AI and what it means for the Legal Profession

The implementation of AI, and its growth in recent years, have meant a change for most industries. The legal industry is not exempt. AI is expected to change the legal profession, however, it is likely not in the way that you think. The goal of AI will be to complement the jobs of lawyers, rather than replace it. Lawyers that are able to use AI can produce better work, in less time, saving their client's money, and allowing them to take on more clients. It is a win-win for both parties.

Traditionally, the legal industry has been largely exempt from paradigm shifts due to technology. But with the existence of big data and AI technology, it is likely that this will change.

AI will make it easier for lawyers to gather and visualize the information that they need to be able to do their job well, and represent their clients. If lawyers are more willing to adopt artificial intelligence software, then costs will go down for clients, and client satisfaction and access to justice goes up. At the same time for lawyers, the drudgery will go down, and the mental health and high value work will go up.

Canada is currently one of the world leaders when it comes to AI technology. Some legal and business AI software has already been developed by technology companies keen to make an impact on the legal industry.

Automatic contract analysis software powered by artificial intelligence is able to read contracts in a matter of seconds, and highlight key information. The software is able to put this information into easy to read visuals, and even gets "smarter" after each contract that it reads.

There is also legal software that is able to scan legal documents, case decisions, and case files, and then predict how courts are going to rule on tax and employment law cases.

Then there is powerful business intelligence software. Users are able to connect with, and gain insights from the massive stores of data that they already have control over. This is important because it gives firms insights into data that only a data scientist would have previously been able to give.

AI isn't working perfectly yet though, as current tests show that the algorithms that run these AI applications begin to make decisions that we can no longer explain or understand. There then is a risk of us being reliant on machines that we don't necessarily understand fully. As well, because humans have biases, the algorithms that are programmed into these AI applications will innately have some sort of bias.

AI is still in its infancy when it comes to its availability and effectiveness, but regardless, AI is poised to fundamentally change the legal profession.