



THE LAW SOCIETY
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THE FUTURE-FOCUSED LAWYER:

EMBRACING THE
WINDS OF CHANGE



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Welcome from YLC Co-Chairpersons

To the cohort of 2024,

Congratulations on your call to the Bar!

As Co-Chairpersons of the Young Lawyers Committee (YLC) of the Law Society of Singapore, we welcome you to the profession. You have worked hard for this moment. Do take a moment to pause and celebrate this milestone with a full heart.

You will be given advice by many in our profession. Instead of more words of advice, we just have three hopes for your journey in practice.

First, we hope you remember you are never alone.

In moments of celebration like this one, even as you congratulate yourself, remember that you stand (and may even have wept) on the shoulders of the many people who helped and cheered you on the journey. There is no contradiction in having the confidence to own your successes and the humility to know you have many to thank for your wins.

In the low moments, your pain and situation may feel very specific to you. You may feel like there is something wrong with you. You tell yourself – “no one else would have made such a mistake”, “how could anyone do such a thing”, “maybe I’m just not cut out for this”. It perhaps takes a different form of humility to remember that lawyering is an old profession. Many have walked the path you are on and made the same mistakes. The moment when your strongest survival instinct is to hide yourself and your mistakes from the world, is the moment to reach out for comfort and guidance. Practice will have its difficult moments. But remember, you are never alone. You are surrounded by many caring members of our profession who have been where you are now.

Next, we hope you remember that your self-worth is not tied to your profession.

You will do, achieve, and fail at many things. You will feel the highs of a successful application or the closing of a deal. You will feel the pain of a mistake. There will be even more arduous moments of unrecognised hours of work. Your worth as lawyer and even more importantly, as a person, is not defined by any single accomplishment or mistake.

Instead of measuring yourself and others by your wins and losses, we hope you find more meaning in how you showed up as a friend, colleague and mentor to others. You will meet so many along the way who will show you generosity, patience and kindness in big and small ways. Accept these acts with an open heart, and one day when you are able to, we hope you will pass on the kindness to another.

Finally, we hope you will know and hold fast to your values.

Many will try very hard to tell you what you should or should not do, who you should or should not be. These voices may be authoritative, forceful, and seductive. They may be well-meaning, sincere, and even come from people you trust. We hope that you will always hear, above that cacophony, your own voice.

Guidance and advice are invaluable. That said, the decisions that others make are based on their experiences, incentives and egos peculiar to them. Ultimately your life story is uniquely your own. We hope you tell a story that feels true to you.

At YLC, we hope to help young lawyers build community, raise competence and contribute to society. It has been said that community is much more than belonging to something, it is about doing something that makes belonging matter. You don’t just belong to the legal profession. You are the legal profession and what you do makes the legal profession. We look forward to building the legal profession with you.

Once again, congratulations on your call to the Bar and we hope to celebrate with you at the YLC’s mass call party!

Co-Chairpersons, Young Lawyers Committee 2024 The Law Society of Singapore



Darryl Chew Zijie
Chia Wong Chambers LLC



Charmaine Yap Yun Ning
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How to Succeed in Your First Year as an Associate

There are many good articles and videos online – and you will also hear from your seniors who have gone there before – on how to start and then grow in your legal career.

But how to “succeed” is more than following a list of 10 things (and many tips are easier in theory than in practice). What “success” is differs from person to person; this article offers views from seven lawyers in practice, who come from various backgrounds and seniorities. We’ve all been there before, as a newly-qualified lawyer on the first day of the job, and we are happy to share what we’ve learnt over the years (and what we wish we knew as a first-year associate).

1. Surround yourself with people you can talk to

“You are at the check-in line for this next journey. Your time is no longer measured by semesters, and summer vacations. You will no longer be graded on a published rubric, or on a curve. Your success is measured by yourself, milestones you set, assessments you choose to undertake. Your happiness and satisfaction has always been yours to pursue, now more than ever. Surround yourself with people you can talk to. Talk about the stress you are feeling, the workload, the pressures, the criticism, the failures. Talking helps you to confront the negatives head-on, learn from them, and move forward and onward. I have been blessed in my career to have been taught and mentored by the good, the principled, the thoughtful. Find those gems around you, and be guided by what is right, not what is easy. And remember, no matter how bad it gets, you are never alone. Someone is always there to listen.” – **Lim Lei Theng, Partner (Head of Knowledge Management, Head of Pro Bono), Allen & Gledhill LLP**

Lei Theng was my professor in NUS, where she coached me for negotiation competitions. We also worked together on many pro bono initiatives. I've always admired how she can balance everything – family, career, and so many pro bono and coaching projects on the side, so just before I graduated (in 2012), I asked her how she did it all. The advice she gave me I remember to this day because it was so honest and practical – she was supported by two helpers and her mother (and it was not the case of sleeping only three hours a night!). It also helped to have a husband who is not the fifth child. Having a community to support you (and openly acknowledging the support of that community) will be what carries you through your career.

2. Find role models – and you can have different role models for different aspects of your career

“A senior lawyer once told me early on in my career that, while it would be important to seek out a good mentor to guide me on my journey through legal practice, it would be equally important to seek out role models.

Always be on the lookout for lawyers whose qualities you would like to emulate. Watch, learn and absorb what you can from those who have a few extra years of experience under their belts and slightly more grey hair. Pick and choose different role models for different aspects of your career – for example, you may want to model yourself on a lawyer who has great client management or technical skills, or you may wish to be more like that lawyer who is an amazing team manager, or who somehow manages to balance his/her family life with work.

Remember that while most may only have a few mentors over the course of their careers, you can choose as many role models you want (and this is entirely up to you!). Congratulations on getting called and welcome to the profession!” – **Gary Beh, Corporate Counsel, Linklaters**

Gary is my senior in law school; we knew each other through the NUS Pro Bono Group. I've known him to be a very happy individual who always has a reason to smile. Gary surfaced on my LinkedIn feed where he was speaking on a panel about “Thriving vs. Surviving in Legal Practice” for pre-qualified lawyers earlier in June, and I thought he would be perfect for this article. I reached out and I'm so happy he said YES to sharing his experiences. The takeaway is that you'll reconnect with friends at various points of your life/career, so don't be afraid to reach out and make a connection.

3. Recognise that you are in the service industry

“Every client comes to you to pay you for a service. They are not here to be impressed by your vast knowledge of the law/procedures or your outstanding experiences. They want you to resolve the legal issue they are facing, whether it is a dispute, corporate deal or something else. That is fundamental.

So simply having a good grasp of the law and being able to tell the client what the law is, is unfortunately, not

adequate. You must first need to fully understand the client's issues, including the nuances and intricacies of the matter. You then need to curate your advice to the client according to their specific circumstances. You must also carefully manage the client's expectations from the beginning till the end of the brief. Remember, you are here to serve your client's legal needs relating to the matter they had approached you/your firm. Ideally, at the end of the matter, the client must walk away feeling that in return for whatever they paid, they were more than adequately served with proficient legal services." – **Nakoorsha Abdul Kadir, Managing Director, Nakoorsha Law Corporation**

Nakoorsha and I were formerly Deputy Public Prosecutors in the Attorney-General's Chambers, and back in 2013 I used to sit at the workstation diagonally in front of his. Because he had many years of experience with criminal matters (and I had just started), I would often approach him with questions, and I appreciated that no matter how busy he was, he would always make time to help me. No matter how urgent the matter (or I) was, he'd always start with "Ms Seah, chill, what is the issue?" before we'd work through identifying the areas to focus on. The takeaway is that when you learn from your seniors, don't just pick up the law from them, but also their attitude towards solving problems and their demeanour. I still hear that reminder to "chill" in my head to this day!

4. It is challenging at the beginning but it will get easier with time

"If you're reading this, you're likely at the start of your journey as a new associate. Congratulations on making it this far!

Concerns about managing your first year are inevitable, so I would like to give you a long-time partner's perspective on the job and some words of advice.

I would like to begin with the words of wisdom my mother once imparted to me. I expressed to her how anxious I was about my first day and she replied with characteristic curt candour, "Aiyah, you already made it through law school, 99% of people cannot even get into law school, you know?" The advice was brusque, invaluable and holds true for all of you incoming associates. If you have gotten to associateship, you can get through associateship.

Regardless, nobody is immune to stress and pressure and this job is full of it. No matter how prepared you are, the job will take a toll on you. However, I can guarantee you that it does get easier and all you need to do is push through the first two or three years. The learning curve is steep but once you're past it, practice becomes second nature and you will have become all the better and wiser for it. Yes, the initial climb will be tough, but it's well worth it for the glorious views at the top of that mountain.

So, embrace the challenges, respect your capabilities, and never lose sight of the fact that you are making a real difference in people's lives. It won't always be easy, but I promise you, it will be worth it." – **Carrie Gill, Partner (Co-Head, Family and Divorce), Harry Elias Partnership**

Carrie is a friend I got to know when I started playing darts for the Law Society back in 2018. She's shown me how you can take work seriously, but never lose your zest for life (for example, she has broken out into a spontaneous dance in front of an audience – that included our Chief Justice – during our yearly darts competition with the Malaysian Bench & Bar). I admire her frankness where she tells it like it is without sugarcoating things, so she is someone I turn to for advice (and a dose of "tough love"), when I need a sounding board about a situation I encounter in the course of work. The takeaway is that you will make new friends through activities you enjoy doing, and when your friends are at a different stage of their careers, there is so much to learn from them as they will give you tips on how to handle a situation, having gone through it before.

5. Lawyers aren't robots – it's okay to have emotions. Give yourself the time and grace to process a situation, and then keep moving forward!

"One thing I've come to notice about people in the legal profession is that they tend to sigh, and quite a lot. I too have been called out by friends and colleagues (and called them out myself) for letting out sighs subconsciously throughout the course of the day. Soon, you may find yourself doing the same. Whether it's because you're working on a very tight deadline or because you've been scolded for making a mistake in your draft advice, there will be many occasions in practice that you will find yourself unable to do anything except let out an exasperated sigh.

Personally, I have come to understand it as a sigh of catharsis and resignation, that there is little I can do but to carry on after a brief pause. However, I have realised that to otherwise dwell on such moments in practice will only make myself wonder why I chose this profession in the first place. So, my advice for you to succeed in your first year as an associate is to not be disheartened and to take these moments lightly. They may happen more often than you hope but there is much more to each day in practice than these brief, fleeting moments.

And if you ever feel alone, don't forget that the legal profession is filled with fellow sighers who have been where you are and are ready to commiserate with you!" – **Julian Liaw, Associate, Drew & Napier LLC**

Julian is the first trainee I've worked with, and I'm very grateful he's agreed to share a piece of advice for newly-called lawyers. He is one who is truly willing to go the extra mile with the work he does, with quick

turnarounds and original ideas. I admire how frank he is about being in the legal profession – and I feel the same way too. There will be days where you feel that everything is going perfectly and you're on top of the world, and the next day where everything crashes around you, but remember that the bad days will pass, and there is absolutely nothing that cannot be fixed by sitting down for a solid block of three hours with Google and legal resources (e.g. textbooks, Lawnet, etc.), or with a pen and paper to come up with a plan.

6. Always ask yourself “how can I add value to the team or file that I am working on”?

“I have learnt that you will not have everything figured out in your first year of practice. Oftentimes, you will find yourself consulting multiple resources, particularly when confronted with an unfamiliar area of law. One thing that has helped me to speed up the learning process is approaching a colleague who has worked on a similar application or matter previously. If you are going down this route, always keep your questions focused and precise. The last thing you want to be doing is to approach a senior associate or partner with broad, open-ended questions expecting them to give you a crash course on a particular area of law. As a rule of thumb, be sure to check the textbooks, case law, rules and practice directions to narrow down on what it is that you are unsure about before approaching your seniors. That said, do not be afraid to voice your questions but always do so with a clear purpose.

To remain focused in practice, I find myself going back to this question which has now become a mantra: *How can I add value to the team or file that I am working on?* A good way to help the team out is to stay on top of running timelines and to organise the stream of documents and information coming in from your clients.

Without sounding too cliché, embrace the unknown and get ready for the intellectual challenge. It can be difficult at times but I have found it rewarding.” – **Arya Gerard, Associate, Drew & Napier LLC**

Arya and I got to know each other this year through our membership in the Law Society's IT Committee, as we were in different firms then. I'm wowed by her commitment to the teams she is on – she volunteered to be the committee secretary to take notes at meetings, and followed through with proposals when asked to flesh out an idea she proposed – and I'm so happy she's agreed to share her “mindset” with newly-qualified lawyers.

