

Adopting new technologies to conduct legal research

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Long late-night hours poring through old legal texts in a stately library setting, with attractive albeit dishevelled colleagues: the storyline of most legal sitcoms. But the reality for legal professionals is not quite so glamorous. Closer to the truth is many unbillable hours spent, mostly alone in a law library, or in the office surrounded by law journals and texts, searching for relevant cases and precedents.



Mellony Ramalho

“Legal research and case preparation consume a large part of the legal practitioner’s day and energy,” says Mellony Ramalho, Sales and Marketing Director at LexisNexis South Africa. “Energy that is needed to not only present and win cases, but to secure new business in an increasingly competitive market.”

Covid-19 has forced legal practitioners into new ways of practicing law. Literally overnight, as Level 5 commenced, legal libraries and non-essential offices and courts were closed, or access severely restricted. Industry retrenchments and cutbacks also meant those accustomed to a legal secretary or candidate attorney supporting their research needs were required to get back to the ‘books’ and do their own case research.

Practitioners working from home were obliged to turn to online resources and next-gen solutions for legal research, with some legal tech suppliers reaching out to offer a variety of free or discounted solutions to enable continued access to the rule of law and justice for all.

“Harnessing all that legal technology has to offer is key to surviving in this new world,” says Ramalho. “Legal tech has changed the way legal professionals conduct research. As an industry, the profession has evolved from hard copy library research to using legal tech for quick access to trustworthy, up-to-date, and comprehensive content.”

This approach saves time, sparing costs, and resources and increasing billable hours.

The legal industry, known to be traditional and conservative, has been slow to embrace technology and software, but by doing so, can provide faster and more accurate legal services – without even leaving their offices. “By inputting a few keywords and parameters into a legal tech search engine, professionals have access to a world of knowledge, curated to their specific case requirements, with relevant and key precedents and awards easily accessible, making them adaptable in a dynamic market.”


Ramalho offers the following advice:

- **Rely on the best:** Find the industry leader in legal tech. Who is bringing the first to market solutions to the industry? Why are they ahead of the game? How can you use them to increase work efficiencies?
- **Choose wisely:** Select a product that can be customised to your needs, that is able to grow with your business, adapt to your needs and is kept current. Do you need specific legal content only? Is practical guidance important to you at this stage? Will you need templates, alerts and workflow solutions supported by commentary to help guide you?
- **Be open to change:** Embracing change, in the form of legal tech, will lead to increased efficiencies, billable hours and better outcomes - a win-win situation for legal professionals in a challenging marketplace.

Need to embrace legal tech but have no idea where to start? Looking for a leading partner with a history of supporting the legal industry with market firsts? Look no further, click here <http://ow.ly/Z7SW50BCL2A>.

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