

Will legaltech help solve the UK's access to justice problem?

The UK is Europe's ideas hub when it comes to legal tech. Can a new generation of founders smooth things out for lawyers and judges, claimants and defendants, and remedy a justice system under strain?

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Legaltech covers a wide range of eventualities – from making paperwork less time-consuming for lawyers, all the way up to cutting lawyers out of certain proceedings entirely. Applying the law as efficiently as possible might involve using AI to select truly unbiased juries, and/or doing away with the concept of in-person courts entirely.

The possibilities are endless and - crucially - should not be seen as a threat to the industry. Legal professionals might fear losing their jobs to robots, but it's unlikely we'll be able to recreate their empathy, critical thinking skills and 'human touch'.

An ideal scenario is one where AI takes care of the manual, straightforward aspects of the profession, freeing up time and money for the face-to-face support that lies at its heart. According to LawTech, adopting new tech could increase productivity growth in the sector from 1.3% to 2.7% per year.

Once these tasks are done away with, it becomes more feasible for smaller firms to compete with the big players. The UK legal system as a whole has been badly hit by cuts in recent years; perhaps the use of technology will restore its ability to cater for everyone – not just those

with cash to spare.

It's exciting to see the big firms, from Clifford Chance to Mishcon de Reya, embracing this challenge. In setting up their own startup incubators, they're demonstrating a readiness to transform the legal world for the better.



Take Mishcon de Reya (MDR), for example. Their innovation lab - MDR LAB - has been going since 2017 and has already facilitated the creation of 'an arguments analysis solution for dispute resolution using advance AI algorithms', 'a Microsoft Word add-in that speeds up and improves the contract drafting process', and a startup 'founded this year to deliver actionable insights from satellite imagery for use by real estate lawyers'.

And recent news suggests we can expect further innovation. MDR LAB has just launched a new set of programmes in collaboration with Founders

Factory, the world's leading startup studio. It plans to take on more legal tech organisations than ever before, with applications open all year round and three routes to choose from.

'Launch' will capture those at the beginning stage, providing assistance as well as pre-seed funding; 'Improve' is a 12-week programme where existing businesses can develop their product by really getting to grips with how legal services are provided; and 'Sell' is designed specifically for startups ready to pursue revenue.

To quote Nick Le Fevre, Head of Business Development at Founders Factory,

"With the world changing faster than ever for individuals and organisations alike, the potential positive impact of technology in the legal space has never been higher. We're excited to be working together with the great team at the MDR LAB to pool our expertise and to help the next generation of LawTech founders build for a better future."

Current MDR LAB projects have a collective value of £100M, and are working to solve a diverse selection of quandaries. We're excited to see where MDR will take legaltech next.



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