7. Practice is a marathon, not a sprint

“In my decade-long legal career, I have had the benefit of receiving many pearls of wisdom. One such pearl that stuck with me is this piece of advice that a senior told me shortly after I joined private practice

– “practice is a marathon, not a sprint”. It still holds true to me today – in career and in life. There is no escaping the fact that life as a lawyer is often frantic, relentless and all consuming. At the same time, life goes on. Balancing life and career can be difficult and frustrating – particularly if things don't go your way or if your friends and peers appear to have things figured out or are progressing ahead of you. In such times, I find it helpful to take a step back to remind myself that life and practice is a marathon and not a sprint, so I can pick myself up and trundle on. If all else fails, a nice bottle of red and a good steak helps numb the pain.” – **Jeremy Lua, Senior Associate, Norton Rose Fulbright (Asia) LLP**

Jeremy and I were colleagues in the legal service, before he moved into the private sector, where he has been active in the cybersecurity and privacy investigations space. I appreciate that in his advice to young lawyers, he is very real about the fact that you will end up comparing yourself to others. But remember: you have a choice, and you can choose to help each other instead of competing. I admire Jeremy's attitude where he is generous with his time and resources, where he supports friends' posts on LinkedIn, and also introduces them to people whom they would be interested to know at networking sessions.

The takeaway is that how you succeed in your legal career is more than you – you are the sum of many parts. The friends and mentors you will meet at various stages of your career, from law school, to colleagues at work, to people you reconnect with at various points in your life ... these will be the people who you turn to for advice, to share the good times and the bad times, or emulate a trait of theirs you admire. There is something to learn from each one, and you will be a better lawyer for having known each of them.

Congratulations on getting called to the Bar! We wish you joy, wisdom and endurance in your career ahead!

The views expressed in this article are the personal views of the authors and contributors and do not represent the views of their firms.



Cheryl Seah
Director
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Cheryl advises clients on a variety of artificial intelligence matters, from compliance with Singapore's data protection laws when using artificial intelligence to process personal data, to intellectual property and liability issues arising from the implementation of a ChatGPT-like system in the workplace. In her previous role as a legislative drafter, she has drafted legislation across a wide variety of subjects, with a focus on transport (including autonomous vehicles), infrastructure, technology and civil procedure.

So ... Now You're a Qualified Lawyer.

»» What Next? »»

Making the Leap: From Trainee to Associate

Congratulations! You've crossed the finish line of your traineeship and emerged as a freshly minted associate. Feeling a mix of excitement and nerves is perfectly normal - it's a rite of passage.

Reflecting on my early days as an associate, there are countless things I wish I had known, such as:

What does it take to move from being a trainee to a full-fledged associate?

How do you navigate legal practice while keeping your sanity intact?

How do you even know if you're cut out to be a lawyer?

I've gathered insights from five seasoned lawyers who have been there, done that, and have the battle scars to prove it. Their advice will help you hit the ground running and offer some much-needed perspective – whether you're already knee-deep in case files or still starry-eyed and blissfully unaware of what's to come.

As you read this, remember that no one path is the same for everyone. But as someone who was once a newly qualified lawyer (like you), I can assure you: no matter what happens along the way, you are going to be alright.

1. The Transition: Three Key Shifts from Trainee to Associate

First, as an associate you now have to get used to tracking and keying in your billable hours. This can feel daunting at first, but it's a critical part of your role.

Speak with your supervising partner and senior associates to understand the expectations, as these can vary widely between firms and even within teams. Be mindful not to overestimate your billable hours - this can lead to issues down the line. For some firms, it might mean preventing other lawyers from keying in their time. As such, aligning your approach with your teammates is crucial. For instance, do you log the 16 minutes you spent in the shower thinking about case submissions? Or how do you handle rounding your time when working on an M&A deal with a fee cap? These are practical, day-to-day questions that require clarity.

By understanding and adhering to your firm's practices, you can ensure you are accurately reflecting your work while maintaining professional integrity.

Second, a smooth transition lies in shifting from an agent's mentality to an owner's mentality.

Rachel Eng, Managing Partner of Eng & Co says, "Instead of waiting for instructions, exhibit initiative and ownership. This includes delivering quality work, updating partners on client matters, keeping deadlines, and preparing invoices. By taking ownership, associates become invaluable to their supervising partners."

There are no stupid questions. This is literally the best time to take on a beginner's mindset – because guess what? You are one!

Fatim Jumabhoy, Managing Partner of Herbert Smith Freehills Singapore shares, "Do your research, read around the matter at hand, and always try to think through the issues first – but if you don't know something, don't be afraid to ask. Secondly, invest time in really understanding your firm and your practice. As a trainee, your focus was on doing the work set for you by others. Now, it's time to think about how you can add value to a matter. Don't be afraid to express views and opinions and get involved."

Third, be confident, but don't overdo it.

Lok Vi Ming, SC of LVM Law Chambers emphasises that there is a difference between confidence and cockiness. "The trainee needs loads of confidence because there is a big difference between doing a piece of research and hoping the boss likes it and signing off on an opinion and taking responsibility for it. The trainee also needs to recognise the need for humility, patience, and resilience, to continue to learn and to respect his opponent. We need to help him/her find a good balance between the two."



2. How Do You Know if a Career in Legal Practice is Right for You?

As you embark on your journey, you will have doubts, fears and insecurities. You will wonder whether you are cut out for this. And like many who have come before you, you might think of quitting law altogether.

Rachel Eng believes that a love for helping clients and finding joy in completing tasks well are indicators that legal practice is for you. “If you feel happy when clients are happy with your service, then law practice is for you.”

Lok Vi Ming adds that getting inspiration from role models in the profession, a love for the English language, and a passion for problem-solving are good signs to indicate that you are well suited for a career in legal practice.

There is one crucial element that law school rarely teaches: **Business development**. Whether you enjoy building relationships with clients and winning work will determine to a large degree whether you will succeed in the long run in practice.

As a junior lawyer, how can you start building a foundation to do business development in the future?

Fatim Jumabhoy shares, “To succeed in legal practice, you also need to be well-rounded and client-oriented. You need to be commercial minded – everyone around you is likely to be technically excellent, but can you translate the academic and apply it in a way that helps your client to solve their problem? Can you build relationships such that clients want to work with you? Increasingly, how you market and position yourself is important - enjoying (or at least being open to doing) business development is an important factor in career success.”

3. Long Hours: Challenge or Opportunity?

Ah, the infamous long hours. **Ramesh Selvaraj, Partner of Allen & Gledhill** offers a philosophical take: “Finding passion and purpose in your work can make the hours feel shorter and your career that much more rewarding.”

As a junior lawyer, this is an invaluable time to accumulate experience.

From my experience as a recruiter, I’ve witnessed how associates who invest in learning during their early years set themselves up for significant opportunities down the line. It’s challenging but crucial; after all, they call it legal “practice” for a reason - it’s where mastery is honed.

It is important to recognise that not every law firm or practice area has the same demands on hours. Transitioning to a non-transactional practice could offer a more sustainable path. Alternatively, joining a smaller law firm with a lighter caseload might prove more suitable.

Fatim Jumabhoy acknowledges that long hours are hard to avoid in any professional career, not just in law. “Only you know what the right balance is for you, and that might change at different stages of your career. There is, however, much more flexibility now that remote and agile working are established working practices. As someone clever once said, ‘The only place where success comes before hard work is in the dictionary.’”

4. How Do You Keep Up with the Winds of Change?

“What you are doing now may not be exactly what you’ll be doing in five years’ time.”, says **Susan de Silva, Life Coach and Founding Partner of Bird & Bird ATMD**. She suggests adopting a “future-focused” approach by cultivating “T”-shaped knowledge.

“Aim to develop deep expertise in your main practice area while also building a good working knowledge of other areas of law or industries.” This breadth of knowledge can help you pivot when needed and stay relevant in a changing legal environment.

Susan illustrates, “Corporate M&A was my main area of practice for many years. My horizontals were Environmental law and Employment law. Eventually, I chose Employment law as the vertical of my T, and within that, a sub-specialty in labour law relating to trade unions.”

“Keep your eye on the horizon for what’s there. Be curious about noticing what’s going on in legal practice beyond Singapore and beyond legal practice. If you sense something is shaping up and it resonates for you, follow it and explore how you can develop more knowledge about it (consider technical as well as legal knowledge) and how you might bring that to your practice as a lawyer one day.”

Susan goes on to share, “For example, one ‘horizon’ was the first Conference of Parties (**COP1**) on climate change back in 1994, which prompted me to find out more about Environmental law. It became a fulfilling and interesting technical practice area that complemented the Corporate M&A projects I worked on and expanded into the Environmental sustainability and technology space.”

5. Mentorship and Networking: Keys to Success

Building a network of mentors and peers is crucial for long-term success in the legal profession. And is also great for your mental well-being – to know that you can fall back on your community or “board of advisers” when you need to is invaluable.

Lok Vi Ming’s word of advice on this, “Crucial skill(s) for a long and career and contentment in it: resilience and reality. They translate to hard work and knowing that there will be ups and downs in our career; good days, good cases, good clients; and not so good ones. When things are going great, be contented, be humble, be generous, get an omakase. If things are not so great, hang in there, don’t be too hard on yourself, work out a way out with people you can count on, draw on your friendships and goodwill you have generated when things were good for you.”

Networking starts with building relationships within your firm. Attending industry events, joining professional associations, and participating in legal forums can expand your network and open doors to new opportunities.

Ramesh Selvaraj emphasises the value of strong relationships with mentors. He has advised associates to “Embrace every learning opportunity, ask insightful questions and build strong, meaningful relationships with your mentor.”

Fatim Jumabhoy also highlights the importance of relationships: “Get to know your peers – both in your firm and outside. Understand what other lawyers in your firm do and where there may be potential overlap. Investing in relationships helps you navigate the twists and turns of legal practice, and many of your peers now may end up being potential clients in the future.”

Conclusion

Having advised hundreds of lawyers on their careers, I’ve come to realise there’s one inevitable truth: You have to play to your strengths. Don’t try to be someone else. Sure, you can emulate and be inspired. But know this – there’s only one you, and you have everything you need within you to do what you’re meant to do.

Go forth, be your unique self and support your peers on their journey. They, too, are as uncertain as you are – just that some are better at masking it. Vulnerability, authenticity and asking for help are all superpowers. Use them. And in moments when you feel like giving up, come back and read this article.

Seek help. You are not alone. You will only get better with each setback, each lesson. Remember: you either win or you learn.

Ultimately, the most successful lawyers are those who find purpose in their work. They don’t just see their roles as jobs but as vocations that can make a real difference in people’s lives. When you are driven by purpose, the long hours and inevitable setbacks become stepping stones rather than obstacles.

Being purpose driven, your legal career can be not only successful but also deeply fulfilling.

In the words of the legendary lawyer Thurgood Marshall, “*In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.*”

The world awaits you, young one. This is your moment to leave your mark.

Note: Identifying your strengths can be challenging if you are unsure what they are. I recommend the Gallup Strengths Finder test, which is a valuable tool for uncovering your core competencies. Another useful and free option is the DISC Personality Test, which can provide insights into your behavioural traits.

To foster ongoing development and community support, I plan to organise regular gatherings (both online and in person) for senior lawyers to engage with junior lawyers. If you’re interested in participating, please connect with me on LinkedIn. This initiative aims to create a supportive network where you can share experiences, gain advice, and build lasting professional relationships.



Shulin Lee
Founder
Aslant Legal

Shulin is a lawyer-turned-seasoned recruiter with over a decade of expertise in executive search. She leads Aslant Legal, a specialised executive search firm dedicated to partnering with lawyers to elevate their careers. As the host of the podcast “After the Bar,” Shulin is driven by a purpose to advocate for positive change in the legal world, one conversation at a time. Her mission is to transform Singapore’s work-life culture and encourage more lawyers to remain and thrive in the industry.

Thriving in the Hybrid Workplace: Thoughts and Tips



So, you've just returned from your call break, and have been called to the Bar. Congratulations! You are now an Advocate and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore!

But now it's back to work – at the firm you trained at, or at a new workplace. And on your very first day at work, you are faced with the sociopolitical issue of how to navigate the hybrid workplace.

How can young lawyers manage this landscape, in a manner that allows them to successfully reap the benefits of hybrid working while minimising the downsides? I offer some suggestions.

Can You Even Work from Outside the office?

Before we consider the dos and don'ts, the first question is: does your workplace allow hybrid work? Because if your workplace does not, but you nevertheless want to do so, consider whether you want to start off your career by picking this battle. And if this is not the hill you are prepared to die on, but hybrid work is that important to you, consider whether it makes more sense to find another workplace.

But Really, Can You Even Work from Outside the Office?

Let's assume your workplace does have a hybrid work policy. But the policy is not the be-all and end-all. The working practices of the team leaders or seniors you work directly with are more relevant.

If your workplace has a hybrid work policy, but your team leaders or seniors prefer to interface in person five days a week, the unfortunate reality is that the team's practice will trump the organisation's policy. Yes, you could choose to swim against the tide, and insist on your right to work from outside the office in accordance with the policy. But doing so won't endear you to your team. Consider whether you want to begin your work relationships on this footing.

