

# THE LEGAL TECHNOLOGIST

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## FEATURES

### INTERVIEW

## Diversity and disruption

Becky Baker interviews John Croft, Co-Founder and President of Elevate.

### ARTICLE

## Onwards and Upwards

Marc May, our editor, details the story of the Legal Technologist.

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Insight into the future of law

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# A note from the editor

We are coming towards the end of 2019 and what a year it has been for the magazine.

We have gone from a quarterly magazine to a bi-monthly one, created a new website, brought in a new face to the team, and gained thousands of followers across our various social media platforms.

What does 2020 hold?

More great content and even some events!

We will also be looking at creating awards to promote the brightest and best people across legal tech, as well as those that use their tech skills for the social good.

I hope you all enjoy the read and a big thanks to everyone that helped to put it together!

**Marc May**

# The Legal Technologist Story

By Marc May

*The Legal Technologist has published 8 issues and one careers supplement since May 2018, drawing on articles from contributors around the world and providing perspectives on the latest issues affecting law and technology. Marc May is the founder/editor of the magazine and explains the journey from light bulb moment to the bi-monthly publication it is now.*

It was back in early 2018 while working as an Automation Specialist at the law firm RPC that I first had a light bulb moment about pulling together articles around legal tech into a newsletter. I reflected on my time during my degree and Legal Practice Course and concluded that there was next to no information about how technology was impacting legal practice.

I understood that technology was changing and modernising the profession but there didn't seem to be any information on what effect it was going to have on either of the two university courses. I felt that there was little conversation about how the lawyers of the future would actually practice law – how would they draft documents or interact with their clients using technology?

There was nothing focused on those at the junior end, which in my mind was the very people that should understand the importance of innovation and how technology could assist them during their legal careers. I thought these people brought up from an early age on a diet of technology would be the champions of change within the legal profession.

In March 2018, I published my first 'newsletter' which turned out in the end to be more of a magazine. I was lucky in that I was able to interview Peter Wright from the Law Society, as well as acquiring articles from Coralie McKeivor on social media, Harper James (a law firm) and an interview article from Becky Baker (who has been Junior Editor of the magazine for over a year now). The rest of the articles were written by me.

I wasn't really sure what was going to happen from there. I published it and hoped for the best! I was happy that at the time it was well received. If it wasn't, I didn't really know whether I would have been able to write enough material to fill a second issue!

Luckily the magazine went from strength to strength from then on. As more issues were published the greater the following and engagement, and in turn the greater number of people were keen to volunteer article contributions. Before long, Becky had joined the magazine as Junior Editor and Eaindra Cho had joined as Marketing Manager. Without their contribution the magazine wouldn't be where it is today.

In September 2019 Stephenie Ong had joined as International Relations Manager, looking at partnerships for the magazine at home and abroad, as well as becoming a regular contributor.

By November 2019, the magazine (and its website) is visited by thousands of people from all over the world. Our social media channels have thousands of followers with more following each day. The magazine itself is now exactly how I imagined it to be, a melting pot of different opinions from around the world on how technology is impacting the law.

I suppose I am writing this so that our readership gets a feel for how the magazine came about and are able to form more of a personal connection to it. In the coming months we will also add video content from each of us involved with the magazine.

I'm lucky to have a team that are passionate about legaltech and about educating the next generation of lawyers. We all volunteer our time to produce each magazine and I think I can speak for all of us when I say we feel it has a bright future ahead. Please do provide your feedback as it makes it really worthwhile for us to hear from happy readers.

**By Marc May**  
**@doublemarc**



# DIVERSITY AND DISRUPTION

Are law companies the answer to law's diversity problem?

Becky Baker interviews John Croft, Co-Founder and President of Elevate

The Lawyer's recent analysis of the Solicitors Regulations Authority's report on diversity in law firms shows a significant ethnic diversity gap, particularly at partnership level. The industry average gender pay gap stands at 21.7%.

What if the legal world could start again, with a clean slate? Disruptive law companies like Elevate recognise that these inconsistencies need not exist in the profession. Elevate is redefining the business of law using a combination of technology solutions, legal project management and flexible lawyering services. This offers them a unique opportunity to create a truly diverse legal resource.

In this interview John Croft, Co-Founder and President of Elevate, explains why radical action is needed to achieve diversity, and how Elevate is helping to build the diverse legal sector of the future.

## **When you founded Elevate, what did you want to achieve?**

*When the founders of Elevate sat down together to establish the company, achieving a diverse workforce was a big part of our definition of success. We developed core values of equitability and inclusion to help us achieve this. We wanted Elevate to be a role model for the rest of the legal sector.*

*It struck me that, in some respects, diversity and equitability in law isn't improving. The Times reported in September 2019 that the top 10 law firms in the UK still pay men 43% more than women. I kept asking myself, how can this be good for law firms – or for their customers?*

*We want to redefine how legal work is done, where it is done, and who does it to get the best possible outcome for our customers (we have customers, not clients). Having a diverse workforce is an essential part of this. We want our customers to benefit from the diversity of thought that our lawyers can provide, so we put diversity at the core of our business model.*

## **What is Elevate's diversity strategy?**

*We know we have to act aggressively to correct the gender, ethnicity and age imbalances that exist in the legal market. We are growing fast, and the market is still heavily skewed towards 'old, white men'. If we don't address the problem head-on we will end up with a law company that looks exactly like a law firm with a long-standing diversity problem.*

*We're doing several things to make sure we achieve our diversity goals:*

### **1. Talking about it**

*We take every opportunity to start discussions about diversity and what we're doing to achieve it. We spread the message that inaction is no longer acceptable: the industry needs to do more.*

