

# How was your year?

We asked some of our contributors this year for their thoughts  
as we move from 2017 to 2018

What's the most inspiring thing you've heard this year?

**Helder Santos, Senior Business Technology**

**Manager, CMS:** From talks, work/personal experiences, and discussions, this year I have gotten a great deal of inspiration for myself. But one thing that stuck in my mind was a spontaneous movement, rather than a speech or a talk, that showed me that the world can be a nice place.

I really like football, and last April a Champions League football game between Borussia Dortmund and AS Monaco was deferred after a bomb attack near the Dortmund team's bus. The game had to be postponed at short notice until the next night, but many of the away fans from AS Monaco did not have an additional night's hotel booking.

Shortly after news circulated about the number of people stuck without a place to stay, the Twitter hashtag #bedforawayfans began trending, helping to connect marooned supporters with locals who opened up their homes to them. There was no official request or organization behind it, it was just an idea that sprang up among fan groups before spreading via social media. It ended up reaching far and wide.

That demonstrates the character of people. Many fans enjoyed a wonderful evening's company and made new friends—and that's what football's all about. It was a great victory for humanity that so many people, also from other clubs and some not even football fans, joined in and opened their doors. This was a truly inspiring moment in 2017.

**Ann Gorr, legal technology consultant:** This past summer, I was invited to be part of a 'careers in technology' panel for 'We Connect The Dots,' which is a STEAM/STEM program for high school students held at Microsoft's Manhattan offices. I arrived early at the program to have the opportunity to see at first hand what the students were learning. It truly was an inspirational afternoon to see these young adults immersed in the state-of-the-art technologies that will be the focus of the future.

But the program wasn't just about the technology component—it focused on developing leadership traits, collaboration skills, the understanding that failure is a natural part of success, and the concept that learning is a lifelong journey. It was truly inspiring to listen to this next generation of tech leaders present to and collaborate

with one another during their learning segments and then interact with those of us on the career panel with some very inquisitive and unique perspectives about the potential of their future career journeys. It was one of the more memorable, humbling, hopeful, impactful, and inspirational experiences of my career.

**Brian Podolsky, Practice Manager, Kraft & Kennedy:**

At a recent vendor conference, I heard a new term—co-opertition. There were many different competing integration partners in attendance, and I was just one of them. And even though we are competitors, it is the partner community that makes the vendor's product a success. And partners can sometimes even help each other, making sure projects are done efficiently. Think of it as a 'pay it forward' situation. I thought that idea about a partner community was inspiring and could apply to other aspects of life.

**Kim Craig, Managing Director, Lean Solutions,**

**Seyfarth Shaw:** I've been inspired by the thinking that is rippling through the industry at large that the 'allied professionals' (f/k/a non-lawyers) bring significant value to their organizations whether within a law firm or in-house. I'm seeing a greater appreciation for their talents and experience in legal operations, project management, lean/process improvement, data analytics and technology solutions. That thinking will help propel teams forward in meeting internal and external client needs.

**Joe Davis, consultant:** The work being done to leverage blockchain and solar panels to create microgrids in the areas of the Caribbean that had their power systems damaged by the 2017 hurricanes. Rather than just rebuild the same vulnerable infrastructure, an entirely new and decentralized system is being built that not only restores electrical power, but also affords residents some economic power, as the tokenized electricity becomes a commodity they can trade for goods and services. It's a project that involves technology, law, economics, and perhaps most importantly, disaster relief.

**Esther Dediashvili, Legal Knowledge Manager,**

**Fischer Behar Chen Well Orion & Co:** 'Change has never happened this fast before, and will never happen this slow again' is one of the most inspiring phrases I heard this year—at Lexpo '17. It made me think about the legal industry in Israel, which has traditionally been slow to adopt technological advances compared to other countries where legaltech is progressing at an accelerated pace.

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## *We don't do AI, we do HI... human intelligence*

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The phrase inspired me to contribute my part for the cause of raising awareness in the local legal sphere as to the benefits of integrating technology in the legal practice. My hope is that the realization that change is inevitable, and will happen faster than expected, will slowly start to penetrate the Israeli legal scene and mark a new chapter in the history of Israel's legaltech industry.