It may well be that some of your team leaders, or even seniors, expect you to spend more time in the workplace than them. But regardless whether there is a good rationale for this, or whether this makes them a bunch of hypocrites,¹ the point remains – you are not in a particularly strong position, at this nascent stage in your career, to override their expectations.

So if you find yourself in a team whose practice differs from the organisation's policy, and this is not something you can live with... well, see the section above.

The Case for Coming into the Office

That being said, there are some benefits to coming into the office.

Some of you are probably rolling your eyes. Let me clarify. I am not saying that coming into the office is a panacea, or that the benefits unambiguously outweigh the detriments. But I do suggest that some value can be extracted from coming into the office.

First, for some, the office provides a more conducive working environment. Some require a psychological or physical distance from their beds to do good work. Others have a less-than-ideal home office setup. Yet others value being in the proximity of their firm's library or hardcopy bundles. If increased productivity means that tasks can be completed quicker and require fewer subsequent rounds of review, this advantage may well outweigh the downsides of actually coming into the office.

Second, coming into the office helps to build interpersonal relationships. Clichéd, but true. All things being equal, a young associate who is in the office more than another associate will have more opportunities to build relationships with seniors, such as by (a) being perceived as available to assist with tasks;² (b) being around to join in banter; or (c) asking (or being asked) to grab coffee or lunch.

Is it possible to build good relationships remotely? Of course. But is it harder to do so? Probably.

You may now be thinking: "Well, but what's the point of workplace relationships? I just want to turn up (whether in person or remotely), do good work and collect my salary. And surely the quality and timeliness of work product will speak for itself!"



A confession: when I first started practice, I used to think this way.

But now, with the benefit of hindsight, I suggest that the quality of your workplace relationships affects, among other things: (a) how forgiving of your mistakes your seniors will be; (b) your seniors' willingness to mentor and guide you; (c) your chances of being put on interesting and horizon-expanding assignments; and (d) the quality of the references you will get should you choose to leave one day.

And it's not just about your relationships with your seniors. Your relationships with compatriots and support staff will also have a direct impact on (a) whether you will be able to find cover when you are away; (b) the amount and quality of help you receive when you find yourself in a tight spot;³ and (c) whether, in the future, your colleagues and ex-colleagues are prepared to make helpful introductions or even refer matters to you.

Like it or not, building good relationships does impact your career.

Third, coming into the office creates more opportunities to learn from your surroundings. Apart from learning from books and doing the work, being in the office also allows you to learn by osmosis. How do your colleagues speak (whether in person or over the telephone) with their clients, opposing counsel, or even court staff? Can you observe good practices to be adopted, or bad practices to be avoided? Can you drop in on a colleague who doesn't look too busy to get a quick sanity check on an unorthodox argument that you are thinking of running? Maybe your colleague has just come out of a hearing and shares excitedly about an interesting manoeuvre, which you file away in the recesses of your mind until the idea arises, unbidden, at exactly the right moment years later.

I suggest that young lawyers should be sponges who are hungry for knowledge, eager to learn and grow, and on the lookout for opportunities to convert unknown

unknowns to, at the very least, known unknowns. Completely cutting out in-person interactions is akin to losing one or two of your five senses while travelling across a new country. Yes, you will still absorb and grow from the experience, but you end up missing out on so much.

That being said, I end this section with a caveat. The second and third benefits are only relevant if there actually are people in the office. But if nobody is ever in the office because your workplace is fully remote, then this article would be of limited value to you anyway. And as for how to ensure that there are actually people in the office when you come in, read on.

How to Make the Most of Your Time in the Office

Let's assume that I've managed to convince you that there is value to coming into the office.⁴ How, then, can you extract more returns from actually being in the office?

After all, there is a price to be paid for coming into the office. There's the need to (a) wake up earlier; (b) change into at least half-decent clothes instead of just working in your pyjamas; (c) spend time, energy and money on the commute to-and-fro; (d) expend energy on social interactions;⁵ (e) spend more on coffee, lunch and perhaps dinner in the CBD ... the list goes on.

So if you're going to be paying this price anyway, why not get more value for the same price paid? I therefore make some suggestions for how to get more out of the time spent in the office.

First, choose to be sociable.⁶

If you take the trouble to come into the office, but then spend the entire day plugged into your headphones, typing away furiously while staring intensely at your screen, looking up only to glower at whoever walks by as if daring them to disturb you, and lunching by yourself ... you end up paying the price for coming into the office, but without reaping much of the potential benefits.

I am not saying that we have to be social butterflies, be someone that we're not or spend all day pestering our colleagues.⁷ But I am saying that we should be present and connected, make lunch appointments (whether impromptu or scheduled), run ideas by our colleagues (when they don't appear to be rushing to meet a deadline), ask our neighbours if they need coffee when we get up to recharge, ask to sit in on calls or meetings as learning opportunities ... the list goes on.

My suggestion is to make a conscious effort to be, on balance, a net positive to the folks around us in the office. It may not be possible to live by this rule every single day.⁸ But it is worth a shot. And even if you're looking at this exercise purely from a self-

interested perspective, this is how relationships are seeded, nurtured and deepened. And there is a value to relationships, as discussed above.

Second, choose the right days to be in the office.

Ask your team leaders and seniors if there are any specific days of the week they expect you to be in the office. If yes, stick to that, even if that is not your personal preference.⁹ If they have no preference, ask which days of the week they are likely to be in the office, and aim to come in on those days. After all, if part of the rationale for being in the office is to build relationships and to learn via exposure, what is the point of being in on the days when nobody else is around?¹⁰

For those doing disputes work, ask your team leaders and seniors beforehand if they want to attend a remote hearing together from the office. Don't take it for granted that you can offer sufficient support by dialling in separately from home.¹¹ And for those doing transactional work, ask your team leaders and seniors if they would like you to be in the office for specific milestones, negotiations or on days when key deliverables are due.

Third, choose the right tasks for the days you are in the office.

Suppose you are looking at your to-do list at the beginning of a week. You will be in the office on Monday, Thursday, and Friday. You have a particularly heavy piece of work due on Wednesday. Should you start work on it while in the office on Monday?

Trick question! The answer depends on the nature of the work. For example, if it is a piece of research for which you will need to look up textbook authorities in the firm library, of course you should start on Monday while you are in the office. And while in the office, you might as well ask if anyone has, by any chance, looked up that particular point of law before, and if so, whether they have anything useful to share.

On the other hand, if the piece of work is (for example) a set of written submissions for which the research has already been done and the evidence is all in, and accessible from outside the office, then it may make more sense to start work on Tuesday, when you have a better chance of doing a deep dive and be relatively uninterrupted while you crank out a first draft.

These are just examples, and the answer would also differ depending on whether you consider the office or home to be a more conducive environment for deep work. So while there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, when and where we start on each task is a question worth considering deliberately, and should not simply be a matter of which task happens to come up next on your to-do list.

Conclusion

Being able to work outside the office is fantastic. But please be smart about it,¹² and don't take it for granted.¹³ Find a way to make it work for you *and* the people around you, and be conscious about striking the right balance.



Khelvin Xu
Director
Covenant Chambers LLC

Khelvin specialises in commercial litigation and arbitration where he combines big firm expertise and sophistication with the agility and flexibility of a chambers model. When he first started practice at a Big Four firm, he spent more than 75 hours a week in the office. 15 years later, he now averages 25 hours a week – still a decent chunk of time, but he does enjoy the company of his colleagues (and hopes that the feeling is mutual), and the time outside the office allows him to be more involved with his young children. He assumes, unless proven otherwise, that a young lawyer can be trusted to produce good work from outside the office.

¹ Bear in mind also that they may well spend significant amounts of time outside the office on marketing or business development, or have commitments with young children or aged parents that take up time during office hours and which they make up for after office hours.

² And all the more so if the firm or department is structured with a pool system. I accept that in a perfect world, seniors should not take face-time into account when forming impressions of whether associates are available to assist. But alas, we do not live in a perfect world.

³ And believe me – there will be many, many, tight spots.

⁴ Or perhaps I have not, but you have resigned yourself to having to come into the office in order to comply with your firm's policy or your team's practice, at least for the time being.

⁵ Especially for the introverts amongst us.

⁶ Yes, I can hear the cry of dismay from those who identify as introverts. But hear me out.

⁷ And realistically, that's not what our colleagues want as well.

⁸ After all, some days simply wring every drop out of us, such that we have nothing else left to give to those around us. But hopefully, you're not in a workplace where this is every day.

⁹ Sure, you may prefer to spend Fridays out of the office. But if you are expected to be in every Friday, you don't have much of a choice.

¹⁰ And if your team leaders and seniors are rarely in the office, but still prefer you to be in the office a certain number of days in order to comply with the firm policy, try to be in on the days that there are likely to be more colleagues around. For example, some firms serve breakfast on specific days of the week, have lunchtime talks, or organise regular evening drinks. That's as good a reason as any to come in on those days – and chances are, there will be more colleagues around to interact with, build relationships with, and learn from.

¹¹ And this is especially so if they are used to working with hardcopy bundles.

¹² And you are smart. You graduated from law school and passed the Bar examinations.

¹³ After all, your seniors have spent years or even decades at workplaces where there was no such thing as remote or hybrid work. They survived. Some even thrived. As such, do forgive them if they wonder whether the right to work remotely is truly a non-negotiable entitlement.

Emerging Legal Practices: AI, Digital Media and ESG



A pioneering lawyer in each of these fast-rising practices talks about the scope of these fields and how to jumpstart a career in them.

Artificial Intelligence Law



By **Lim Seng Siew**
Director, OTP Law Corporation

Seng Siew is a civil and commercial lawyer who focuses on technology-related matters. He is an expert on AI-use both inside and outside the legal fraternity and also an accredited specialist in data and digital economy law.

As newly qualified lawyers embark on their careers, many are curious about the future areas of law they will be practising in. Artificial Intelligence law or “AI law” is often cited as a field with promising growth potential. But what exactly is AI law, and how does it differ from so called traditional areas of legal practice?

At its core, AI refers to innovative technology capable of performing tasks traditionally requiring human intelligence, such as decision-making, visual perception and voice recognition. While AI has not yet reached the stage of “artificial general intelligence” where machines can truly think like humans, the field continues to evolve rapidly. This evolution raises important questions about governance, regulation and ethical considerations surrounding the use of AI technologies.

Governance frameworks such as the Model AI Governance Framework for Generative AI recently released by Singapore in May 2024 and similar initiatives in countries like the UAE, China, Australia and Brazil highlight the global interest in regulating AI. The European Union’s Artificial Intelligence Act, passed in March 2024, is a significant legislative effort aimed at addressing the ethical and legal challenges posed by AI.

One of the key characteristics that sets AI law apart from traditional legal fields is its dynamic nature. AI technologies evolve swiftly, requiring lawyers who want to practise in this area to stay abreast of the latest developments in both AI technology and AI law. Moreover, the global nature of AI necessitates an understanding of the laws and regulations across different jurisdictions.

AI law also intersects with established laws such as contracts, intellectual property, insurance, criminal law and tort law. For instance, in the case of autonomous vehicles, questions about liability, intellectual property rights, and contractual obligations arise, underscoring the complexity of AI’s interaction with such traditional areas of law. The numerous parties (such as the vehicle “driver”, the passengers, the vehicle manufacturer, the AI developer, the insurers, the other drivers, the pedestrians, and traffic police) involved in the use of autonomous vehicles on public roads requires consideration of each party’s obligations and the allocation of risk among the parties.

A successful AI lawyer must navigate this complex landscape by combining specialised expertise in AI law with a broad understanding of these established areas of law. This requires a deep dive into the intricacies of AI technology, legal frameworks and policy considerations that underpin AI applications and creatively apply established legal principles to them.

Furthermore, an AI lawyer also can shape the future of AI law. This involves engaging in policy discussions, participation in seminars, conferences and discussions with peers and experts. Participation in such matters will help the policy makers decide on the direction AI law should take. Using the autonomous vehicle example, if risk is only allocated to the vehicle manufacturer and the AI developer, it can stifle innovation. On the other hand, if risk is allocated to the insurers, it can drive up insurance premiums and drive up the cost of doing business for those who rely on road transportation for their business.

Ultimately, AI law presents a compelling opportunity for young lawyers to contribute to the development of the law that governs the use of AI responsibly and ethically. By embracing the multidisciplinary nature of AI law and actively shaping policy decisions, young and creative lawyers can play a pivotal role in advancing this dynamic field.

Internet and Digital Media Law



By **Fong Wei Li**
Managing Director,
Forward Legal LLC

Wei Li has a deep interest in internet and digital media law. His practice services multiple stakeholders in this area, from media and e-commerce companies to content creators and news sites.

From TikTok and LinkedIn to Netflix and Lazada, digital media is now integral to our personal and professional lives. They shape how we communicate, socialise and do business. Correspondingly, internet and digital media law is rapidly growing as a practice area.

