

# AI Can Help Lawyers Overcome The Programming Barrier

By **George Zalepa** (November 17, 2023)

In the landscape of modern legal practice, an understanding of coding may provide an advantage. It unlocks doors to improving and automating processes, making a compelling case for its adoption at all experience levels.

Since last addressing the topic, generative artificial intelligence technologies have taken both mainstream and legal communities by storm. While coding may still provide a competitive advantage for attorneys, generative AI may now provide a rapid on-ramp for getting started.



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## Understanding Generative AI

Generative AI is the latest vanguard in technological innovation, particularly for professionals in fields that have traditionally not required extensive programming knowledge. At its core, it involves models that may understand and generate human-like content, enabling a wide array of applications that extend into the legal domain.

This form of artificial intelligence stands out by its capacity to automate the creation of content that feels natural and intuitive, akin to what a human or programmer would produce. By harnessing generative AI, legal professionals may translate their requirements into automated processes without the steep learning curve traditionally associated with programming.

This shift aligns with the dynamic needs of the legal industry, where time is a resource as precious as legal expertise itself.

## Generative AI as a Learning Assistant

Generative AI emerges as a revolutionary tool, redefining the way lawyers expand their technical skill set. As an interactive learning platform, this technology offers a customized educational experience, guiding practitioners through the nuances of digital literacy. It tailors educational content to individual learning curves, ensuring that concepts are not only understood but also retained.

Programming challenges, for instance, may be broken down by AI into manageable tasks, enabling lawyers to grasp the logic behind automation without delving into the intricacies of code syntax.

The immediacy of feedback provided by generative AI is transformative — offering corrections, suggestions and explanations in real time. This interaction creates an efficient loop of learning, where questions are promptly addressed, and concepts are clarified on the spot, potentially reducing the trial-and-error phase.

As a result, lawyers may apply their newfound knowledge to automate aspects of their practice, enhancing productivity and service delivery.

Generative AI not only aids in understanding the theoretical aspects of technology but also

translates that knowledge into practical applications. By inputting their objectives, legal professionals may receive custom scripts and macros, effectively bypassing traditional barriers to technological empowerment.

### **Overcoming the Programming Barrier With Generative AI**

The adoption of technological solutions in the legal sector may stumble upon the programming barrier — the perceived need for coding skills to automate and innovate. Generative AI, however, may shift this paradigm, enabling lawyers to harness the power of automation through more intuitive means.

Generative AI may simplify the automation process by allowing natural language commands to act as a bridge between the lawyer's intent and the creation of software. This facet of AI is helpful, as it demystifies the process of programming, allowing lawyers to articulate their needs without needing to learn a programming language top to bottom. The implications of this are substantial.

With generative AI, tasks that would traditionally require a developer may now be undertaken directly by legal professionals. Whether it's automating document assembly, extracting key information from a mass of data, or any number of repetitive tasks, AI serves as a digital liaison, translating intent into action, i.e., code.

Such capabilities are not confined to simple tasks. Complex automations that previously seemed out of reach for those without programming expertise are now accessible. From parsing through extensive legal documents to extracting specific references to automating due diligence processes, the range of applications is vast and ever-expanding.

For example, legal documents often come with specific formatting requirements that may be painstaking to apply manually. With generative AI, lawyers may describe the formatting rules, and the AI may provide the visual basic for application code to create a Word macro that applies the change.

For example, one task recently encountered was to "remove all comments in a document including the text 'OK.'" Given a large number of comments, this may be a time-consuming and error-prone process. By using generative AI to code the script, lawyers may not only automate simple tasks but reuse the solutions across numerous documents, ensuring consistency and freeing up considerable time for legal analysis and client engagement.

As another example, while the thought of developing command-line tools might seem daunting, generative AI bridges the gap. Lawyers may be able to articulate the task at hand — be it organizing files, batch-renaming documents, or complex search operations. The AI may then generate the necessary code, requiring minimal input: the installation of a development environment, which itself may be guided by generative AI.

This lowers the barrier to entry, allowing legal practitioners to exploit powerful command-line functionalities without delving into the intricacies of coding languages.

As another example, text parsing, particularly extracting specific information like phone numbers or legal names and entities from a text document, typically demands a foray into the complex world of regular expressions — a nonstarter for many lawyers and many programmers. Generative AI transforms this ordeal into a conversation.

With generative AI, lawyers may simply describe the objective, i.e., "find all phone

numbers," and leverage the underlying model's understanding to complete a task, all without a single line of code.

These applications are more than just examples; they are evidence of a shift in how legal professionals may leverage technology.

### **The Path Forward With AI in Legal Practice**

Generative AI should be viewed not as a replacement for the skilled lawyer but as a powerful tool that complements and augments their capabilities.

It facilitates a collaborative approach where the analytical strengths of AI and the nuanced understanding of the human lawyer work in concert. This synergy may elevate the level of service provided to clients, delivering more informed and timely advice and fostering a more client-centric practice.

As the legal industry looks to the future, the integration of AI offers a promising avenue for enhancing the quality and efficiency of legal services. It represents an essential step for firms aiming to stay competitive and adaptable in an ever-evolving legal landscape.

### **Conclusion**

As we reflect on the integration of generative AI into legal practice, it is becoming clear that an understanding of generative AI will not be "nice to have," but will instead be expected of practitioners. The once-essential skill of coding has become an option rather than a requirement, unlocking new avenues for legal experts to enhance their service offerings.

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