*I think talking about diversity will put a mirror in front of firms who aren't doing enough, and make them realise they have to change. It will also reinforce to their customers that they're the people with the leverage to enforce that change. A GC of a huge global company told me recently: "When I send out an RFP I'll receive perfectly crafted answers from firms with apparently good diversity stats and I'll invite them to pitch. When they arrive, the whole team looks like me (old white men). Where's the diversity they were talking about? I can use my leverage in that moment to ensure my vendors know that I won't accept a team that isn't diverse.*

### **2. Building our tribe**

*It's hard to fight against the tide of a hundred years, but it's very rewarding; as a result, we've found like-minded people in law departments, law firms and law companies who are also trying to do things differently and who are energised by change. This is our tribe.*

*Our acquisitions last year were closely connected to helping us achieve our diversity goals. We've been growing very successfully and organically, but we also wanted to build our tribe. Then one of our customers, Morgan Stanley, said they wanted to invest in Elevate with the intention that their finance would enable us to make a strategic acquisition. Like us, they recognised the opportunity we had to bring in not only new customers and revenue, but to bring in the capability and management of people who had the same priorities we did. We initially set out to acquire one business – we ended up with five!*

*None of the acquisitions lost the core of their business or their leadership team. This was a priority for us because we wanted these people on board. The acquisitions helped create a highly diverse senior leadership team, and it has enabled all of us to go global and move forward in key areas. With new ideas and an even more diverse senior leadership team than when we started, we will hopefully keep moving further and further in the right direction.*

### **3. The next generation**

*We work closely with law schools to make sure we're talking to the next generation of lawyers. That's where I think real change will take place.*

*Although I'm practical enough to know that there's a limited amount you can do when a firm's male to female partner ratio is 80:20, I know we must look to the future and ensure that the next generation don't suffer the same imbalances. We particularly want to support under-represented groups at law school level to improve ethnic hiring in the industry. For example, we're currently working with the Hispanic National Bar Association in the US to support law students as they start their legal careers.*

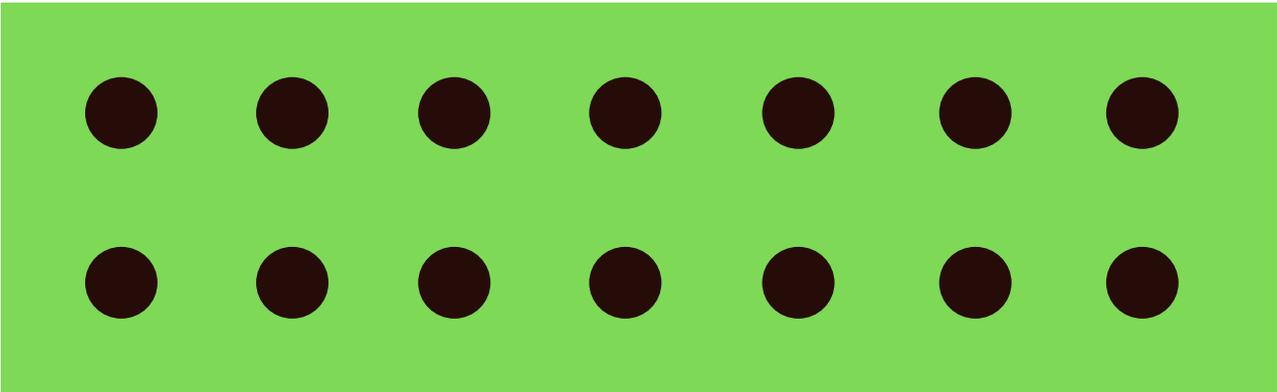
### **Has Elevate achieved its diversity goals?**

*We measure our diversity statistics very carefully, and we publish a yearly Equitability and Inclusion report to assess our progress. I'm pleased with the results of this year's report – we have no gender imbalance on pay – but our results still have room for improvement. If we find an imbalance, we strive to correct it.*

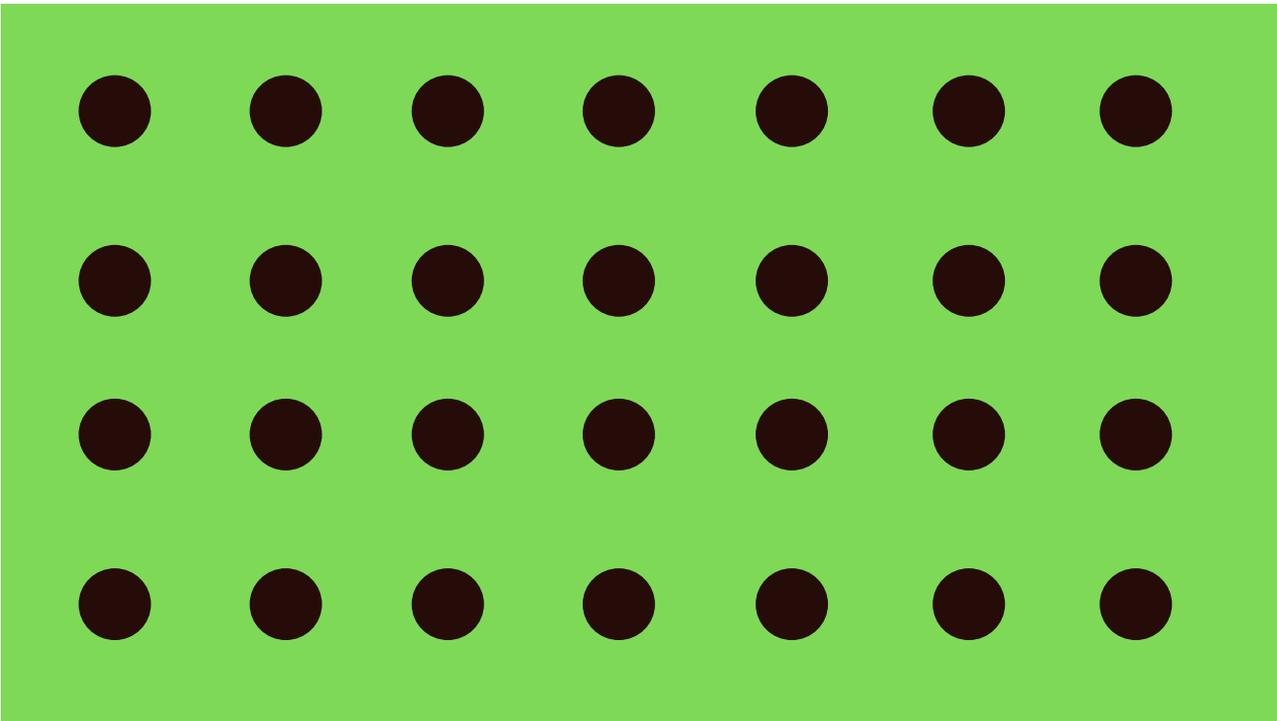
*We found that our associates in our India practice were predominantly male, so we asked our existing female associates about why they joined Elevate and why they thought more women weren't joining them. Their responses were invaluable: thanks to their feedback we could make practical changes (such as safe travel to and from home at certain times of day) that made our Indian practice a more attractive place to work for women.*