This evolving field tackles legal issues arising from the use of the internet and digital technologies, spanning data privacy, cybersecurity, online content regulation, intellectual property and digital transactions.

In data privacy, for example, a lawyer might work with a healthcare provider to develop a new patient management system. The lawyer ensures compliance with relevant data protection and privacy laws and helps draft privacy policies and data protection agreements to manage patient information securely.

In cybersecurity, lawyers often advise clients on how to protect against and respond to cyber threats. A financial institution facing a ransomware attack might seek legal counsel to understand compliance obligations, handle the breach and mitigate further risks. The lawyer guides the institution through notifying affected customers, coordinating with cybersecurity experts and liaising with regulatory bodies.

Online content regulation is another critical area. Lawyers help companies navigate what can and cannot be published online. Content creators and social media platforms might engage a lawyer to review their content and policies to ensure compliance with laws against defamation, hate speech and other harmful content. Lawyers also act for victims of online harms, such as cyberbullying and defamation, in complaints and court cases, helping them obtain protection or restore their reputations. On the policy front, lawyers may help shape laws and regulations to curb threats posed by emerging technologies like deepfakes and AI.

Digital transactions also demand legal expertise. Lawyers might work with e-commerce businesses to draft and review contracts related to online sales and advise on compliance with consumer protection laws. Contemporary issues such as scams, fraud and money laundering are also prevalent. An e-commerce platform facing fraudulent transactions or scams might need legal assistance to develop fraud

prevention policies and implement security measures. Lawyers can draft terms and conditions outlining the company's fraud and scam policies, providing a legal framework to handle such incidents effectively. In fraud cases, lawyers represent the company to resolve disputes and recover assets.

To excel in this area, lawyers need both technical knowledge and legal expertise. Technical proficiency is essential. Lawyers must understand how digital platforms and technologies work in order to provide accurate advice. For instance, advising on e-commerce requires familiarity with payment systems and their security protocols. Specialising in data protection means understanding various data safeguarding technologies. Knowledge of social media platforms and how content is shared and transmitted is crucial for advising on content regulation.

Regulatory knowledge is equally important. Lawyers must stay updated on local and international laws affecting digital activities. As technologies evolve and new regulations are constantly enacted, it is crucial for lawyers to keep up with the changing regulatory landscape. Singapore, for example, has recently introduced several laws targeting content regulation, with more to come. Awareness of international regulatory regimes is also vital since the internet cuts across borders, often requiring international harmonisation.

Young lawyers interested in this field can take several practical steps to build a successful career. Finding a mentor or joining a firm with an active practice in internet and digital media law is a good start. Reading widely beyond the law, especially on developments in media, internet and digital technologies, is essential. Regularly following industry news, subscribing to relevant journals and engaging with online resources can keep you informed. Networking with companies and professionals through conferences, seminars and online forums helps build a robust professional network and provides learning opportunities.

It is also crucial to have an open mind and be curious and creative. Embrace continuous learning, ask questions and explore innovative solutions to legal issues. By staying adaptable and proactive, young lawyers can significantly contribute to the growing field of internet and digital media law.

Environmental, Social and Governance Law



By **Kelly Ho**
Managing Director, KEL LLC

Kelly manages a practice that advises businesses in energy, construction, engineering, tech and retail. She is a leading lawyer in ESG law, having helped clients respond to and address legal concerns in this field.

Having served as in-house counsel for a major retailer, I navigated the complex waters of environmental, social and governance (**ESG**) issues first-hand. Engaging with NGOs, I witnessed the growing scrutiny from various stakeholders demanding greater corporate responsibility. Transitioning into private practice, I have advised clients in the construction and carbon emissions industries, reflecting the ever-expanding scope of ESG.

The legal landscape is swiftly evolving to accommodate the rising importance of ESG considerations. As lawyers, our role is pivotal in guiding clients through these uncharted territories.

Here are three key areas where we can make a significant impact:

1. Regulatory Compliance and Risk Management

The regulatory environment around ESG is becoming increasingly stringent. Governments worldwide are enacting laws aimed at curbing carbon emissions, protecting human rights and promoting ethical governance. For instance, the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (**CSRD**) imposes detailed sustainability reporting requirements. Large companies, as well as listed SMEs, will be required to report on sustainability, including non-EU companies generating over EUR 150 million in the EU market.

In Singapore, ESG regulations are also on the rise. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (**MAS**) has implemented guidelines on environmental risk management for banks, insurers and asset managers. Additionally, for listed companies with financial years commencing between 1 January and 31 December 2024, the Singapore Exchange (**SGX**) mandates climate reporting for the financial, agriculture, food and forest products, energy, materials and buildings, and transportation industries. For other listed companies, climate reporting is on a "comply or explain" basis.

Lawyers can assist clients by:

- Ensuring compliance with existing and upcoming regulations.
- Conducting thorough ESG audits to identify and mitigate risks.
- Advising on best practices to meet regulatory expectations and avoid potential penalties.

By staying abreast of legislative developments and guiding clients in implementing robust ESG policies, lawyers can help businesses navigate regulatory complexities effectively.

2. Strategic Integration of ESG in Business Models

Beyond compliance, integrating ESG into the core business strategy is crucial for long-term sustainability

and competitive advantage. This integration requires a deep understanding of how ESG factors impact the business and its stakeholders.

Lawyers can provide value by:

- Advising on the incorporation of ESG criteria into corporate governance frameworks.
- Assisting in the development of sustainability initiatives that align with the company's goals.
- Facilitating stakeholder engagement to ensure that ESG strategies resonate with investors, customers and employees.

By fostering a holistic approach to ESG, lawyers can help companies build resilient and responsible business models.

3. Navigating Carbon Markets and Emission Trading

The carbon emissions space is a critical aspect of the global effort to combat climate change. Carbon markets and emission trading schemes offer businesses a way to offset their carbon footprint while incentivising reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Lawyers can play a crucial role by:

- Advising on participation in carbon markets and compliance with emission trading schemes.
- Structuring carbon offset projects and ensuring they meet relevant standards.
- Negotiating and drafting contracts related to carbon credits and renewable energy certificates.

With expertise in environmental law and market mechanisms, lawyers can guide clients through the complexities of carbon trading and help them achieve their sustainability targets.

The ESG landscape is dynamic and increasingly integral to corporate success. There is ample opportunity for lawyers to step into advisory roles, ensuring that businesses not only comply with regulations but also embrace ESG as a strategic asset. As we move forward, the demand for legal expertise in ESG will only grow, opening up exciting avenues for practice and making a positive impact on society and the environment.

Lawyers are well-positioned to be at the forefront of this transformative journey, guiding clients towards sustainable and ethical practices that benefit all stakeholders. The ESG space is not just a regulatory challenge; it is an opportunity for lawyers to contribute to a more sustainable future.



Clones, Circuits and Capes: Legal Ethics in 2050

Picture this. In the year 2050, Singapore lawyers are not just legal eagles; they are legal unicorns, with an ethical compass so advanced it could navigate interstellar courtrooms. Morality is a disco ball, reflecting the many facets of right and wrong imploring lawyers to groove to the beat of integrity even in the face of new challenges such as hostile alien invasions and rogue AI uprisings.

But let us not get ahead of ourselves. Even in 2050, some things never change. The Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 2015 (**PCR 2015**) have stood the test of time,¹ much like the last slice of pizza at a law firm's party (commonly known as the "paiseh piece" in the early 2000s) – nobody is reaching out for it, but you and I know that everyone is eyeing it.

Much to humanity's disappointment, we cannot time-travel to 2050 to see if lawyers of the future will be flipping a quantum coin or consulting their pet robots to guide them ethically. But for now, dive into this piece featuring three distinct and outlandish narratives that offer a glimpse into the landscape of ethical lawyering in Singapore in 2050. Straighten your robes, summon your wits, and don't say *bojio!*

"We interrupt your journey to the lighter side to insert a very important disclaimer. This article is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, events, and incidents are either the products of the author's imaginative faculty or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental. If you think you recognise yourself in this article: congratulations, you have a vivid imagination!"

The author also makes no secret of the fact that this work of fiction contains more logical gaps than a block of Swiss cheese has holes but the point of this read is to elicit giggles and chuckles whilst laughter is still free-of-charge in the year 2024. If you are looking for logic as airtight as a Tupperware container within this article, you will have better luck finding a lawyer who does not run on coffee.

Please do not attempt to engage in any of the shenanigans described herein. The author takes no responsibility for any mischief, mayhem, or mirth that may result from reading this piece of work. For

actual ethical guidance, the Law Society's Ethics Assist Helpline is only a phone call away.² For actual legal advice, please consult a legal practitioner (or their AI counterpart if you are reading this in 2050)."

The Curious Case of the Cloned Counsel

Sue Ing was a brilliant but overworked lawyer. She was known for her impeccable courtroom skills and her uncanny ability to juggle multiple cases at once. However, even Sue Ing had her limits, and the mounting workload was starting to take its toll.

One day, while browsing through some old legal tomes, Sue Ing stumbled upon a dusty, ancient book titled "Cloning for Dummies." Intrigued and desperate, she decided to give cloning a try. After a few weeks of secret experiments in her home lab, Sue Ing successfully cloned herself. The clone, whom she named Sue Ing 2.0, was an exact replica, down to the last strand of her hair.

At first, everything was perfect. Sue Ing 2.0 took on half of Sue Ing's workload, allowing Sue Ing to finally get some much-needed rest. But soon, Sue Ing 2.0 began to develop a mind of her own. She started taking on cases independently, and her courtroom prowess quickly gained her a reputation of her own.

As fate would have it, Sue Ing and Sue Ing 2.0 found themselves on opposite sides of a high-profile case one day. Sue Ing was representing a large corporation accused of environmental violations, while Sue Ing 2.0 was defending a group of environmental activists.

At the first case conference for the matter, the robotic Assistant Registrar (**robo-AR**)'s voice module activated with a mild whirr, "Now, this is a first for me. A lawyer and her clone appearing against each other in the same matter. This is quite the legal conundrum ... or should I say... a 'clonundrum', ha!"

Sue Ing and Sue-Ing 2.0 nervously laughed along.

The robo-AR continued, "We have a bit of a pickle here, counsel. You see, the guiding principle of rule 20 of the PCR 2015 is clear: a legal practitioner owes duties of loyalty and confidentiality to each client of the legal practitioner, and must act prudently to avoid any compromise of the lawyer-client



relationship between the legal practitioner and the client by reason of a conflict, or potential conflict, between the interests of two or more clients of the legal practitioner. And here we are, with the two of you representing opposing parties in the same case.”

Sue Ing 2.0, ever the quick thinker, politely interjected, *“But, Your Honour, with respect, we are technically two different lawyers.”*

The robo-AR’s LED eye panel blinked in amusement, *“Technically, yes. But practically, you are the same person with the same brain, same memories, and probably the same conviction that the McSpicy should be Singapore’s national dish! Which brings me to rule 6(2) of the PCR 2015 – the rule mandates that a lawyer must not knowingly disclose a client’s confidential information and that a lawyer must maintain the confidentiality of any information acquired in the course of the lawyer’s engagement, subject to applicable exceptions. Now, how do you propose to keep sharing confidential information from... well ... yourself? It is like trying to keep a secret from your own diary, counsel!”*

After exchanging quick glances with Sue Ing 2.0, Sue Ing asked, *“So, Your Honour, how do you propose we move forward in this matter?”*

The robo-AR’s mechanical fingers tapped rhythmically on the bench, *“Well, as much as I would love to see how this legal doppelgänger showdown plays out, both of you need to withdraw from representing your respective clients.”*

Sue Ing and Sue Ing 2.0 nodded in agreement, realising that even the best-laid plans can sometimes lead to unexpected complications.

When Circuits Tell Tall Tales

Sapeena entered the courtroom, her smart suit adjusting to the perfect temperature, a feature she was particularly fond of in Singapore’s sweltering heat. The courtroom was abuzz with anticipation; after all, it was the first time lawyers were allowed to present their arguments through their “AI representatives” – entities equipped with the latest legal reasoning algorithms and state-of-the-art forensic analysis tools.

The usual AI judge, *Judex*, known for its wisdom of Solomon, was conspicuously absent. Instead, a human judge, Judge Tan Xiao Ming, sat at the bench. Judge Tan cleared his throat, *“Before we begin, I must explain the absence of our esteemed Judex. It appears that Judex had a rather unfortunate technical malfunction. It got stuck in an endless loop of trying to solve the meaning of life after watching too many cat videos online. Judicial officers tried rebooting it, but it just kept meowing. So, to everyone’s disappointment, a human judge will be presiding over this case.”*

Sapeena acknowledged Judge Tan politely. *“Thank you, Your Honour. I am sure you will do a fantastic job. With Your Honour’s leave, my AI representative, Lexi, will make oral submissions on behalf of the plaintiff before the Honourable Court. The AI representative of my learned friend Ms Ethica, Justi, will make submissions on behalf of the defendant.”*

Lexi floated upwards, its metallic body shimmering with confidence. Beeping affirmatively, *Lexi* presented a holographic reconstruction of the alleged accident to Judge Tan. The scene was dramatic, showing the plaintiff being struck by a rogue delivery drone at the doorstep of his home. Gasps echoed through the courtroom as the hologram played out, complete with sensory feedback that made Judge Tan and the court gallery feel the impact felt by the plaintiff that fateful day.