**Jobst Elster, Head of Content/Legal Market Strategy, InsideLegal.com:** 'We don't do AI, we do HI... human intelligence'. What started as a joke over breakfast with

fellow legal ITers quickly turned into a mission to find and engage with companies that not only advertised but delivered on the 'AI in legal' value proposition, as well as those that opted to pass on the AI hype train and channel innovation and technology progress elsewhere.

**Ebbo Haantjes, Head of Legal Operations, NautaDutilh:** The emergence of preventative law. It will drastically change legal provision, because 'solving a problem' will no longer be the core business of a lawyer (I hope).

**Seth Wilson, Adler Tesnar & Whalin:** Action trumps everything. It's important to have good information, but it's also important to get started. A similar concept is fail (and recover) fast.

**Richard Tromans, artificiallawyer.com:** Legaltech can really help with access to justice. Why? Because we need to address this immediately. ■

If you were to rule the legal IT world for a day, what is the one thing you would change about it?

**Helder Santos:** My current perspective and reality show me that inside the legal IT industry we are still trying to understand what is the next big thing! Blockchain, AI, robot lawyers, smart contracts... the list goes on!

The majority confuse innovation with invention. You don't have to invent the next legal big thing; innovation is about improvement. It's always saying: how can I do more and better for clients? How might I run the team better? How can we deliver legal advice better? Law firms see there is a lot of technology available that can empower them to be more innovative, but they only focus on the outer scope, forgetting their inner scope.

Therefore, my change would force people to focus on now—getting the industry to look at real challenges and opportunities that are here right now instead of discussing how the future will be in 10 years' time.

**Ann Gorr:** I would ban the use of technology acronyms. Those of us in the legaltech industry tend to allow acronyms to become part of everyday conversations and presentations

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simply because we live in that world and are always eager to evangelize about the advantages of implementing those technologies. During client and project meetings, I now find myself stopping technology presenters mid-stream and asking the attendees: 'Do you know what "XYZ" acronym means?' When they usually respond with 'No!' (and a correlating look of relief that they didn't have to ask that question out loud in front of everyone else at the meeting), that at least ensures that the non-legal IT folks in the room gain a better grasp of what the legal IT team is discussing.

**Brian Podolsky:** I would force all legal IT vendors to create 64-bit builds of their Office add-ins. Too many firms struggle with the move to 64-bit Office because of a lack of support from some of their add-in vendors. Everyone needs to develop for 64-bit, and keep pace with the new update timelines of the Windows 10/Office 365 platforms.

**Kim Craig:** Organizations would recognize the importance of focusing on process and human behavior BEFORE purchasing expensive 'shiny objects' that they think will solve their problems. They need to 'do the work' on the front end before installing a 'magical solution'. Tech is powerful but without investing the time to really ►

understand what problem(s) an organization is trying to solve and understanding the change management challenges, the technology solution is bound to fail.

**Joe Davis:** I would encourage more learning and experimentation with new technologies. History shows that the people and companies that resist keeping up with technology almost never win in the long run, and the pace of change is only increasing. Look at Bitcoin's increase in value over the past year—or even over the past few months. That's not necessarily proof that everyone should be investing in it, but it is solid evidence that cryptocurrencies and the technologies that underpin them are disruptive forces worthy of consideration.

**Esther Dediashvili:** The legal profession is in many ways a backward-looking discipline. In a field built on the foundation of precedent, it's not surprising that lawyers are often apprehensive about adopting new technology. Some even contend that technology shouldn't be embraced because it's going to replace lawyers. As I believe that technology is not 'instead of' but 'in addition to' lawyers, I would encourage lawyers who are skeptical about legal IT to focus on exploring the potential benefits of technology (such as efficiency gains, improved quality and new business lines) and how to use these innovative tools to improve legal service delivery.

**As John F. Kennedy said:** 'Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.' In order to succeed as law firms operating in the new economy, I believe organisations should be more open to experimenting with new technologies. Naturally,

experiments involve both successes and failures, and even though it runs contrary to much corporate thinking, failure should be an option. It almost always leads to success, and should be celebrated. It took Thomas Edison more than 10,000 tries to perfect the light bulb, after which he famously stated: 'I have not failed. I have just found 9,999 ways that do not work.'