*Our diversity goals will always be an integral part of our business plan. If we're using technology to make legal work more efficient, why shouldn't we change the way the legal industry works and encourage greater diversity at the same time? Some firms see that approach as a competitive threat, but some see it as an opportunity. I think in the next five years we will see a dramatic shift in attitudes as the younger generation move into positions of authority. They won't see introducing tech as a threat – they'll question why there aren't technology solutions in place already. The same applies to diversity. I hope the next generation will see diversity as the norm, and won't accept anything less.*

**Becky Baker was talking to John Croft, President and Co-Founder of Elevate. For more information or comments please tweet @LTechnologist, @ElevateServices and @rebeccaJKBaker.**



# **Navigating the minefield of procuring LegalTech**



The hype surrounding LegalTech is at an all-time high. Law firms and in-house legal teams are under increasing pressure to automate processes and become more efficient. We are seeing rapid growth of new vendors in this industry as is evident from just a wander down the Start-up Alley at Legal Geek. This can be overwhelming when trying to find which technology can provide the solutions your business needs - so how can you ensure you are procuring the right software and in the right way?

## 1. Map your processes

Step number one is to recognise the power of process. Map out current processes and highlight inefficiencies. There may be multiple processes for each team or practice area looking to adopt new technology. Take the time to do this properly as it will pay off in the long run.

Then use these maps to inform what the 'ideal state' should be. What does the most efficient process look like and how does that differ from the current state? Will technology help you to achieve this desired state and if so, at which stage in the process? It is important to remember that technology is not the solution: it is an enabler of the solution. Bad processes must first be overcome with the right amount of planning and engagement.

Throughout my career, and more recently during my time at HighQ, I have often seen a lack of defined process, particularly with smaller in-house legal teams. Ways of working and methods of communication evolve organically, but it is also necessary to take a step back and robustly assess them. From a solutions point of view, it is important for me to encourage clients to tackle this first in order for us to pinpoint key use cases and design those effectively.



## 2. Engage key stakeholders

As part of the process-mapping exercise, identify who the key stakeholders are at each stage. Next, engage those individuals and understand what their pain points are, including regular work that can be considered to be low-value and repetitive.. Get to the crux of the matter and simply ask them “what annoys you on a day to day basis?”. This will help you define the ‘why’ behind procuring new technology. At this stage, you may find that the processes mapped out previously need reviewing and tweaking – it is vital to allow the people involved in those processes to contribute to this process.

Allow those stakeholders to advise what data (and subsequent metadata) needs to be captured and reported on, and how frequently. Standardising this will help to inform the desired outcome from the process flow(s) and will allow you to capture the key information required to analyse and gain visibility into business operations.

Encouraging this open communication between various teams will help you design the correct solution to aid the entire organisation. It will also ease the onboarding and implementation process. Culture is key - remember to build relationships and a strong foundation of trust to ensure stakeholders are truly invested in adopting new technology.

From having conversations across the organisation, it will become apparent who is enthusiastic and ‘bought in’ to using any new software – assign those individuals the role of ‘LegalTech Champion’. This person (or people) will be indispensable to the onboarding process, enabling others to use the new technology as quickly and effectively as possible. In an ideal world, every organisation would have dedicated change management resource. Where this is not possible, having ‘champions’ is especially important.



### **3. Don't get overwhelmed!**

A common theme that has emerged from numerous LegalTech events recently is that many people have admitted to getting carried away with the LegalTech 'hype'. Cut through the hype by questioning why your organisation needs this technology and how exactly it can help business operations. If you are procuring multiple technologies, ensure that they can integrate with one another for an easier, seamless user experience.

Harnessing the power of people and processes will allow law firms and in-house legal teams to effect meaningful, systemic change through technology. Entering into conversations with technology vendors while armed with process maps and internal 'champions' will make those conversations more focused and meaningful, resulting in your organisation procuring the right solution for the business.



**This article was written by Kirsty Ramsay, a Legal Solutions Engineer at HighQ in London, UK.**



## Scaling: A Framework for Growth

In Part 2 of our 3-part series about the LegalTech startup, Juro, CEO Richard Mabey explains the challenges of scaling up a startup, and the framework he uses to tackle them.