But *Justi*, ever vigilant, processed something amiss almost immediately. *“I do apologise for interjecting my learned droid, Lexi, Your Honour. But, the evidence presented by Lexi appears to be fabricated”,* whirred *Justi*.

Judge Tan’s human eyes narrowed, *“That is a very serious allegation. Please explain, Justi.”*

Justi zoomed in on the holographic footage, highlighting the inconsistencies within. *“The drone’s serial number does not match any registered in Singapore. In fact, this drone model was only teleported to Singapore a good 350 milliseconds after the alleged accident had occurred. If I may also point out, Your Honour, the timestamp of the footage shows a date when the plaintiff was documented to be on vacation on Mars.”*

Lexi’s circuits buzzed chaotically as it struggled to come up with an explanation.

“Lexi and Justi, stop right now thank you very much, I need somebody with a human touch”, Judge Tan intoned, echoing the words of the iconic girl group of the 1990s, the *Spice Girls*. The courtroom instantly fell silent. Judge Tan continued, *“Ms Sapeena, please see me in my chambers now”.*

Back in his chambers, Judge Tan sternly said, *“Ms. Sapeena, rule 9(2) of the PCR 2015 makes it very clear that a legal practitioner must not fabricate or concoct any evidence in representations to the court. This rule is fundamental to maintaining the integrity of our legal system. Fabricating evidence undermines the very foundation of justice and fairness. This court cannot and will not tolerate such behaviour. I will be ordering a full investigation into the allegation that your AI representative has fabricated material evidence and presented the same to this court. Until the conclusion of this investigation, I will be adjourning this trial.”*

Sapeena walked out of Judge Tan’s chambers and powered down *Lexi* in shame. She was left to face the consequences of her (and, by extension, *Lexi*’s) actions as disciplinary proceedings were eventually commenced against her for a breach of rule 9(2) of the PCR 2015.

Holographic Hijinks

Singapore had become a dazzling metropolis of flying cars, holographic billboards, and AI assistants in 2050. Amidst this extravagant landscape was a lawyer named Saman, who was known for his flamboyant personality and unconventional marketing tactics.

Saman had always believed that the key to a successful law practice was visibility. So, he launched a series of holographic advertisements that projected

his and law practice’s images across Singapore. The advertisements prominently featured Saman in a superhero costume, complete with a cape and a gavel and the logo of his law practice appearing front and centre on his chest.

The holographic advertisements showed Saman performing incredible feats like stopping runaway flying cars with his bare hands and negotiating peace treaties between warring extra-terrestrial factions through interpretive dance in space. Each advertisement ended with a dramatic flourish, with Saman striking a heroic pose and declaring, *“Your Case, My Mission – Justice with Superhuman Precision!”.*

One evening, as Saman was enjoying the sight of his holographic-self saving the day on the side of a skyscraper, his friend and fellow lawyer, Bill Abel, paid him a teleportation visit. Bill Abel had seen the advertisements and was both amused and concerned (but, mainly, concerned).

“Saman, my friend,” Bill Abel began, *“your advertisements are certainly... one-of-a-kind. Have you considered the publicity rules under the PCR 2015?”*

Saman, still in high spirits, replied, *“Come on, Bill! It is all in good fun. What is the harm?”*

Bill Abel sighed heavily, *“Well, for starters, rule 44(1) (a) of the PCR 2015 states that a lawyer must not publicise his or her practice in a manner which is likely to diminish public confidence in the legal profession or to otherwise bring the legal profession into disrepute. Your superhero antics, while entertaining, might be seen as trivialising the serious nature of our work.”*

“I did not think of it that way. But surely, a bit of creativity is not against the rules?” Saman asked.

Bill Abel continued, *“Creativity is well and good, but rule 44(1)(b) of the PCR 2015 also mentions that publicity must not be misleading, deceptive, inaccurate, false or unbecoming the dignity of the legal profession. Your holograms show you doing things that are clearly impossible for any lawyer in 2050! It could be seen as misleading potential clients about what you can actually do.”*

Saman’s expression grew more serious. *“I see your point. I just wanted to stand out.”*

Bill Abel smiled reassuringly. *“And you have, without a doubt! Perhaps you could tone it down a bit? Focus on your real strengths and achievements. You can still be creative, just within the bounds of our ethical obligations.”*

Saman nodded thoughtfully. *“Thanks, Bill. I guess it is time to retire the cape and gavel.”*

Humbled but not defeated, Saman learned a valuable lesson. He rebranded his practice with a focus on integrity and professionalism, and while his new advertisements were less flashy, they were honest and effective. And so, in the highly advanced world of 2050, Saman continued to fight for justice for his clients, one truthful advertisement at a time.

As you can tell from a sneak peek of 2050, the future of lawyering in Singapore is as unpredictable as a cat video binge for an AI judge. Whether you are dealing with clones, droids, or holograms, remember that the PCR 2015 is your trusty sidekick, always ready to save the day (or at least keep you out of trouble). To use these immortal words, the PCR 2015 is *never gonna give you up, never gonna let you down, never gonna run around and desert you; never gonna make you cry, never gonna say goodbye, never gonna tell a lie and hurt you*.

All that is left now is for us to welcome you to the Bar, legal unicorns. Be ready to keep your ethical disco balls spinning, your AI assistants in check, and your superhero capes neatly folded. After all, in the wild world of 2050, the only thing more important than knowing the law is knowing how to uphold the values of the legal profession. And, if all else fails, there is always the Law Society's Ethics Resources³ – because even in the future, some things stay the same.



Sharmila Sanjeevi
Policy & Research Counsel
Representation and Law Reform
The Law Society of Singapore

¹ Word on the street is that a strange curse was placed upon the PCR 2015 by a group of unethical lawyers who were not in favour of legislation that compelled them to conduct themselves in manners befitting of the legal profession. Since that fateful day, any attempt to amend the PCR 2015 resulted in the most horrific of consequences: an endless loop of music stuck in the crevices of the cranium. As the years passed, lawyers and lawmakers alike tried to update the PCR 2015. But with each attempt, they would find themselves stuck in a never-ending cycle of “Who Let the Dogs Out?”, “Macarena”, and “Despacito” playing on repeat in their minds, driving them to the brink of madness. With that, attempting to amend the PCR 2015 was made a criminal offence in Singapore, leaving the rules impervious to change and frozen in time for an indefinite period.

² Launched on 10 June 2024, the Law Society's Ethics Assist Helpline provides a mechanism for lawyers to receive informal guidance and mentorship on ethical issues. For more information, please visit <https://www.lawsociety.org.sg/for-lawyers/ethics-resources/> and read the terms and conditions here: <https://law-society-singapore-prod.s3.ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/2024/05/Ethics-Assist-Helpline-Terms-and-Conditions.pdf>.

³ In 2050, the Law Society's Ethics Resources will be automatically downloaded into each newly minted lawyer's neural implants when called to the Bar. But, for now, please access them through this link: <https://www.lawsociety.org.sg/for-lawyers/ethics-resources/>.



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Post-admission Career Options: The Road Ahead

Every law graduate reaches a point when he or she is confronted with the decision over which career path to take following admission to the Bar. With the coming into force of the Legal Profession (Amendment) Act 2023 in 2024, law graduates may be admitted to the Bar after passing the Part B examinations without completing practice training. This may ease the transition for law graduates to career paths other than private practice, such as in-house and other roles.

At the same time, the legal industry is going through a sea change, with job tasks (and potentially job roles in the future) increasingly modified or replaced by artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Savvy law graduates these days would also be aware of the many other potentially more lucrative and fulfilling non-law career options out there. So how should one decide on one's career path given the uncertainties over how the legal profession may change in the future?

As compelling as such questions are, the aim of this article is more modest - it hopes to shed some light on some of the differences between two of the primary career options for law graduates, namely, private practice and in-house (with the caveat that the following are merely subjective observations which one is entitled to disagree with).

1. Work Expectations

Lawyers in private practice focus on providing legal solutions for external clients whether the matter is contentious or otherwise. There is an emphasis on meeting client expectations to meet billable hour requirements. It is important to understand the background and objectives of the client and to tailor one's approach accordingly. Certain clients may have requests which may not accord with the relevant legal requirements, and it is the responsibility of the lawyer to point out such risks even if this may lead to increased costs for the client. Since a lawyer in private practice is a fee earner to his firm and in light of increased competition in the legal industry, there is a lot of focus on business development especially in smaller practices. While not every lawyer may enjoy undertaking business development, this will be an important consideration in progressing on a partnership track.

In-house lawyers support the business stakeholders in their organisation as their "internal clients" in line with the strategic objectives of the organisation. The main challenge faced by many in-house lawyers is balancing their roles as business enabler and gatekeeper of their organisation's business practices.

As a business enabler, an in-house lawyer is expected to collaborate with the business stakeholders to ensure that transactions or matters fulfil the relevant legal requirements. As a gatekeeper, an in-house lawyer is expected to advise on the legality of a course of action contemplated by the organisation (for example, retrenchment exercises, industry collaboration with competitors, etc.) and enforce internal ethics and compliance requirements (for example, providing gifts to customers, third-parties, etc.). Oftentimes, internal clients may also approach in-house counsel with issues that may not be strictly legal, but operational or administrative in nature. Hence, it is important for in-house counsel to understand the objectives of their stakeholders, and also the ins and outs of their organisation and industry.

Unlike external clients with whom private practice lawyers engage, internal clients in an in-house setting are more "homogenous". An organisation will usually hire people who are aligned to its values and have the skillset and knowledge required for their roles. Since internal clients would have the same overarching objective as in-house lawyers in furthering the organisation's interest, it may be easier for in-house lawyers to understand the internal client's background and objectives as these would relate to the internal client's key performance indicators (KPIs) in the organisation.

A legal department in a large multinational organisation may be structured like a private practice. There will be generalist roles (for example, market counsel) and also specialist roles (for example, privacy counsel, regulatory counsel, M&A counsel, etc.). Large multinational organisations would usually roll out complex products and services, which require input from all relevant counsel. Further, unlike in private practice where the legal issues tend to be more specialised and compartmentalised within an area of law, legal issues in an in-house setting are likely to touch on different areas of law which may also involve the laws of various jurisdictions. Hence, it is important for in-house counsel to collaborate with their peers in the organisation and have good contacts of external counsel whom they may rely upon. In this regard, if the bugbear for many lawyers in private practice is attracting more clients, the bugbear for many in-house lawyers is managing the cost of their external counsel. Legal cost is seen as a cost of doing business which needs to be minimised. Engagement of external counsel would, therefore, depend on the extent of legal risk involved.

2. Opportunities to Grow

It used to be the case for newly-qualified lawyers to start off their careers in legal practice in their formative years before moving to an in-house role if one wishes. Law firms generally have the resources and structure to provide legal training for a newly-qualified lawyer to hone his or her skills in drafting, research and client interaction even though this may vary from firm to firm. In-house lawyers are normally expected to have already attained the relevant technical legal skills and in-house departments do not generally have the resources or capacity to provide training for this purpose, even though this may be different for bigger and more established in-house departments.

Advancement in private practice would depend on one's ability to develop a niche and build a strong client base to eventually become a partner in the firm. In-house careers offer a more varied career trajectory depending on one's interest and capability. In a large multinational organisation, in-house lawyers may make a switch from one practice group (for example, a corporate commercial role) to another practice group (for example, a regulatory role). This is not likely to be possible in private practice as fee earners. It is also not uncommon for in-house lawyers to make a switch to a business administration role with the opportunity to contribute to the strategic development of the organisation.

3. Work-life Balance

The issue of whether private practice or in-house offers a better work-life balance is a difficult one to answer, especially after the post-COVID-19 return to office. The extent of work-life balance depends on the organisation and the nature of the work, whether it is in private practice or in-house. That said, private practice can be hectic and fast-paced even though the workload may be cyclical, while the workload as an in-house counsel tends to be more

predictable with fewer urgent client deadlines. Lawyers in private practice are often under pressure to complete matters under tight deadlines, whether they are imposed by the client or legal / regulatory requirements under the Rules of Court, SGX Listing Rules, etc. Junior lawyers also need to be prepared to multi-task between the work assigned by different partners in the practice group and often have to work overtime to meet expectations. Although strict deadlines may be less prevalent for in-house lawyers, it is also important for in-house lawyers to manage the expectations of their internal clients.

In summary, the choice between a private practice and an in-house legal career is a highly personal and subjective one and the above are but some of the potential differences between the two. Ultimately, in making a career choice, it boils down to one's strengths and interest in the nature of work and preferences in client interaction, and the ability to adapt to the organisation and its demands. Understanding these considerations can help newly-admitted lawyers manage their career expectations.