**Jobst Elster:** While this is not exclusively a legal IT phenomenon, I would have to say more accountability surrounding M&A, especially as it relates to delivering customer value and being honest about it. I am so cynical when it comes to 'vendor X acquired Y' announcements and the promises of greener pastures for the customer-prospect-stakeholder ecosystem. Prove me wrong and show me a legaltech deal that makes sense beyond the dollars and cents of the board room.

**Ebbo Haantjes:** Standardization of the most common legal documents. Only then we can use AI properly.

**Seth Wilson:** Single point of entry for data and use throughout the life of a matter with each system having the secure ability to easily communicate with other systems. Both from an automation and a knowledge management standpoint.

**Richard Tromans:** I would close down all legal IT functions inside law firms immediately and demand the management team of partners made all decisions about legal AI and automation. Any external IT input can then be serviced by professional legal engineers. ■



## Who in the legal IT industry would you most like to meet and what would you ask them?

**Helder Santos:** For a long time I have considered Professor Richard Susskind as an authority in the legal IT industry, therefore he would be my choice. In his book 'The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts,' he predicts the decline of today's professions and describes the people and systems that will replace them. He argues that the current professions are antiquated and no longer affordable and explains how 'increasingly capable systems' will fundamentally change the way that professional expertise is shared.

I would ask him whether he thinks that the skills of the lawyer will complement the skills of the computer, or whether the computer will do better without lawyers!

**Ann Gorr:** With so much of the legal IT world trending towards AI and process management, I think that I'd like to have the opportunity to meet Richard Susskind. I don't have a particular question to ask—I would rather learn about the personal and professional experiences, drive, personality and philosophies that placed him on the pathway to becoming a subject matter expert.

**Brian Podolsky:** Having been in legal IT for over a decade with Kraft Kennedy, and having attended about seven ILTA conferences, I have met and spoken to many of the leading minds in the industry. So instead, I will mention the most impressive legal IT mind I've encountered—Alvin Tedjamulia, CTO at NetDocuments. Alvin has always been at the forefront of legal technology over the past 30 years. If you've been lucky enough to witness one of his presentations, you will already know they are uniquely entertaining while being extremely technical.

**Kim Craig:** I would want to talk to innovative IT leaders OUTSIDE of legal as I believe we have much to learn from other verticals.

**Joe Davis:** Serial entrepreneur Justin Kan, founder of Atrium LTS, a combination 'technology-first law firm' and legal technology company. Kan has been a partner at US seed accelerator Y Combinator, and a founder of Justin.tv and Twitch (he sold the latter to Amazon for \$970m). With a long history as an entrepreneur and investor, Kan is certainly an experienced consumer of legal services. I would be very curious to talk to him about how he feels he can bring a fresh point of view to building not only a legal technology company but also an actual law firm from the ground up.

**Esther Dediashvili:** I'm a huge fan of Professor Richard Susskind and would be delighted to meet him. He's a true visionary of the legal profession and the effect of technology on the legal sphere as a whole. His book 'Tomorrow's Lawyers' is one of my favorites, and I believe it's a must-read for anyone involved in the legal sector.

Given that the legal industry is traditionally considered as conservative and often reluctant to embrace innovative technology, I'd like to ask Professor Susskind what his thoughts are on how to bring about change in the legal sphere on several levels:

- a) adoption of technology by law firms to enhance legal service delivery;
- b) incorporation of technology into the education of future lawyers to equip law students with the skills needed to be successful in the 21st century; and
- c) leveraging technology to facilitate public access to justice.

**Jobst Elster:** I sometimes have debates with friends about what musician or group I would have wanted to see before they broke up/stopped performing (or living). So in terms of who to meet in #legallIT, I want to (re)introduce an old friend and colleague who is no longer with us but inspired (and continues to inspire) scores in our legal space. Ross Kodner was a law office technology giant whose infectious 'teach and preach' style moved many and inspired many others to follow in his footsteps.