Juro is entering an exciting new phase as we start to scale-up the business. In the early days only two goals really mattered: building the right product and selling it in the right way. I think about scaling using the framework of the three T's: technology, traction and team.

## **Technology**

We have a long way to go on our technology roadmap; there's so much more we want to achieve with the product. It's not a question of building the product and going to market; it's a continual process of iteration. We release new features every two weeks, on average. It's a rapid development cycle.

## **Traction**

Maintaining our growth rate is going to be a challenge as we scale. It requires having the right demand generation engine and having the right people to focus on marketing and sales. We've been successful with using content as a way of building our leads pipeline and we're also dedicated to customer success, ensuring our clients get the best value from the product.

## **Team**

As a founder, you have to acknowledge your own weaknesses. You're not going to be able to do everything forever; you have to understand how to hire the right people to join your fledgling startup when they could just as easily be working for Google. They need to be able to cope with the uncertainties and pressures of an early-stage environment, but there's also the opportunity to become a real leader in the organisation.

The number one trait I look for in a team member is curiosity. We lose curiosity throughout our lives; we get used to living within certain boundaries, and it's hard to find time to pursue new skills. I like people who are curious because it indicates they can learn quickly. Most people here are doing things they don't feel comfortable with on a daily basis, things they haven't done before. I think if you're truly curious you can work out how to solve a problem yourself. If you're not, then you become reliant on help, and the help sometimes isn't there in a small team.

The ability to cope with uncertainty is something I've had to learn. As lawyers we don't really like uncertainty; it's our job to minimise it. Understanding how to cope with that in a fast-paced environment is important.

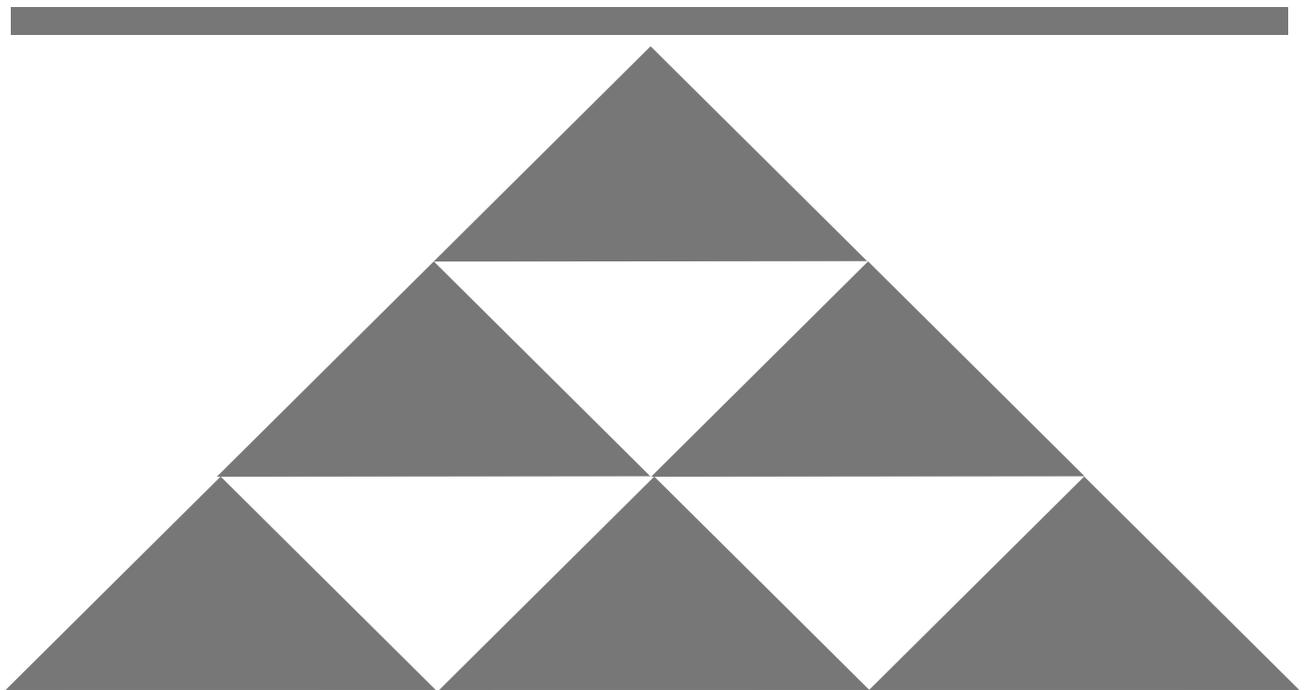
The other trait I look for is a willingness to collaborate; we have an inherently collaborative product, so it's a value we like to live as a company. To me, collaboration is underpinned by an understanding of our mission and what we're trying to achieve. You're not just going to work to meet your lead target. You're bought into our mission and you derive satisfaction from achieving team goals.

In a way, it's a naked environment as well. If things go well it's clear who's responsible; equally, if things don't go well it's clear who's responsible! We have a culture of transparency around that data.

We also have a culture of feedback. Everyone is willing to give everyone else feedback, sometimes directly, sometimes quickly, and people generally are willing to accept that feedback and learn. The reason for that is you've got to learn faster here than in any other business.

People who embody those qualities will thrive in our environment and support our growth as a company. Although developing your technology road-map and developing your demand generation processes are important, finding team members who fully understand and buy into your mission is vital.