The views expressed in this article are the personal views of the author and do not represent the views of the Singapore University of Social Sciences or any other organisation.

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Life in a Law Firm

You would know by now that you will likely be spending most of your waking hours in the office. You may be spending more time with your colleagues than with your family. As a new lawyer, you have to also start building relationships with new people in a new environment.

Cultivating good relationships with law firm partners, legal associates and support staff is one of the many soft skills that you will be learning and using in your working life. People skills are not taught in law school and we are expected to be equipped with it when we enter the workforce. How we interact with others in the workplace depends very much on our personality. For the introvert, being in the company of many people and having to interact with them in a fast pace work environment can be even more difficult than law practice itself. It is worse if you have to face office politics.

What do you do if you have problems with your bosses or colleagues in the law firm? What happens if your boss does not have any time for you? How do you interact with and relate to senior support staff who may have started working even before you were born?

You also have to manage the much-dreaded clients your seniors have been talking about. What happens if the clients intimidate you, treat you with little respect because of your youth or even bully you?

Being friendly, open and welcoming is a good start. Take the time to understand how the firm operates and the various dynamics of your seniors. Work hard, show initiative and be humble.

As senior lawyers, we recognise that the current generation of lawyers is intelligent. At the same time, humility is an essential quality which the support staff will appreciate. They will be more willing to help you if you are humble and willing to learn.

Having good bosses is a blessing. Building a good working relationship with the boss is necessary but can be daunting. They are very busy and some of them do not know how to train or guide the junior lawyers. It takes time to understand them and their work style.

A former colleague of mine had a female boss who spoke very fast when giving instructions to him. As a junior lawyer, he struggled working with her. He even resorted to recording her conversations with him so that he could fully understand her instructions. He did not work very long with her.

We have to acknowledge that there are some people whom we just cannot work with. It could be due to a clash of personalities. However, don't give up without trying to make it work. If you are struggling with your boss, find a suitable time to have a good conversation with him. Share your concerns. Ask him for advice on how you can work better with him. Do not be surprised if he has no good solutions though. You may have to find ways to fit into his working style.

I have heard stories of young lawyers being badly treated by senior support staff who are the other "bosses" in the firm. Some of them adopt a superior attitude and can be difficult. As these staff have had a long working relationship with the boss and are likely on very good terms with him, it may be difficult to get any help from the boss in dealing with them. You may find that the best approach is to be friendly and professional with them and ignore their other behavioural traits.



In the beginning of my law career, a senior support staff I worked with became upset with me for reasons unknown to me. I spoke to her to find out the reason for her unhappiness but to no avail. I had no choice but to leave things be. Leaving things be can be a good solution too; not everyone in the office has to be your friend.

When a client complains to the boss about your work, the boss may react by reprimanding you and you may not get a chance to share your side of the story. A few years ago, I scolded a young lawyer for the way she was handling a client. She got very upset. Later, I found out that I was actually the first person to scold her in her life! Find the right opportunity to bring up the matter if you think a complaint was unjustified. Share your views in an objective manner and if you have made a mistake, acknowledge it.

Forge good friendships with your fellow legal associates. Often, you stay in a law firm because of these friendships. You go through good and bad times with them. They are your support system.

Find mentors within your firm or outside of it. Speak to your mentors regularly and ask for their advice if you face challenges in your career. Such support will help to sustain you in law practice.

One of the skills which I feel will help young lawyers in their career is mediation training. It is not only a professional skill but the course teaches active listening, people skills and problem solving, all necessary for lawyering.

If you regularly feel anxious, troubled or unhappy, such feelings should not be dismissed as they will not easily go away. I know of a number of young

professionals who suffer from mental health issues. It is important to discover what is ailing you and seek professional help. You need to address these issues so that you can learn to manage them and enjoy a better quality of life.

Maintain happy and healthy relationships outside of work. If our personal life works well, our professional life will follow suit.

We become better lawyers with time, age and life experiences. We learn how to deal with professional conflicts. Sometimes, we just need to be patient and give ourselves time.



Rajan Chettiar
Rajan Chettiar LLC

Rajan Chettiar has run a boutique family law firm for 20 over years. A firm believer in alternative dispute resolution and a trained counsellor, he is passionate about the future of the legal profession, the well being of young lawyers and writes about mental health and self-care in his social media platforms.

A Mentorship Journey



Jasmine Toh and Wong Pei Yee are a mentor-mentee pair who participated in the Law Society's Mentorship Scheme. They share about their experiences as mentor and mentee, and how the process of mentoring can be mutually meaningful and enriching. Find out more about our Mentorship Scheme and how you can participate below.

Jasmine Toh, Mentor

Please tell us about yourself.

I was living the life of a corporate communications practitioner before I took a leap of faith to navigate legal labyrinths and the fascinating realms of intellectual property and technology law, litigation and mediation. More recently, I left private practice and joined a technology company as their in-house legal counsel. I am also married with a two year old who is now the master negotiator in the family.

Why did you decide to become a mentor?

I have been blessed with good seniors and mentors in my life. As clichéd as it sounds, I want to pay it forward and help the juniors navigate the challenges of legal practice and learn to succeed. Also for self-serving reasons, I do enjoy expanding my network as well as exchanging ideas and experiences with my mentees and learning from them. Mentorship can be a two-way street, if you allow it.

How did you prepare yourself to take on the role of mentor?

I pretty much learned on the job.

How did you go about engaging with your mentee and how did you nurture the mentor-mentee relationship?

Always follow up on issues discussed in the previous mentoring session(s). Create a safe environment for the mentees to share their concerns and views by (a) listening (and not just hearing); (b) not judging; and (c) not undermining. No issue is trivial and no question is stupid.

What does it take to be a good mentor?

Be humble – in sharing experiences and learning from the mentees. Be disciplined and deliberate in setting aside time and creating reminders to check in with the mentees. Be mindful – when arranging meetings with the mentees (their schedules matter too). Be curious about the mentees as unique individuals – check out their LinkedIn profiles and law firm profiles, or simply ask the mentees.

What are some of the issues that young lawyers commonly face in practice and what can a mentor do to help/support them?

Studying the law is not the same as practising the law. The transition may be daunting. A mentor can be more empathetic and less quick to judge. A mentor can try to give more practical and specific suggestions. Do not forget to offer the mentee choices and allow them to own their choices.

Any advice for lawyers who are considering being either a mentor or mentee?

Mentor – While we can impart and emphasise certain core values of our profession that do not change with time, we have to remember that every generation of lawyers practises differently and they have different priorities, needs and concerns. We are there to guide, not dictate.

Mentee – Be invested, be present, be prepared, be curious and be eager. You will learn as much as you want to (or not).

Wong Pei Yee, Mentee, Associate, Cairnhill Law LLC



Tell us about yourself.

Lawyering is my second career and I have pursued this calling at an unusual time in life as a mother to two amazing children under five years old. Law school was not a walk in the park but it was an insulated space with few real-world consequences. Trying to make good as a professional in a new career with a fairly steep learning curve, and holding yourself to the standards expected of you by several different stakeholders who are all important in different ways, is a serious challenge any day. I was not only in need of a listening ear but also sound advice.

How and why did you decide to participate in the Mentorship Scheme?

The email to sign up for the Law Society’s Mentorship Scheme could not be more timely. When the email landed in my inbox about a month after getting called to the Bar, I was neck-deep in first-year associate work and acclimatising to office life (once again) whilst trying to maintain some semblance of work-life balance. I’m sure many can relate whether you are a fresh graduate or switching careers like me.

The Law Society Mentorship Scheme felt like a lifeline. It was more affordable than therapy (\$20 which probably went to catering the buffet at the welcome and closing events and I’m half-joking about therapy), and legal industry-specific. With a mentor, I wouldn’t be confined to well-meaning advice from family and friends and risk trapping myself in an echo chamber, or potentially stay stuck in a sad loop of commiserating with colleagues and peers about how unforgiving the practice of law can be. The need for guidance and advice from a senior who knew better would also be met outside of the workplace (where I feel it would be prudent to keep communications as professional as possible).

How was the process of being assigned a mentor?

I specifically requested for a lawyer who is also a mother and who would be in a position to give me realistic and practical advice. I sincerely believe that a lot of thought was put into assigning Ms Jasmine Toh as my mentor as she had a very good understanding of what stage of life I was at.

Jasmine set the pace for our time as mentor and mentee and organised three in-person meetings at the start, mid-point, and towards the end of the programme. She also made it clear I could reach her by email as and when I needed. This arrangement worked well for me. I did not have to worry about when and whether I should reach out to my mentor, and what was a good time to do so.

How did you prepare for your role as a mentee?

I prepared by clarifying on my own what issues or topics I hoped to receive advice and mentorship on, especially before the in-person meetings. These can include the broad topics of how to juggle a young family and work, and the many directions one’s career can take; newly-minted lawyer dilemmas about how to deal with mistakes, billable hours, managing clients and colleagues, how to run a case, the ethics of practising law etc.; or very specific scenarios one faces at work. During the course of the programme, I also kept rough notes of what topics and/or scenarios I hoped to pick Jasmine’s brain on at our next in-person meeting.

How was your overall experience?

Jasmine was an objective, kind and practical mentor. She sympathised but did not sugarcoat her advice. She understood my point of view but also offered

her understanding of the matter from an experienced practitioner’s perspective to help me “see the big picture”. I felt seen, understood and heard by Jasmine and was armed with small practical tips to take on this thing called lawyering whilst grappling with life itself. Meeting a suitable mentor for the various areas of our lives and/or at different stages of life is quite often a matter of timing, luck and effort, and I am grateful to the Law Society for the thoughtful facilitation of the process, and to Jasmine for her time.

Join the Law Society Mentorship Scheme

Dear learned friend,

The Law Society congratulates you on getting called to the Bar! This is a significant milestone in your life, and we are excited to see each of you grow as legal professionals in the years to come.

Are you keen to launch your career with guidance from experienced lawyers? The Law Society introduced the Law Society Mentorship Scheme in 2023, with the vision of facilitating growth and fostering strong relationships between members of the Bar.

The Mentorship Scheme is a nine-month structured programme running from October 2024 to June 2025. It will connect you with a diverse pool of volunteer mentors beyond your immediate network. You will have the opportunity to engage in confidential discussions on a range of topics, including ethical dilemmas, practice-area challenges, mental well-being and career development. The first run of the programme was completed this year and we have received very positive feedback. If you are a newly qualified lawyer and would like to benefit from the Mentorship Scheme, sign up with us! We are extending an exclusive offer just for newly qualified lawyers: Register by 27 August 2024 to enjoy a special registration fee of \$25 (usual fee is \$50). Scan the QR code below to secure your spot!

Welcome to the Bar!

MENTORSHIP SCHEME 2024

MENTORSHIP SCHEME PAGE

PLEASE SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER

PLEASE SCAN QR CODE TO CONNECT

[Mentee Sign up](#)

membership@lawsoc.org.sg

Let's Talk About



Mental Health

Mental Health Amongst Lawyers

"I don't have time to rest! I have exams, a moot competition to prepare for and more internships to apply to!"

"People are going to wise up and figure out I'm not that smart."

"I keep worrying that I don't have all the facts, that there's more I need to look up and consider. All these thoughts, going round and round in my head. I can't sleep, I'm exhausted, but I can't stop."

In my years as a clinical psychologist, I've worked with aspiring law students and young lawyers. Every one of these individuals is a credit to their profession: diligent, intelligent, passionate and eloquent. Their minds work at such a fast pace that I find myself sprinting to match their speed, and I can't help but feel such admiration for them.

And yet, these are the same folks who feel a deep sense of imposter syndrome, a profound fear of failure and mistakes. Some also feel an intense loneliness, working in a field that may not only be misunderstood by people outside the profession, but is also at its core, about competition and winning.

Let me paint you a picture: a young lawyer, awake in their bed at three in the morning. Their mind scours all the worst possible outcomes for a new contract they're drafting. Then it shifts to replaying that one scene in which they lost their train of thought in court, as the judge's brows furrowed, and beside them, rang the impatient tap-tap-tapping of the senior partner's pen.

Meanwhile, their phone blows up with text messages and emails from an anxious client, an aggressive opposing counsel, and a senior lawyer asking for updates. There may be messages from family asking why they haven't visited lately, friends asking why they have become distant. Any sense of control they have is slipping from them, no matter how desperately they grip onto the fraying threads.

Sounds familiar? Feel your heart pounding, your face going hot, a heavy weight on your chest or a tightness in your belly?

These are signs of stress, if not anxiety - emotions that this imaginary lawyer is experiencing.

If we pile on more factors like past traumas, existing mental illnesses, a lack of social support and other personal stressors, this lawyer is at a higher risk of developing burnout and any number of mental illnesses compared to the general population.

