

Why are Lawyers writing code?

We find ourselves in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution, and this digital transformation brings with it a need for change in our working practices.

There is a shift towards a more innovative, fresh and connected way of doing business. Organisations that are digitally savvy, in every sector, are leading the way and growing exponentially.

The legal sector is no exception – indeed in many ways, lawyers are ahead of the game. Legal firms are embracing digital legal software - reimagining their business, streamlining processes, integrating real-time systems, providing mobile access and automating routine tasks. As part of this, increasing numbers of lawyers are choosing to find out more about what is going on behind the technology that is transforming the way they work.

Some want to become more familiar with technology ‘buzz words’ so they can converse knowledgeably with suppliers and optimise the use of their software. Others are learning to code for themselves. With apps and Artificial Intelligence (AI) becoming a lynchpin in the way forward-thinking legal firms now operate, and with these technologies so heavily reliant on coding, it is clear to see why lawyers are taking an interest... and why on Twitter #LawyersWhoCode is on the rise.

This is reflected in the modules now offered at law schools. Courses are provided for trainee lawyers so they can learn how to code and resolve legal process challenges with apps, or create software that can automatically identify

and classify legal documents. There are many benefits to undertaking these courses. Learning how to program is academically challenging, and highlights for the student any areas of legal knowledge that they don't fully understand. Coding can be a useful new skill that complements legal thinking; it also makes a prospective employee stand out from the crowd.

Alongside this, law schools are embracing emerging areas of law that are directly related to the digital revolution. Technology is changing the law, and topics such as the law of robots or cyber-security are becoming increasingly important. The field of technology law is predicted to grow significantly over the next few years. As the number of technology companies continues to rise, a deeper understanding of how these businesses work, and the terminology they use, will help lawyers take on more of these clients and do a better job for them.

Global law firm Linklaters is encouraging its lawyers to embrace technological advances by launching a pilot programme to teach the basics of coding. Paul Lewis, a partner at Linklaters, told Legal Business ‘We see coding as very useful for lawyers who are involved in technologies such as blockchain, smart contracts and AI. But, at an even more basic level, it's also just useful for lawyers to have a grounding in computational logic – it

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complements all sorts of traditional legal skills.'

Clifford Chance is another firm that has introduced a global initiative to provide a better understanding of technology, with topics such as coding and AI. Their Tech Academy enables lawyers to become more tech-savvy through online learning and attending workshops. Paul Landless, Clifford Chance Finance Partner, commented in a recent Legal Cheek article, 'As a firm we want to develop our people fully with a balanced set of both technical and business skills for today and the future, focussed on what our clients need and with a strong grasp of business trends in our clients' industries.'

So, it would seem there are good reasons for lawyers to learn code.

Certainly, it helps to understand the technology that is becoming an integral part of the day-to-day activities in a law firm. It can also help lawyers to differentiate themselves at a job interview or

impress a tech client. Some lawyers find coding creative and satisfying and get a buzz out of building something with a clear end result. The elegant logic, attention to detail and challenge to get the best result from the fewest possible lines of code can be very pleasing. Lawyers often make naturally good coders, crafting a set of objective instructions to enable a machine to deliver the required result. They are used to thinking in a very structured and detailed way and are familiar with breaking a problem down to its core to find the cleanest solution.

Steve Jobs once said that everybody should learn how to program because it teaches you how to think in a certain way – like going to law school. The two do seem natural bedfellows in many ways. By learning how to code, lawyers are opening up more opportunities for collaboration with technologists at a time where every market sector is becoming increasingly digital. This can only lead to further exciting innovation in the field.

Taken from our recent blog series: <https://www.oneadvanced.com/news-and-opinion/why-are-lawyers-writing-code/>

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