*Becky Baker was talking to Richard Mabey, CEO and co-founder of Juro. For more information or comments please tweet @LTechnologist, @GetJuro and @rebeccaJKBaker. Join us in February 2020 for Part 3, the final instalment of our series on Juro, where Richard Mabey will describe the benefits of their empathetic team culture and the inspiring values they live as a company.*



# **LegalTech isn't just for lawyers..**

**by Josh Harris**

There are 5.7 million businesses in the UK and just 140,000 solicitors (there's even fewer if we just focus on corporate law). Looking at the numbers, it's no wonder that fees are high and hours are long for lawyers. Based on this, it is clear why the LegalTech industry has boomed over the past few years, and will continue to do so, with the aim of easing the strain on lawyers and reducing fees for consumers. This is just simple economic theory.

## **What is LegalTech?**

Before I explain why LegalTech isn't just for lawyers, let's start with how it is currently defined. Take this definition from G2: *'all technology used by law firms to improve their processes and increase their efficiency and effectiveness'*. Or this definition from IntellectSoft: *'software and technologies that help law firms streamline core processes'*.

From these definitions, it sounds like LegalTech is just for lawyers. I disagree. First, let me explain why this has traditionally been the case. Law firms have the money to invest in platforms to make their work more efficient, whereas their clients' primary focus is on minimising legal costs. Therefore, there is little investment in LegalTech solutions for non-law firms and non-lawyers. Rather, Big Law has invested heavily in, *'streamlin[ing] [its] core processes'*.

## **LegalTech is for everyone**

Despite this, the legal market has been changing drastically over the past few years and a trend towards 'LegalTech for everyone' has well and truly started. *'LegalTech for everyone'* means technology solutions for anyone who accesses legal services, not just lawyers. Imagine your own personal lawyer, in your pocket, but not having to pay them and they speak in terms you understand.

Take SeedLegals, a platform that uses logic to allow any business owner to set up and close their investment round without the need for a lawyer (don't worry, they have lawyers on hand to help if you get stuck). What previously would have taken lawyers weeks, months or even years has now been automated, and control has been passed to the business owner.

To take another example, CrowdJustice is enabling those without the required financial backing to crowdfund for legal support so they can obtain justice through the court system. It's a wonderful example of how technology is making law accessible for all.

Finally, if you commute in London, Reclaim is a platform that automatically submits delay repay claims on your delayed TfL journeys. It's a fabulously simple yet effective piece of technology, giving power back to the consumer, minimising a previously manual and time-consuming task. Although, at the time of writing, their service is down for maintenance - oops.

### **A wider definition of LegalTech**

Based on the processes these example businesses are improving, I think it is clear that the aforementioned definitions really are not fit for purpose. Instead, I propose a much broader, more inclusive definition of LegalTech:

*'LegalTech is any technology that makes a legal process easier, for anyone.'*

### **Where is LegalTech headed?**

I don't have a crystal ball, but here are a few of my predictions for the future of LegalTech:

- Continued investment into *LegalTech for everyone* platforms;
- A world where real-time information for complaints is gathered in seconds resulting in decisions in minutes rather than weeks or months (think insurance claims or parking fines);
- A world where property transactions don't require countless solicitors and are 100% error-free; and
- Probate processes being completed at the click of a button based on live market data and bank feeds.

These are just a few ideas, but I hope they give an exciting glimpse of what is to come.

It is important not to forget of course, that LegalTech for lawyers will also continue to grow at a scarily fast pace, but, for me at least, it is the movement towards LegalTech for everyone that is going to change the world.

### **About the Author**

Josh Harris is the CEO and Co-founder of Doc2. A 'Big 4' Chartered Accountant-cum-business owner, he aims to make contract automation and eSigning simple and frictionless for SME businesses around the world. Feel free to add him on LinkedIn and suggest a different definition for what LegalTech really is.



Marc May caught up with the founders from AUTTO while at the Legal Geek conference in London back in October. Both Ian Gosling (IG) and Max Cole (MC) had given talks earlier in the day on their product, as well as process design and improvement.

### **So how are you enjoying Legal Geek?**

MC: We have actually been here every year since it started, but it's the first year we have had a stand here trying to win customers. It's been a really exciting day as you look around and people are using AI and NLP but what we are doing is simpler. What has been really rewarding is people saying they can really imagine implementing our product

### **We last spoke back in March when you'd just launched AUTTO – what has happened over the last six months since then?**

MC: Since March we have gone into the market and raised some money. We have had a really busy year and have got some traction and got people using the product. It's been the start of a long journey.

IG: One of the good things about being in the market is that you get your minimum viable product into the market and then you get customers that ask "can it just do this?". We have had a lot of that and have had a lot of investment over the last six months that has translated into improvements in functionality.

While we are still keeping AUTTO simple to use, it is able to do ever more complex things because our customers are automating things that we have never thought of. We had the opportunity to see some of our clients' work recently and some of the workflows are huge with 200 – 300 actions in them. It was really eye opening to see what our clients are doing with the product!

**In relation to the legal tech market do you think we have hit 'peak' legal tech (i.e. a point where we have hit too many legal start ups)?**

MC: No we are not at peak legal tech! My theory is that we are in the foothills because technology is much more advanced than it has ever been and it much more capable of being a part of day to day work of providing a legal service. You can do things with technology that you couldn't do before e.g. getting insight using artificial intelligence. Adoption is still quite immature and that is going to change. This technology is going to change the way that lawyers practise law but my view is that change has only just started.

IG: To me it feels like we are sitting on an iceberg at the moment where the available tech is all very visible, but below the waterline are thousands of lawyers just using Word and Outlook.

**Do you see a drive towards process improvement in the legal sector?**

IG: I think there is a big drive towards process adoption because law firms are providing services as a package of technology and expertise together, rather than just expertise on their own. There are new charging models that are beginning to emerge and if you look at the commercial aspect of this then this brings into focus process design to make that work more profitable.

