

court programs in the past few years. “That resumé enhancement value is gone,” she adds.

On the job

While students are performing at their 2L summer post “just fine,” Mattock says, some realize quickly that it’s not a good fit.

“We had this year a record number of students who were 2L summer associates who reached out to let us know that they were thinking about not returning to their firm or wanting to go to a different firm,” she adds. “They found out very early on in the summer that it wasn’t the right fit for them.”

Georgetown Law’s Treanor says he worries the implications of people landing early at the wrong firms will last several years.

“They’ll be there for a year or two years but will leave in the third year, leaving just as they become profitable for the firms,” he adds.

Instead, Treanor would like to see more 3L hiring. “At that point, you’ve got students who’ve taken not just 1L basic courses but at least one year to take courses that they’re actually interested in to develop an expertise and two summers’ worth of experiences to have a better sense of what they’re looking for and why.”

He worries too that markets can change quickly, and firms might over-hire summer associates if the economy later takes a turn. “Do they lay them off? Do they give them money to go away? Do they bring them to the office and just have them sit there?” he asks. “It’s a hiring model that doesn’t make any sense.”

Mattock argues that it’s only a matter of time until firms realize the early recruiting practice isn’t ideal and recruiting again starts later.

“At some point, things are going to get so out of control that the firms realize it cannot go on this way,” Mattock says. “Nobody thinks this is a great model. Nobody thinks this is working well.” ■

TECHNOLOGY

Robo Relief

Immigration attorneys are turning to AI to help with an abundance of cases

BY DANIELLE BRAFF

Artificial intelligence has come to the rescue of immigration attorneys who have been slammed with an onslaught of extra work.

“We are three times busier right now than this time last year,” says Marina Shepelsky, CEO and founder of the New York City-based Shepelsky Law Group. “Last year, everybody was waiting to see the results of the election to legalize. Now, clearly, everyone feels the urgency.”

The number of immigrants not represented by legal counsel in December 2023 was six times what it was in 2019, according to the Transactional Access Clearinghouse of Syracuse University. At that time, in 2019, there were 363,000 migrants who didn’t have legal counsel and 660,000 who did. By early 2024, the number of people without lawyers jumped to nearly 2.3 million, with fewer than 1 million reporting having an immigration lawyer.

Unable to physically work more in an already-burdened field, many immigration attorneys are relying heavily on AI to help with everything from simplifying family reunification by flagging eligibility for underused visa categories to creating personalized risk assessments to identify red flags in a client’s background, such as prior visa denials. AI can even help with fraud detection by analyzing patterns in documents to detect inconsistencies that may raise concerns during immigration reviews.

Programs like Docketwise IQ, which launched in December, already serves more than 21,000 legal professionals, Docketwise co-founder James Pittman says. Designed with immigration law in mind, Docketwise IQ’s Data Cap-

ture feature—which is still in closed beta—can help automatically read and extract key client information from scanned documents like passports and green cards and flow it directly into government forms and client profiles, which helps firms avoid manual data entry.

Additionally, its IQ Writing Assistant corrects grammar, refines tone and translates between English and Spanish.

The Memphis, Tennessee-based firm Siskind Susser uses AI tools, many of which were internally developed with its sister company, Visalaw.ai. At the core of Visalaw.ai’s software platform is a massive immigration law library filled with several million pages of content.

“We’re able to use the chat feature to get legal research memos, case checklists, questionnaire forms, feedback on client meetings, templates for cover letters, instant summaries of new policies, cases, legislation and more,” says Greg Siskind, co-founder of both Siskind Susser and Visalaw.ai.

For instance, GEN Drafts, which was developed by Visalaw.ai, allows lawyers to customize a front-end interview, upload dozens of supporting documents and build out complex legal briefs and petition documents. The time to produce these documents is compressed by about 90% when using the technology, Siskind says.

He says the firm has saved so much time and effort that it has opted to spend many hours training the team in using the tools, along with doing strategic planning on redesigning their workforce in anticipation of shifting people into the remaining positions that AI can’t replace—yet.



Deluge of work

AI has also been incredibly useful for Hector Diaz, managing partner with Miami-based Your Immigration Attorney. Specifically, ChatGPT has helped with legal research, and that has been supplemented with other programs.

“We also use Google search and Gemini to keep up with ongoing developments that impact immigration law, including executive orders, which are occurring at a breakneck pace,” Diaz says.

Diaz couldn’t specify how much time AI was saving his firm, but Andy Semotiuk, a U.S. and Canadian immigration attorney, says he’s twice as busy this year as last, and ChatGPT is cutting his workload in half.

Others, like Michele Carney, co-founder of Seattle-based Carney & Marchi, says that in addition to adding AI—her firm uses Visalaw.ai

for case research and drafting documents, Microsoft Copilot to help draft PowerPoint slides and Perplexity Pro Incognito to prepare for webinars or roundtables—her firm is considering offering a few weekends per month to assist clients affected by all the executive orders.

The only downside is the time required for onboarding the AI programs, says Kwabena Larbi-Siaw, principal attorney with the Chicago-based Law Offices of Azita M. Mojarad. He says work has been nonstop since the inauguration, with half of his day being spent answering calls, allaying fears of deportation and emailing clients about their rights.

That’s why, Larbi-Siaw says, he is not able to use AI to help.

“I have received emails from AI companies but haven’t had the time to review their products,” he says.

He’s not alone. A new study published by Washington, D.C.-based legal services company Consilio finds that 48% of attorneys rank overwhelming work volume as their most significant challenge.

And while 46% agree that AI will shape the future in the legal field, 60% say they remain focused on smaller tech projects, such as contract management and records retention.

“While the promise of incorporating AI into a company has many potential benefits, it can be overwhelming to get started,” Michael Pontrelli, managing director of Global Strategic Client Experience at Consilio, said in a statement. “However, it’s important to not get stuck in decision paralysis. Humans will not be able to keep up with the growing workload volume much longer.” ■