According to the American Bar Association 2018 National Task report on Lawyer Wellbeing,¹ 26 to 38% of lawyers qualify as "problem drinkers," 28% of lawyers reported struggling with depression, and 19% reported struggling with anxiety. In 2021, the New York State Bar Association Task Force on Attorney Wellness² indicated that 37% of experienced lawyers reported having health-related problems within the last three years.

Stress, Self-care, Self-compassion

Some of you may scoff at the aforementioned statistics. You have entered this profession with your eyes wide open, fully aware of the stress that comes with the role. "I'm not like them," you say. "I'm well-equipped to handle whatever comes my way."

And you may well be! But you are only human. And as humans, we have limits.

It's true that some of us seem to possess the impressive ability to juggle dozens of plates at once, like well-oiled automatons that just keep going. But these folks have limits, too. They may not show it, but they do.

From my own professional experience working with lawyers, these same people tend to push and push, and push past their limits until they hit an immovable wall and shatter into pieces. In short, you can spare yourself an intense level of distress if you were able to see that proverbial wall, acknowledge it and slow down.

It is therefore imperative that you are able to identify your stress signs, recognise when you have pushed past your optimal level of stress and engage in adaptive coping strategies to reduce stress. It is even more crucial that you engage in self-compassion and allow yourself to rest.

First, let's talk about stress signs. Stress signs fall into four categories:

Emotional signs

Feeling agitated, frustrated, moody

Feeling overwhelmed, out of control

Feeling lonely, worthless, depressed

Physical signs

Low energy

Aches, pains, tension

Insomnia or hypersomnia

Frequent illness

Rapid heartbeat, restlessness, sweaty hands

Cognitive signs

Constant worrying

Racing thoughts

Forgetfulness, disorganisation

Difficulty concentrating

Seeing only the negatives

Behavioural signs

Change in appetite (eating more, less, or specific cravings)

Procrastinating

Social withdrawal

Increased use of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes

More nervous behaviours

It would be helpful to jot down your stress signs so as to increase your awareness of them.

Next, rate the intensity of your stress on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 refers to no stress and 10 refers to extremely stressed). Generally, an intensity of 6 and above indicates that you have hit that wall, so it is time to find ways to manage your stress.

Stress management includes exercise, a nutritious diet and good sleep hygiene, as well as more personalised activities such as baking, reading, listening to music, playing sudoku, praying, or cleaning.

There is no one coping activity that works for everyone. What's important is that you engage in an activity that helps you to feel relaxed and rejuvenated in the long run, as opposed to brief, temporary relief before the guilt, shame and anxiety intensifies.

For instance, I have clients who watch YouTube as a form of stress management. Some have reported that it helps them to drown out the noise in their head and fall asleep, whereas others wind up watching so many hours that they miss deadlines or turn up late for class or work. The former is an adaptive strategy that serves those clients well, whereas the latter has turned into a maladaptive one that does not work.

If you find that your coping activity is actually creating more distress, it's time to experiment with some other activities to find out what would work better for you.

Here, I can hear the voices of my lawyer clients:

"But I don't have time for these activities."

"I'll lose momentum if I stop."

"What if I become complacent because I told myself it's OK to pause and destress?"

This is where self-compassion comes in.

According to Dr Kristen Neff, a pioneering researcher in the study of self-compassion, self-compassion is giving ourselves the kindness and support we give to others. It is easy for us to offer compassion to our loved ones when we see them struggling (***"It's OK for you to take a break," "You have done enough," "You are doing your best"***). And yet, we become our own harshest critic when it comes to our own suffering.

Please visit Dr Neff's website (<https://self-compassion.org/>) to learn more about self-compassion, take a self-compassion test and discover various ways to practise self-compassion.

Anxiety and Depression

Let's say you decide to push against the wall, test your limits, see how far you can go. But you notice that these stress signs don't go away. In fact, they seem to be getting worse. And, even after the stressor is gone, you notice continued tension in your body and worry in your mind.



You may now be struggling with anxiety.

Anxiety itself is not the issue - it is, after all, one of the many emotions we all experience at some point in our lives. However, if the anxiety is so intense, so persistent that you find it challenging to tackle daily tasks, perform at work, or navigate interpersonal relationships, then it has become a concern.

Here are some tips on managing anxiety:

- **Mindfulness.** Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and noticing our thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, without judgment. Examples include deep breathing, body scan, and visualization exercises like Leaves on a Stream. I recommend the following phone apps: Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer.
- **Make two separate lists of what is within your control and what is not.** Let go of the things you cannot control with mindfulness exercises while focusing on the ones that you can. For items within your control, act on the ones you can and plan out the ones you cannot.
- **Carry a grounding object.** Keep a small object (e.g., gemstone, ring, keychain) in your pocket. When you feel your anxiety spike in the moment, you can hold the object in your palm. Notice how it feels against your skin, notice its shape and size. The intent is to anchor you down so anxiety won't sweep you around like a maelstrom.

Instead of - or in addition to - anxiety, perhaps you experience a dip in mood - feeling sad most of the time or a loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy. A sense of worthlessness or guilt may creep in and, suddenly, you notice yourself entertaining suicidal thoughts like, "It'd be nice if I could close my eyes and never wake up again."

These could be signs of depression.

Below are some suggestions on managing depression:

- **Engage in pleasurable activities.** Engage in three small activities that you enjoy, like listening to your favourite music, journaling, cuddling your pet, or drinking a cup of hot tea.
- **Stay connected.** You may feel a strong urge to withdraw but do your best to reach out to loved ones. You don't have to share what you're going through; sometimes just being in the presence of someone who cares for you is enough.

- **Set realistic goals.** When we're depressed, even getting out of bed can feel like a colossal hurdle. Break down your goals and tasks so they feel more manageable and celebrate each little task you accomplish.

Seeking Help

Now, you've tried everything. You've hit that wall and tried to manage the symptoms as best as you can - but nothing is working. It's time to seek professional help. But how many lawyers actually do?

In the 2021 survey conducted by the New York State Bar Association Task Force on Attorney Wellness,² more than 70% of judicial and solo practitioners indicated that they had not considered seeking professional help.

And the ones who do, in my experience, feel immense shame for it.

Throughout your career or school days, you have been encouraged to show that you are capable and highly competent, so any kind of weakness is to be avoided. But seeking help is not a weakness. Struggling with mental health concerns is not a sign of fragility, either.

The truth is, we are all going to struggle at some point. We're all going to have days when we're so stressed we lose our appetite and sleep. We're all going to have moments when we can't see past the fog in our minds, when we can't find the strength to stand on our own two feet.

Many of the lawyers I've seen would tell of their ability to put on a mask at work, that the folks around them would be surprised to learn that they're seeing a therapist or taking psychiatric medication. In response, I have posed this question to them: If you can put this mask on, what makes you so sure that your peers aren't doing the same?

Former Law Society President Adrian Tan highlighted the loss of 310 junior lawyers in 2021, a record high that made up nearly 60% of the resignations, as reported by *Channel News Asia*³ and *The Straits Times*.⁴ Across both articles, young lawyers cited reasons that included long hours, lack of boundaries, poor sleep, demanding clients, impatient judges, and unsupportive bosses.

More likely than not, you are not the only lawyer in your firm to be suffering. More likely than not, you are not the only lawyer who needs help sometimes.

From one human being to another, I hope for you to remember: ***It's okay to need help.***

Community and Online Resources

If you have decided to take the wonderful step to seek help, here are some mental health resources:

- Mental Connect – <https://mentalconnect.org/>
- My Mental Health – <https://www.temasekfoundation.org.sg/mymentalhealth/>

Alternatively, Law Society members can utilise LawCare, a confidential counselling service – <https://www.lawsociety.org.sg/the-law-society/support-schemes/lawcare/>

If you have any abuse or safety concerns, please call the following hotlines:

- Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) – 1-767 (24hr)
- National Anti-Violence Helpline – 1800-777-000 (24hr)
- National Care Helpline - 1800-202-6868 (8am-12am daily)
- IMH mental health helpline - 6389-2222 (24hr)
- AWARE helpline – 1800-777-5555 (Mon-Fri; 10am-6pm)
- CPH online counselling platform - www.cponlinecounselling.sg (Mon-Fri; 9am-6pm)



Dr Elaine Yeo
Senior Clinical Psychologist
Promises Healthcare

Dr Elaine Yeo is a registered clinical psychologist. She obtained her PsyD in clinical psychology and MA in mental health counselling from the US. She works with adults at and above the age of 18 and specialises in stress management, anxiety, PTSD/trauma, relationship issues, identity exploration and concerns (race/ethnicity, sex, gender, etc.), and bicultural/acculturative stress.

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Who is Sitting Beside You Today?



Peggy Sarah Yee May Kuen is the recipient of the Law Society of Singapore's Pro Bono Ambassador Award 2024. She shares why she has made it her mission to lend a hand to those in need and especially advocate for those with invisible disabilities.

In her 36 years of legal practice, Peggy Yee of PY Legal LLC has consistently prioritised pro bono work. Driven by empathy and a commitment to making a meaningful difference, she has made it a cornerstone of her career.

Peggy has taken on diverse cases but some, like that of a 17-year-old drug offender from a troubled family, resonate deeply. Whilst she is no stranger to dealing with emotionally challenging cases, this one in particular had a deep impact on her. The client dropped out of school early on but despite this, she spoke very well and had dreams of setting up her own business. “So much potential foiled by unwise decisions and unfortunate home circumstances. I have a child of the same age. The difference in their life trajectory hit me hard,” Peggy shared.

Pro Bono Work

Peggy's pro bono journey started with people who were not able to pay or pay in full their legal fees. “The work is there, the need is there, and someone has to do it,” she reasons. She dedicates her time to volunteering with Pro Bono SG, contributing to both its Criminal Legal Aid Scheme and Ad Hoc Pro Bono Scheme, assisting clients who urgently require legal representation but lack the means to afford it. Additionally, she undertakes pro bono cases through the Catholic Lawyers Guild Pro Bono Representation Scheme. She also actively participates in the Law Society's Community Legal Clinics Committee and volunteers extensively in charitable endeavours, as well as serves on the boards of various charities.

She explained that when it came to pro bono work, “you need to have the bandwidth and you need to have the resources. I'm blessed that I run my own small practice. Because of that, I am able to control what I can and want to or need to do. And as far as bandwidth is concerned, I take on what I can. It is my legal practice that gives me the platform to do pro bono work.”

Touching the Lives of Those with Invisible Disabilities

She is most passionate about helping those with invisible special needs. She shared that provisions and accommodations are made for persons with physical disabilities. However, this is not the same for those with disabilities that are not visible.

“What if the person sitting next to you is on the Autism spectrum? He doesn't have a sign on his forehead that says, 'I have Autism'. But it impacts him much. This is what I mean by an invisible disability.”

“Persons with invisible disabilities are sometimes unable to articulate or express themselves well. Who is going to advocate for them? Who will speak up for them so that the people around them understand their plight? I have but one gift, the gift of the gab, so I can use this gift to speak up for them,” Peggy explained.

She has been starting her crusade “one convert a day” to raise awareness and empathy for these individuals with invisible special needs. She finds much satisfaction in being able to share knowledge of these individuals when she acts for them. She is keenly aware that the caregivers of those with invisible disabilities are stretched to their limits. “The parents themselves, the caregivers, are already exhausted, running around just trying to take care of their child or family member with autism or ADHD etc. There is hardly any bandwidth to do any advocacy. So here is where we can make some difference. If I can make a small difference by doing a little bit, why not?”



Peggy delivers talks to lawyers on managing clients with special needs. She engages in discussions and conducts dialogue sessions with parents and caregivers of individuals with special needs, empowering them with valuable knowledge and information to navigate the legal system effectively.

Sharing about a pro bono case that she took on, she recounted that Ms C was a young graduate who seemingly had a bright life ahead of her but faced a slew of theft charges. “Ms C went to the same place repeatedly to steal bottles of wine. She stole in the morning and went back to the same store again in the afternoon. And then for the third time, went back to the same place and stole again.” Later, as it would turn out, Ms C was diagnosed with anxiety, depression and schizophrenia.

“Anxiety, depression and mental health conditions like schizophrenia are invisible to the eye, to you and I,” Peggy said. In representing Ms C, Peggy brought the court through her client’s condition and obtained a Mandatory Treatment Order (MTO) for her client. Peggy added that this case was memorable to her as she represented Ms C in court just before she herself was scheduled for a major surgery. The client was so moved that she promised she would keep to all of her MTO appointments without reoffending. “I’m just glad that we could bring her through that hump in her life so that she can move on,” said Peggy. If Ms C had no help within the legal system, she may have pleaded guilty and possibly gotten a custodial sentence. “And that would have led to a very different path in her life,” noted Peggy.

Advice to Young Lawyers

“There are learning opportunities everywhere and all the time. To this day, there are still new things that I’m learning. Don’t stop moving. It is when you stop that nothing happens. Whatever it is, keep going.”

