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Big Law Firms Integrate Generative AI Training for Summer Associates

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By [Maria Lenin Laus](#) 

Posted on June 4, 2024



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As generative AI technology continues to revolutionize the legal profession, prominent law firms like K&L Gates, Dechert, and Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe are incorporating AI training into their summer associate programs. This initiative is aimed at equipping new legal professionals with essential skills to leverage AI tools effectively in their practice.

Preparing For The Future With AI

K&L Gates, Dechert, and Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe are integrating training on generative AI for their summer associates, providing hands-on experience with research and chatbot tools currently in use at these firms. This training reflects the firms' belief that future lawyers must harness AI to succeed, rather than being replaced by it. Brendan McDonnell, a partner at K&L Gates and a member of the firm's AI solutions group, emphasizes the importance of understanding how to interact with AI to extract useful information for clients.

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demonstrate how AI will impact daily legal work. While AI is expected to automate many routine tasks, it will also open up new areas of legal practice and allow junior lawyers more time to focus on complex legal issues.

Experimentation And Client Openness

Most law firms are still in the experimental phase with AI tools, and their use depends largely on client receptiveness. Alex Su, chief revenue officer at Latitude Legal, notes that the legal industry is in a transition period, making it difficult to predict the immediate impact on staffing.

Evolving Tech Proficiency For Lawyers

Nora Freeman Engstrom of Stanford Law School underscores that modern lawyers must be proficient with a suite of sophisticated tech-based tools, moving beyond basic familiarity with Word and Westlaw. This proficiency is crucial for delivering top-tier legal services in the 21st century.



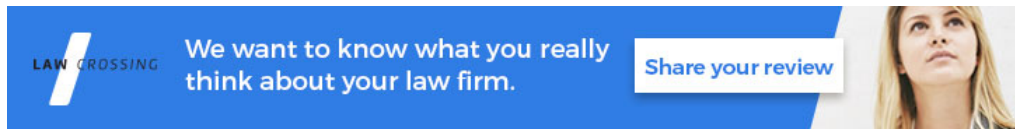
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Integrating AI training into summer associate programs also serves as a marketing strategy for law firms. These programs, akin to paid internships that often lead to full-time job offers, help promote the firm's brand to law students and build a recruiting pipeline. Alex Su notes that AI training signals a firm's commitment to embracing new technologies.



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Challenges Of Training And Substantive Knowledge

Michele DeStefano, a professor at the University of Miami Law, cautions that while AI training is beneficial, it must be paired with substantive legal knowledge. Without this background, new lawyers may struggle to determine the quality of AI-generated answers.

Focus On Prompt Engineering

K&L Gates and Orrick are collaborating with tech learning platform AltaClaro for comprehensive training on "prompt engineering," the science of interacting with generative AI models. AltaClaro's CEO, Abdi Shayesteh, mentions that 15 AmLaw200 firms are working with AltaClaro on AI training, though Orrick has been the first to include it in their summer associate program.

Practical Applications And Mentorship

K&L Gates' summer associates will be trained on using CaseText's Co-Counsel, a legal AI assistant, and paired with internal AI "power users" for practical experience. Dechert offers one-on-one training between



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Embracing The Competitive Edge

Despite these challenges, many law firms, historically slow to adopt new technology, are now embracing generative AI. Firms like Dechert, Wilson Sonsini, A&O Shearman, and Paul Weiss are investing in AI tools and startups, recognizing the competitive advantage they offer. AltaClaro's Shayesteh notes that the legal industry is now moving at a faster pace to integrate these technologies effectively.

By training summer associates in generative AI, law firms are preparing the next generation of lawyers to navigate and leverage cutting-edge tools, ensuring they remain competitive and capable in an evolving legal landscape.

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.

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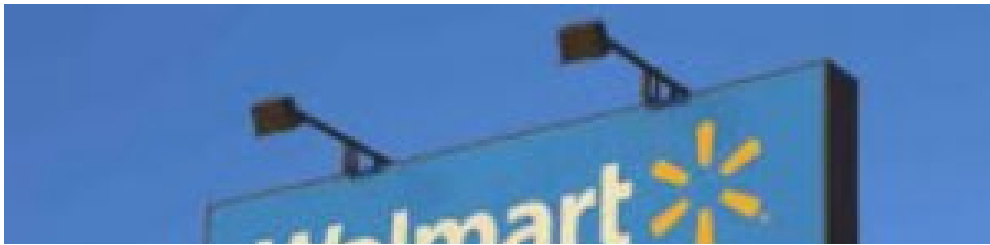
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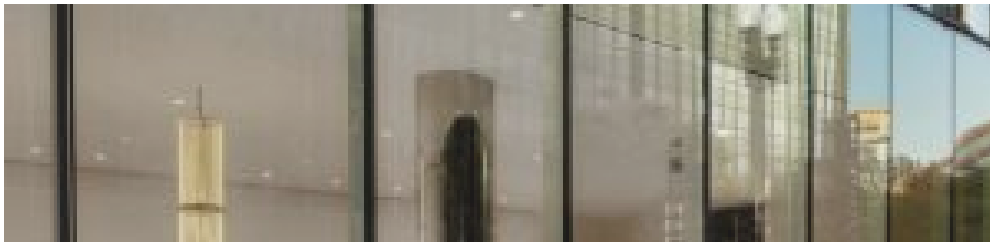
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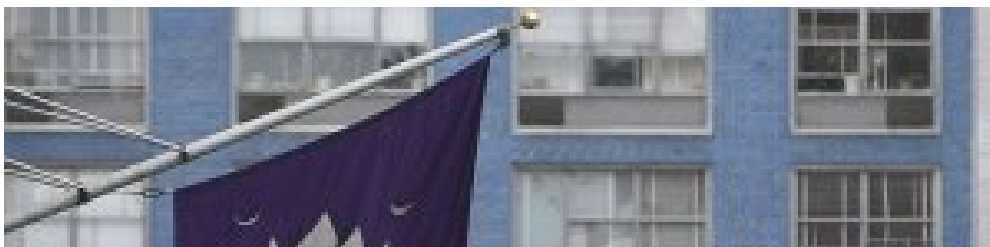
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