that must be protected. With this increased information, law firms can more accurately assess outcomes, minimizing costs and limiting risks while protecting their clients'—and their own—reputations.

**AI produces higher-quality work.** Work produced by intelligent software—which doesn't get tired, bored or distracted—can be truly error-free. Specialized document software can enhance the organization of documents and flawlessly maintain that organization, including all internal cross-references, through the life of the document. Such software can also ensure that language

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is applied consistently, no matter how many attorneys had a hand in the drafting. Through document comparison and automatic learning, software such as contract comparison tools can identify missing clauses or conditions, inconsistently used terminology or undefined terms, both within a single document and across a pool of similar documents.

**AI improves organizational and logical structure.** With automatic document comparison and organization, attorneys can more quickly identify holes or gaps in their documents and even in their legal analyses. For example, contract analysis programs that have learned through repeated analysis can identify missing terms or definitions in known types of contracts. Similarly, document analysis can uncover a logical connection that hasn't yet been firmly established in a legal memorandum, allowing attorneys to revisit and strengthen their weak points. For both, smart software that maintains internal organization and allows attorneys to quickly and conveniently switch between different levels and views enhances the overall structure and logical flow of the document.

**AI enhances creative analysis and identification of persuasive precedents.** With the time savings of automated review, research and document quality control, AI frees up attorneys' time and mental energy for higher-level work. This enhances creativity, allowing attorneys to add unique value and focus completely on the work that computers can't do. Increased confidence in results also gives attorneys the free hand they need to take risks and evaluate alternatives. With intelligent legal research software, attorneys can test out variations in fact patterns or legal analyses to identify the most advantageous strategy. Comparative analysis between cases in different states or between state and federal courts no longer takes days of exhaustive (and exhausting) scanning.

**AI reduces attorney stress and frustration.** Document review, proofreading and legal research can be tedious, mind-numbing work. While these tasks must be completed in the course of competent and ethical representation, no one said that attorneys had to do them! Allowing software to do at least the first round of "heavy lifting" reduces stress and boredom, minimizing the time that attorneys must spend on preliminary or low-level review. At the same time, knowing that their AI solution has already completed a comprehensive review gives attorneys more confidence in the results. This allows attorneys to dive into the creative, intellectual analysis that they are trained to do—and that computers can't replicate, no matter how smart. Together, these dramatically improve attorney work satisfaction.

**AI improves client relations.** Building from the previous points, AI solutions allow attorneys, freed from the tedium and minutiae of low-level tasks, the time to engage in the more satisfying, creative, human-specific work of legal representation. This includes

talking to clients; fully developing, exploring and explaining strategies, theories and outcomes; and keeping clients better informed at every stage of the legal process. Not to mention, better and more consistent results by themselves lead to greater client satisfaction.

As we discussed at the outset, these benefits are interrelated, with each type of benefit leading to and fostering additional benefits. That interrelationship also harnesses the power of momentum. Just as an early mistake can rapidly spiral into more (and more serious) later mistakes, high-quality work also builds on itself and supports the production of more good quality work.

In short, deploying an AI solution can create a positive momentum throughout a law firm. As attorneys come to trust AI software, they can relax and let the computers attend to the monotonous details. No longer "stuck in the weeds," these attorneys are more likely to engage in strategic problem-solving, which can enable them to enjoy their work more. (Aren't our creative problem-solving abilities part of what drew us to the law in the first place?) Happier, more satisfied attorneys are less likely to take sick days or suffer burnout. They're also more likely to have adequate time (and patience) to thoroughly counsel their clients and mentor their subordinates. All of this adds up to a much better working environment for everyone.

What benefits can your law firm reap by adopting more AI software solutions?

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Link to original story "Seven Benefits of Artificial Intelligence for Law Firms"