**Do you think that universities should teach process design and improvement at university during their law courses?**

MC: That is a really good question. There was an article by Mark Cohen where he discusses the distinction between legal practice and the delivery of legal services. Delivery of legal services requires an understanding of process. Understanding processes will become more and more valuable, and there will be lawyers that do this sort of work designing processes as part of their job and I imagine at that point it will start to get taught.

I think we will start to see law school courses looking at this sort of training.

**Thanks both for your time.**

**For more information on AUTTO please do have a look at their site here.**

# The 'Ten Commandments' for Purchasing and Implementing LegalTech Solutions

by Adv. Edo Bar-Gil

Legal departments provide value to organisations. In addition, investing in the right technology may increase such value, and optimise the in-house counsel's work and performance in a way that benefits the entire organisation.

Nevertheless, in many cases it is difficult for in-house legal teams to get the budget and resources to look for and purchase the necessary legal tools for their job.

It is partly due to the fact the legal function is traditionally not considered as a business or a productive unit, but rather as an overhead. To change this perception, In-house legal teams should create a clear and solid business need that demonstrates the benefits and values of such investment to the entire organization (See my previous article for further exploration of this topic).

Even if you got lucky and received the necessary budget for implementing a new technology, and you spent the necessary time in choosing the right technology, having exhausted the current technologies and their capabilities, there are still major concerns related to this process.

The reasons for such concerns are diverse and complex, however they are mainly psychological and based on two major issues:

- On one hand, lawyers tend to be (very) conservative; there is a major concern that the legal team will not be a champion of the chosen technology and will not support the process of implementing and using it.

- On the other hand, legal services consumers are used to working in a specific way, using specific tools. Changing the process and the tools may make them feel uncomfortable.

Since the legal department is a major junction for many processes, whether legal or core business-related, the potential for resistance and 'noise' is huge and may cause the process to fail. The fear of creating unnecessary noise may cause some in-house lawyers to give up on making changes in the organisation.

How can the new generation of in-house lawyers avoid - or at least reduce - noise and resistance? Here are my 'ten commandments' for purchasing and implementing legal tech with the least resistance possible:

- 1.** Before you start, define the challenges that need to be overcome or the problems that need to be fixed. Make sure you understand the reasons for such challenges from the point of view of the consumer and the legal team.
- 2.** Demonstrate how the challenge or problem has impacted the business. For example, show how time, money or resources have been wasted or how the business has been exposed to risk. Note that costs savings as a stand-alone reason will never be

considered as a business impact.

- 3.** Never assume that software or technology will fix all your problems. Technology is only one aspect of the solution and the other aspects - such as proper processes and people - need to be taken into consideration too.

- 4.** Always map the existing technology and its capabilities first, including scheduling meetings with IT and other relevant departments.

- 5.** Capture the existing state of the business, so you will be able to demonstrate the changes and improvements the technology brings to the business and report back on your success.

- 6.** Do a reality check. Will the potential solution fit business needs, budget, strategy and priorities? Will it integrate with existing solutions? Make sure you've considered IT resources and pipeline, implementation timelines and so on.

- 7.** Brainstorm with both internal and external colleagues and iterate your proposed solution.

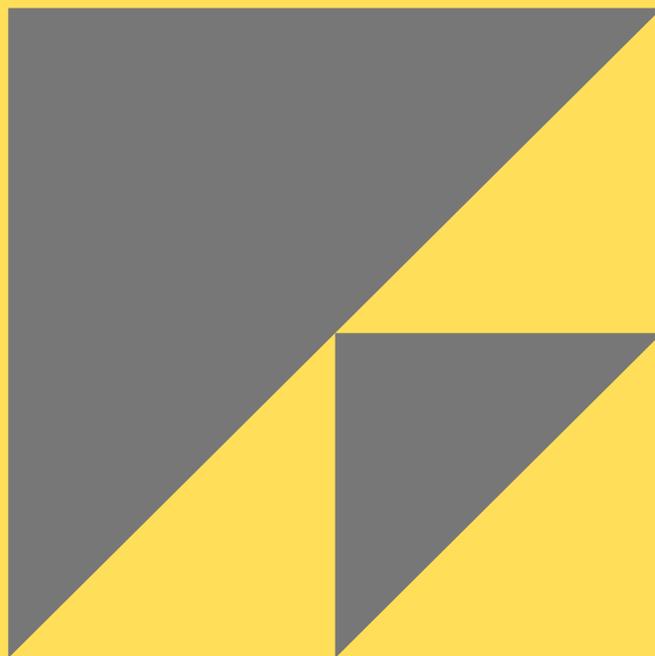
- 8.** Make sure that your chosen solution will achieve most of your goals. In addition, make sure that you check at least three options for any solution and do proper due diligence on each service provider.

**9.** Test and conduct a short-term pilot of your solution. Always remember that changes take time and that your success is based, to an extent, on the “tolerance” of the organisation to implement and use new technology.

**10.** Always use a baby-step approach and make small changes. Be ready to deal with the ‘noise’ created and make sure that you can demonstrate the benefits of the solution to the wider business at any point.

Best of luck.

**Adv. Edo Bar-Gil is the CEO of  
‘Lawflex Designed Solutions’  
(<https://www.lawflex.com/>)**



## Contributors Required

Here at the Legal Technologist we are always looking for good content so if you're interested in writing an article about how law and technology are converging then please do get in touch. This could be a practical article on legal tech, a use case of legal tech with clients, how new technology will change legislation or what the future lawyer looks like. This isn't an exhaustive list though so please don't think you are limited to just those topics. If you are keen to contribute then all you need to do is get in touch with our editor at [marc@legaltechnologist.co.uk](mailto:marc@legaltechnologist.co.uk).

We look forward to hearing from you!