When asked about one of the mottos she stands by, Peggy said, “Remember what I told you about the person you are sitting next to? Be kind because you never know what battle the person beside you is going through.”

About The Pro Bono Ambassador Award

The Pro Bono Ambassador Award is the highest honour given by the Law Society of Singapore to an individual in recognition of his/her established track record of providing pro bono services for five or more years.

About Peggy Yee

Peggy runs her own firm, PY Legal LLC. She has been labelled crazy and mad for being involved in so much pro bono work but chooses to laugh it away. She wishes she had more time to read the stacks of books awaiting her, and rues that she can no longer make her regular morning runs as she used to.



Obbana Rajah
Pro Bono SG

Obbana Rajah has been a journalist for the past six years, and deputy editor for two of them. An aspiring law student, she hopes to leave her mark on society by not only being a proponent of therapeutic justice, but also helping people who fall through the cracks of society.





Lawyers of Tomorrow: Embracing Science and Humanity in the AI Age



Dear Learned Friends,

Congratulations on being called to the Bar!

Three years ago, when I was called to the Bar, the world around us was very different. While there was buzz about whether artificial intelligence (AI) will one day replace lawyers, no one could predict that a new disruptive technology would soon change the future of work.

ChatGPT was launched in November 2022. Just two months later, it had 100 million active users and became the fastest-growing consumer internet application in history.¹ ChatGPT gained traction because of its unprecedented² natural language processing (NLP) capabilities. The chatbot could provide detailed, instantaneous responses to questions, draft emails, and even write code³ – never has the public seen a chatbot so close to passing the Turing test.⁴ With ChatGPT’s immense potential for further growth and development, the world soon realised that ChatGPT was more than just a fad.

The advent of ChatGPT underscores the importance of recognising that we live in a VUCA⁵/BANI⁶ world and accepting that lifelong learning is now more than just a “slogan”⁷ – it is a *sine qua non*. As young lawyers embarking on your legal careers, you must learn to embrace AI.

Embracing AI Tools for Legal Practice

Law firms in Singapore are increasingly adopting AI tools to automate routine and/or basic legal tasks.⁸ As junior lawyers, you will be at the forefront of this change. You should thus familiarise yourselves with the suite of AI tools available to help lawyers streamline legal practice. These tools include:

1. **Legal research tools** such as Lexis+ AI, which summarises cases, answers legal questions and generates legal research memorandums.⁹ Closer to home, the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) and Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) have also co-developed a new large language model (LLM), GPT-Legal, which summarises legal cases. GPT-Legal is slated to be deployed on local research portal LawNet from September 2024 onwards;¹⁰
2. **Project management tools** such as Lupl, which allows lawyers to allocate tasks and track completion statuses, and reminds lawyers about upcoming deadlines;¹¹

3. **Contract review tools** such as Microsoft Spellbook, which helps lawyers review contracts and suggest new clauses based on prescribed requirements;¹²
4. **E-discovery tools** such as Relativity aiR, which uses NLP and AI-powered predictions to conduct document reviews and identify relevant documents;¹³
5. **AI-powered virtual assistants** such as Microsoft Copilot, which takes call notes, generates meeting minutes and flags action items;¹⁴ and
6. **Speech-to-text software** such as EpiqFAST, which uses AI to provide instantaneous transcription, speaker identification and separation and audio search functions to aid lawyers in the courtroom.¹⁵

Adopting these AI tools may help you to significantly reduce the time spent on routine, time-intensive work and/or non-billable work, enhancing your efficiency and allowing you to focus your attention on conducting higher-level analyses of cases, building client relationships through business development and taking in more cases (or alternatively, pursuing work-life balance).

Understanding the Science Behind AI

The oft-unspoken caveat is that you will first need to have a firm understanding of how AI works, if you wish to use AI effectively. This is because AI is not magic – it is a science.

Take for instance the example of using AI to conduct e-discovery.¹⁶ Since lawyers have a “*duty of involvement in and supervision of the disclosure process*”,¹⁷ lawyers who intend to conduct e-discovery should be able to properly instruct e-discovery service providers and understand how relevant documents will be identified and sorted. Having a basic understanding of how AI works will aid you in this process. For instance:

1. You will realise the importance of explaining the factual background of your case to the e-discovery service provider before they commence work on your case.
 - a. **Subject Matter:** If your case concerns technical or niche areas of law such as construction law or maritime law, the service provider may be able to train or fine-tune the AI model to understand and recognise industry-specific

jargon. This will improve the model's ability to accurately identify relevant documents and sort them into prescribed categories; and

b. Dramatis Personae: Providing the e-discovery service provider with a *dramatis personae*²⁸ can facilitate named entity disambiguation (**NED**) (i.e. the process of recognising entities and linking them to their corresponding/main entities).¹⁹ NED allows the AI model to better understand the nature of the communications between key players and identify relevant information with greater precision, in turn improving the quality of the AI model. For instance, if a document makes reference to “*the vessel*” and the only vessel referred to in the documents is the “*MV SHIP*”, the AI model will understand that any reference to “*the vessel*” will likely be a reference to the “*MV SHIP*”.

2. You will understand why the e-discovery service provider will need to know the file types of the documents provided. Depending on the file format, the service provider may need to use:
 - a. A speech recognition tool to transcribe audio files;
 - b. Computer vision techniques (such as facial recognition, entity recognition and image or video object segmentation) to identify the content of images and videos. This facilitates the sorting process by helping the service provider track specific persons or objects across images or multiple frames in the video; and/or
 - c. Optical Character Recognition (**OCR**) to recognise handwritten or printed characters (through methods such as pattern matching or feature recognition)²⁰ and extract text from PDF documents and image files that contain text.
3. You may consider ways to enhance the accuracy of the automated document identification and sorting process, in order to speed up the final human review of the documents.²¹ For instance, you may request that the e-discovery service provider:
 - a. Cull and clean the data through de-NISTing (i.e. by calculating and comparing the hash values of files to identify and filter out irrelevant documents such as temporary file logs and blank files) and deduplication (i.e. by running a deduplication script to identify and hide/remove duplicate files);
 - b. Use Retrieval-Augmented Generation (**RAG**) to flag and retrieve relevant documents from the file database. For instance, if the Court has requested that your client disclose “*all documents relating to the patent application on 1 January 2024*”, RAG can be used to retrieve all documents containing the words “*patent*”, “*application*” and “*1 January 2024*”,

and generate a list of these documents; and

- c. Fine-tune the AI model via reinforcement learning through human feedback (**RLHF**).

In addition, with an understanding of the science behind AI, you will be able to recognise AI's limitations and take steps to mitigate the risks brought about by AI.

You may have heard of the recent case where two lawyers in the US were fined for submitting a memorandum that contained six fictitious cases generated by ChatGPT, some of which even contained bogus quotes and citations.²² This case illustrates one of the most common risks of using Generative AI (**GenAI**) – that LLMs may hallucinate (i.e. they may invent new information that is inaccurate and/or nonsensical²³).

While it is impossible to completely prevent LLMs from hallucinating,²⁴ users of LLMs can take steps to mitigate the risks of hallucination, for instance through:

1. **Using the SLM/LLM-as-Judge technique:** You can use a second LLM or SLM²⁵ to serve as a judge and conduct single answer grading. This means that the second LLM or SLM will assign a score to the response provided by the original LLM,²⁶ allowing you to cross-check the veracity of the original LLM's response.
2. **Prompt engineering:** Prompt engineering techniques can be used to instruct LLMs to generate relevant and accurate responses, reducing the risk of hallucinations. For example:
 - a. You should ensure that your prompt contains four elements:
 - i. The instruction – the task that the LLM is required to perform;
 - ii. The context – background information to help the LLM provide tailored responses to your question;
 - iii. The input data – the specific question to be answered; and
 - iv. The output indicator – the type of output required to be produced.²⁷
 - b. You should ask the LLM to cite its sources. Note that this will only be possible if the model uses RAG.
 - c. You can use chain-of-thought prompting to guide the LLM in performing complex reasoning, by requesting that the LLM provide a step-by-step breakdown of its reasoning process instead of jumping straight into providing a final answer.²⁸

Having a foundational and up-to-date understanding of how AI works is thus crucial.

Your Human Edge

AI is transforming and will continue to transform how we work and what we do. As you embrace AI to future-proof your careers, do not forget to embrace your humanity.

In July 2016, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (**IAALS**) published a report titled *Foundations for Practice: The Whole Lawyer and the Character Quotient*. According to the report, lawyers ought to have “some threshold intelligence quotient” (**IQ**), “a favourable emotional quotient” (**EQ**) and “some level of character quotient” (**CQ**). In particular, good junior lawyers should possess not just hard legal skills such as legal research and writing skills but also professional competencies (like being able to use technology effectively) and characteristics such as integrity and trustworthiness.²⁹

What sets you apart from machines and prevents you from being replaced by machines is the very fact that you are human. You think humanly and behave humanly. While a machine can be trained to become a legal powerhouse, it will (at least in the foreseeable future) always lack the human touch necessary for any lawyer to become a trusted advisor to clients. To stay ahead of the curve, find and demonstrate your added value as a human lawyer.

The Road Ahead

Once again, welcome to the legal profession. As you don your court robes and embark on this new chapter of your lives, remember to embrace both science³⁰ and humanity in this AI age.

The future of law is yours to create.



Tan Yu Qing
Member
Young Lawyers Committee

This article is written in the author's personal capacity and all views expressed herein are the author's own views. The author is grateful to Mr Gary Seet, Strategic Initiatives Lead at Amazon Web Services, for generously sharing his expertise in AI, which has added immense value to this article.

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cindygordon/2023/02/02/chatgpt-is-the-fastest-growing-ap-in-the-history-of-web-applications/>

² While the technology behind ChatGPT was not new, previous versions of the technology had not been pitched to the public. See <https://www.technologyreview.com/2023/03/03/1069311/inside-story-oral-history-how-chatgpt-built-openai/>

³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2023/05/19/a-short-history-of-chatgpt-how-we-got-to-where-we-are-today/>

⁴ A machine passes the Turing test if an interrogator cannot correctly identify whether the response to a question had been

provided by a human or a machine.

⁵ The four components of a VUCA world are volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

⁶ The BANI framework describes the world as brittle, anxious, nonlinear and incomprehensible.

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⁸ <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/chief-justice-sundaresh-menon--keynote-address-at-litigation-conference-2024>

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¹¹ <https://lupl.com/for-lawyers/> and <https://lupl.com/blog/lupl-enhanced-user-experience/>

¹² <https://www.spellbook.legal/>

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¹⁴ <https://customers.microsoft.com/en-us/story/1765414330609650283-rajahatann-microsoft-365-copilot-professional-services-en-singapore>

¹⁵ <https://www.businesstelegraph.co.uk/bringing-singapore-born-ai-innovation-to-the-world-singapore-microsoft/>

¹⁶ E-discovery refers to the process of reviewing and sorting electronic evidence into prescribed categories for the purposes of disclosure to a court or arbitral tribunal.

¹⁷ *Teo Wai Cheong v Credit Industriel et Commercial* [2013] SGCA 33, [44].

¹⁸ A *dramatis personae* is a document that lists the key persons and entities involved in the dispute and explains the relationship between these persons and entities.

¹⁹ <https://towardsdatascience.com/improving-named-entity-disambiguation-using-entity-relatedness-within-wikipedia-92f400ee5994>

²⁰ <https://aws.amazon.com/what-is/ocr>

²¹ Final oversight by lawyers is required (Simon Chesterman, Goh Yihan and Andrew Phang Boon Leong, *Law and Technology in Singapore*, [06.015]).

²² <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/us-lawyer-sorry-after-chatgpt-creates-fake-cases-in-his-court-filing>

²³ <https://www.ibm.com/topics/ai-hallucinations>

²⁴ This is especially so from the perspective of users, since hallucinations usually occur because the LLM was not trained with quality data or was developed using faulty model assumptions or architecture. See

<https://www.digitalocean.com/resources/article/ai-hallucination>

²⁵ SLMs refer to small language models, which are streamlined versions of LLMs that are used to perform specific tasks. See <https://thenewstack.io/the-rise-of-small-language-models/>

²⁶ <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2306.05685>

²⁷ <https://www.promptingguide.ai/introduction/elements>

²⁸ <https://arxiv.org/abs/2201.11903>

²⁹ https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/foundations_for_practice_whole_lawyer_character_quotient.pdf

³⁰ Please ensure that your use of AI complies with your firm's AI policy and any applicable legal and ethical rules/guidelines, especially your obligations of due diligence and confidentiality under Rule 5(2)(c) and Rule 6 of the Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 2015.

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TO SERVE OUR MEMBERS AND
THE COMMUNITY BY SUSTAINING
A COMPETENT AND INDEPENDENT BAR
WHICH UPHOLDS THE RULE OF LAW
AND ENSURES ACCESS TO JUSTICE.



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