I met Ross through InsideLegal's CEO JoAnna Forshee who together with Ross annually orchestrated 'The Dinner', a who's who of legal technology movers and shakers and just plain fun, cool and brilliant people. I often think of Ross and how he would navigate the current legal landscape and continue to 'preach'. I discuss topics like attorney technology proficiency and competence and think 'man, Ross was saying that decades ago'. For those of you not familiar with Ross and those of you who miss him like I do, take a few minutes and take in Craig Ball's Ross Kodner tribute from 2013.

**Ebbo Haantjes:** Bharat Anand, author of 'The Content Trap'. I would like to ask how we can use his theories and examples for digital change in legal provision.

**Seth Wilson:** With social media, we have more access to leaders than ever. I would like to sit down with Jack Newton of Clio and discuss the future of automation and analytics in the legal industry.

**Richard Tromans:** Not really a legal tech person, but Nick Szabo. I would ask: is this what you wanted to happen with smart contracts? ■

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## What are you hoping to achieve in 2018?

**Helder Santos:** Looking ahead to 2018... I want to keep growing at the company where I work currently and ensure its continued excellence. Some of the nice things we did last year have energized me and made me very confident and excited about my future there. Any strategies and effort I employ in 2018 will be to sustain and build on that success. Personally, I intend to learn and grow, teach and share—this is fundamental to my happiness. If I'm not learning, I'm dying. And if I'm not sharing what I've learned, I feel like I'm wasting those lessons.

**Ann Gorr:** I'm so very blessed in many ways but especially in that I love my career and the opportunities and challenges that are placed in front of me on a daily basis. In 2018, I'd like to do a better job of juggling the work/life balance scenario.

**Brian Podolsky:** I am looking to help my clients move their DMS to the cloud, and make them realize they've made the right choice. Whether it's with iManage Cloud or NetDocuments, law firms have the ability in 2018 to take advantage of very exciting new cloud technology. iManage's RAVN acquisition brings AI and data classification into the fold, and NetDocuments' recent acquisition of ThreadKM brings incredible collaboration at both the document and matter levels. It's going to be a big year.

**Kim Craig:** Continue to work with in-house legal teams bringing design thinking, lean and project management disciplines together to help them improve their legal operations and service offerings, addressing the change management challenges for execution. Additionally, I would like to continue to build bridges between law firms and law departments through joint initiatives, including continued investment in law school content and education encompassing the 'business' of law.

**Joe Davis:** Blockchain is the technology that has me the most excited right now. It has so many potential applications, yet is still in its infancy. I have heard it compared to the internet in 1995—still in its experimental



phase, but capable of changing everything. In the coming year, I plan to continue to deepen my knowledge of blockchain on a technical level, and to broaden my understanding by talking to the innovators who are applying it in different contexts.

**Esther Dediashvili:** As a legal knowledge manager, my primary goal next year is to continue identifying and making accessible the most valuable knowledge assets that will empower the firm's entire professional team with the information and insights necessary to maintain industry leadership, as well as facilitating internal processes through technology to enable more efficient legal service delivery. In other words, I intend to keep promoting innovative KM and legaltech initiatives that will both maximize business value and client satisfaction.

**Jobst Elster:** If Bon Jovi 'gives love a bad name', my focus will be on giving legal content marketing a good name. I consume and create more content than the average legal ITer and can quickly differentiate the insightful and thought provoking, well intended stuff from the deliberate, cumbersome and uninspired content that best ticks the 'content for content's sake' box. As legaltech professionals, I feel we have an obligation to focus on the former and really make our words count—especially when the sheer amount of content we consume and have access to is quickly spiralling out of control. Before you write your next blog post or begin work on that ebook, give some thought to why and how it can and should benefit your audiences and actually help move the legal education needle in the right direction. If content is king, let's make 2018 the year we polish and return the crown.

**Ebbo Haantjes:** To communicate more in pictures than in words.

**Seth Wilson:** Greater automation of routine tasks. I would like to see lawyers more focused on being lawyers, rather than entering data. I'm focused on leveraging data in 2018 to better serve clients.

**Richard Tromans:** Peace, love and goodwill to all AI systems.

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