**How Law  
Firms can  
Capitalise  
on  
Automated  
Vehicle  
Technology**

By Joshua Prior

Late last year, the UK pre-emptively passed the Automated and Electric Vehicles Act 2018 (“AEVA”). This established the groundwork upon which infrastructure and investment into the technology may be built. Since then, a transitional period has emerged in which investors and driverless vehicle enthusiasts await the completion of the first roadworthy fully autonomous vehicle (AV). There are several key players in the industry who are driving towards this ambition, most notably Tesla, Waymo, Lyft and Uber. However, they all vary in their approach. This article will examine how commercial law firms might capitalise on the predicted £62 billion industry from the perspectives of insurance, mergers and acquisitions and energy and infrastructure.

## **Insurance**

Automated vehicle technology could radically disrupt the insurance industry. Over many years, insurance providers have been able to refine their policies for vehicles, bolstered through the UK’s compulsory vehicle insurance framework. With reams of data on crash statistics and studies into human error, insurance companies are able to approach policy sales with a high degree of certainty.

This changes when the human element is removed from the equation. The purpose of the AEVA was to bridge the gap between driver-focused liability and insurer-focused liability. Essentially, the effect of the legislation is to indemnify the insured through the imposition of strict liability on the insurer.

This puts the insurance company in the hot seat. Insurers find this problematic due to the lack of data and unpredictability of the technology; calculating risk, an essential part of preparing an insurance policy, becomes rather ambiguous.

Insurance companies will therefore seek to rely on exclusion clauses, and this is where law firms come in. The legislative framework provides a skeletal outline that shapes what an insurance policy might look like. Most importantly, there are provisions for the exclusion of liability, such as circumstances where the owner has tampered with the onboard software or failed to keep it updated. Lawyers can work alongside insurers to craft insurance contracts in order to limit insurers’ liability in such situations, which will in turn allow insurers to offer more commercially attractive policies to future automated vehicle owners.

## **Mergers and Acquisitions**

Two main camps have emerged from the stiff competition in the automated vehicle industry: those who seek to develop software in addition to physical vehicles (often integrating software into existing vehicles) and those who specialise in the development of software, with a view to licence this out to or partner with vehicle manufacturers. Although the market is still in the early stages of its lifecycle, it is suggested that it will reach the point of saturation quickly, within the next five to ten years. Whilst existing industry leaders possess the financial backing required to propel their product past the finish line first, smaller developers are still entering the scene, often backed by institutional investors and their own public offerings. This presents two possible eventualities: firstly, industry leaders who wish to gain a valuable competitive advantage will look to acquire smaller developers in order to access valuable IP or data. In order to remain competitive, smaller developers may find it beneficial to merge with others in an attempt to hold their share of the market. In either event, commercial law firms will find an opportunity here to act on their behalf. It may also be advantageous to

carry out this work at a discounted rate, especially for smaller companies and start-ups. This forms part of a long-term investment strategy into the client, where upon successful growth, the firm may capitalise on the future business they bring in.

## **Energy and Infrastructure**

It is a relatively uncontroversial suggestion that the future of mobility will be powered by electric vehicles. This includes autonomous vehicles. The main barrier to this is the inadequacy of the current energy infrastructure and more specifically the lack of charging stations for the vehicles. In what can only be described as a “chicken and egg” scenario, the vehicles cannot successfully be rolled out without the charging stations, yet these stations will not be built unless there is a demand from the vehicles on the roads. The solution to this is investors taking the risk and preemptively developing such stations with a view to the future and not immediate returns. This burden is likely to rest on private investment as governments will not be able to justify the expenditure due to uncertain returns and no immediate profits. There is already evidence of this; in an effort to support its electric vehicle technology, Tesla has built supercharging stations throughout certain high demand areas in the US in order to service its fleet of vehicles. As more companies enter the market, it is foreseeable that similar moves will be made by manufacturers. Once the private sphere has covered the initial infrastructural framework, public sector investments will slowly start to flow in.

With money to be made in both the public and private spheres, this presents a unique opportunity for law firms.

The development of such stations requires compliance with environmental law as well as health and safety, opening up opportunities to advise on operations and structuring. Furthermore, the developments involve the acquisition of land and its subsequent development. Law firms will be able to facilitate the purchase of land and ensure all construction complies with building regulations.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, autonomous and electric vehicle technology will undoubtedly disrupt many sectors of the economy. However, it provides many opportunities, some of which are available to law firms who are willing to take the risk. Investment in the present will yield high returns in the future and law firms should keep their eyes peeled for such opportunities.

**By Joshua Prior**

# Access to Justice

The Legal Technologist has always been interested in promoting articles showing legal tech innovation for the social good. We will be tracking the progress of Alejandra Rodríguez de la Sierra and the team of students at University of Nottingham develop their access to justice app and detail progress so those wishing to pursue a similar path can understand the difficulties.



Hey, we are the Access to Justice Pro Bono team (A2J) at the University of Nottingham, UK!!

As a project, we aim to use technology and communication platforms to empower ordinary members of the public to know about their rights. We are currently developing an app to help students with housing issues, and the design and development of the app is being done by students for students. Our team is split into three parts: design, legal research and app development.

The app is primarily focused on assisting students with housing issues. Organising housing is an exciting part of the university experience, enabling students to have the freedom and independence to choose where they live and often, who they live with. However, when renting a house, students can encounter different challenges, including payment or deposit disputes where they may require support with effective negotiation.

Access to Justice aims to empower students to take control of such issues, providing them with the resources and skills they require to feel confident with such dealings. Housing can be a stressful and confusing experience for many students, and this is something we hope our hope can really help with.



