

ROBOTS AND RELATIONSHIPS: WILL YOU BE REPLACED?

Section of Avocats of Foreign Bars of the Geneva Bar Association

6th Annual Future of Lawyers Conference

September 25, 2014

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Introductory Remarks

Crazy topic you might think? Lawyers will never be replaced!

Richard Susskind, whose book: *The Future of Lawyers* was the genesis of our future of lawyer conferences 6 years ago predicts in his new book, *“Tomorrow’s Lawyers,”* a world of virtual courts, Internet-based global legal businesses, online document production, commoditized service, legal process outsourcing, and web-based simulated practice. Legal markets will be liberalized, with new jobs, and new employers, for lawyers. “

Are you ready for the legal profession of the 21st Century which is here now?

From telex machines to video calls on cell phone our world is more interconnected by technology. Each of you can think about how technology has changed your practice and our profession since you became a lawyer.

No longer are young associates spending hours in the library researching using books. Today information is available digitally and online at half the time and fraction of cost

The business model of law firms and law firm partners charging clients for the education of their young associates is over. Clients want answers for their money, not training future lawyers.

Remember when one would bring books to court or meetings? Today we bring computers. Consider this: the associate lawyer and computer could be replaced by a robot to which a question could be asked and analyzed. Our “lawbot” would have “memorized” all the documents, all the law and through the use of Artificial Intelligence could immediately provide an answer. That is what we used to do and it took us hours if not days or weeks. Tedious work being automated. This is progress and I believe a good thing.

We will adapt by creating new ways of working, as we have done over the last years.

Law firms today are businesses with law as the service we provide. No more sending associates to the library for days to write a 10 page memo and then billing the client for all of that time. This is the behind the scenes work—like the sous chef in the restaurant who does not charge the customer separately for each hour or for the hours of training. Our clients-- like the diner in a restaurant--want the results and are willing to invest in or pay for that. Our profession and what we do is becoming more exciting.

There will be new areas of law; for example, data privacy, technology transactions, internet of things.

So, what will be our future? I predict and believe our relationships and our experience and judgment which is unique to each of us will be the most important part of our “lawyering.” Tedious repetitious legal work will continue to be replaced by technology—and robots.

But tasks that require thinking---imagination, creativity, problem solving based on judgment and experience and empathy and the human touch--the components of relationships—will increase our value.

I believe there is a strong and very different future for lawyers which will require an evolution in our skills..... **IF** we make sure our clients love us. Can a client truly love a robot?