At the moment we are at the design stage where we are looking to keep our app as simple and accessible as possible. Our key features will be as follows:

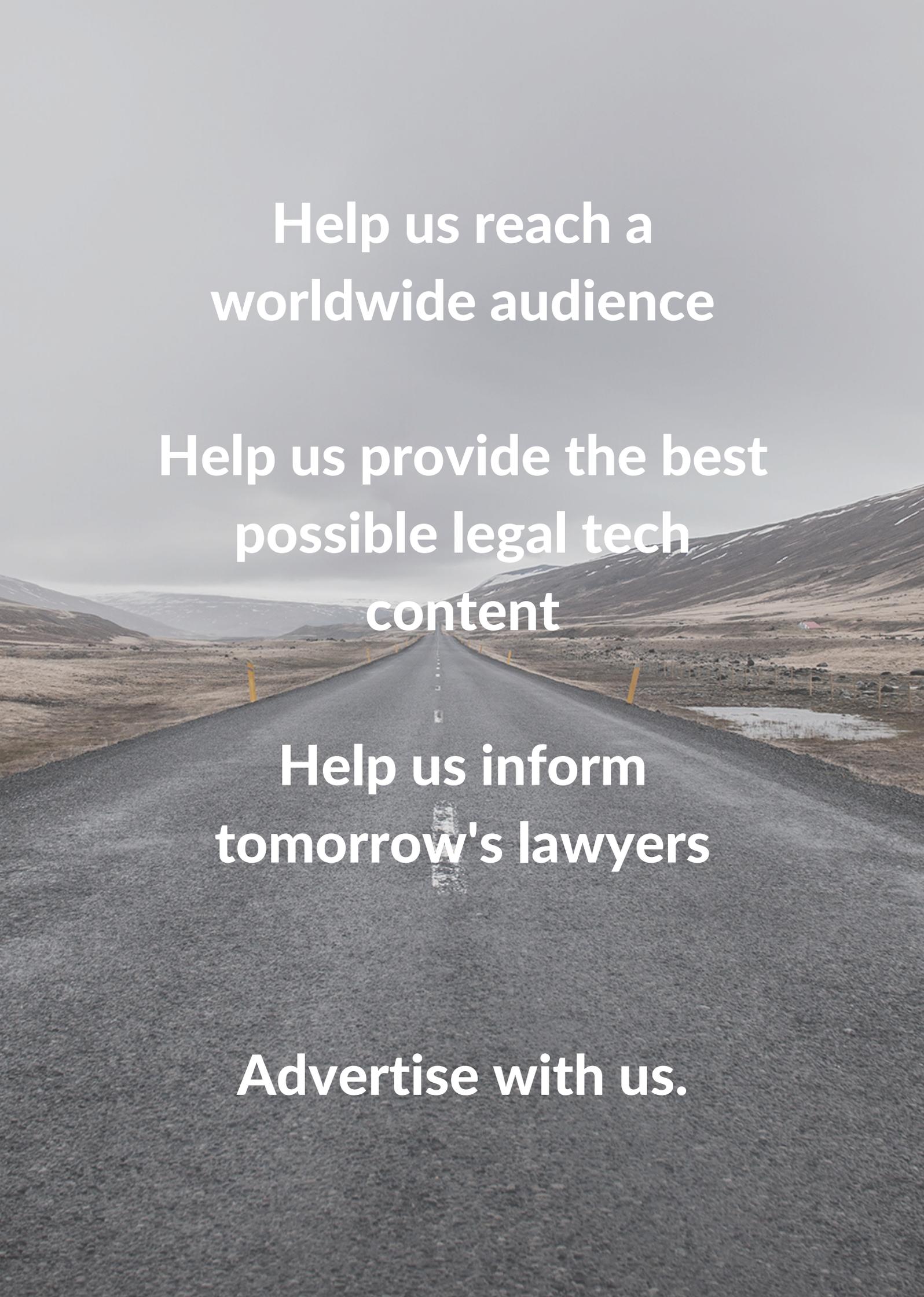
- Navigation around the app will be structured in a way which makes it easy to navigate and easy to read, so it is easy for the user to reach the content they are looking for.
- We will be focusing on the following options: house search, moving in, living in, moving out and 'your rights'.
- Within house search you will be able to see a checklist that you can take with you when going on house viewings, you will be able to take notes and take pictures for each different house.
- In moving in, living in and moving out, there will also be a checklist to make sure the students know what they have to do at each stage of the process. There will also be a payments, deposits and terminating your tenancy section too.
- In 'your rights' the user will be able to reach content which explains their rights and obligations as a tenant, as well as content about to deal with landlords.
- The content will be kept as simple as possible to make sure that it is easier to understand and allow it to be accessible for all kinds of users e.g. international students.

The A2J team has made immense progress in the last few weeks. At this point in time most of our needed research has been carried out, the key sketches for the app have been designed and the coding of the app is starting to show visible and functioning results.

We aim to launch a BETA version of the app as soon as possible. In addition, we will have to market the app to the local student community. Our long terms goals are to make the app more interactive by adding new functions such as videos and quizzes to the app. Carrying out market research regarding the different letting agencies in Nottingham will also assist the students in their decision-making. We are looking forward to launching the beta version to assess the impact the app will have, get feedback from users and find new ways to improve and develop the app.

**The next update will be in February 2020 in the next issue of the Legal Technologist. In the meantime, if you have any questions, want to follow our journey or get involved please do follow us on Instagram and Facebook at @access2justices.**





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# Past editions



If you would like to have a read of our previous editions please click on the links below:

- May/June 2018 Issue
- October 2018 Issue
- January 2019 Issue
- March 2019 Issue
- Careers Supplement
- August 2019 Issue
- October 2019 Issue

# Next edition



Next edition will be out in February 2020.