

**Law Society of South Africa's
Annual Conference and AGM**

**Emperors Palace, Johannesburg
24 - 25 March 2023**



LAW SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA



PROFESSIONAL
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DE REBUS

The Law Firm of the Future

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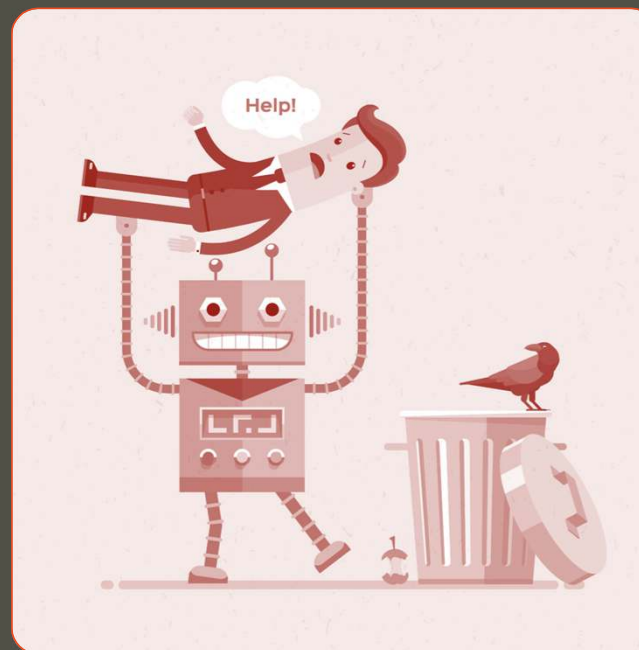
Today's topics

- What will a South African future law firm look like?
- What are its challenges going to be?
- Overcoming the challenges



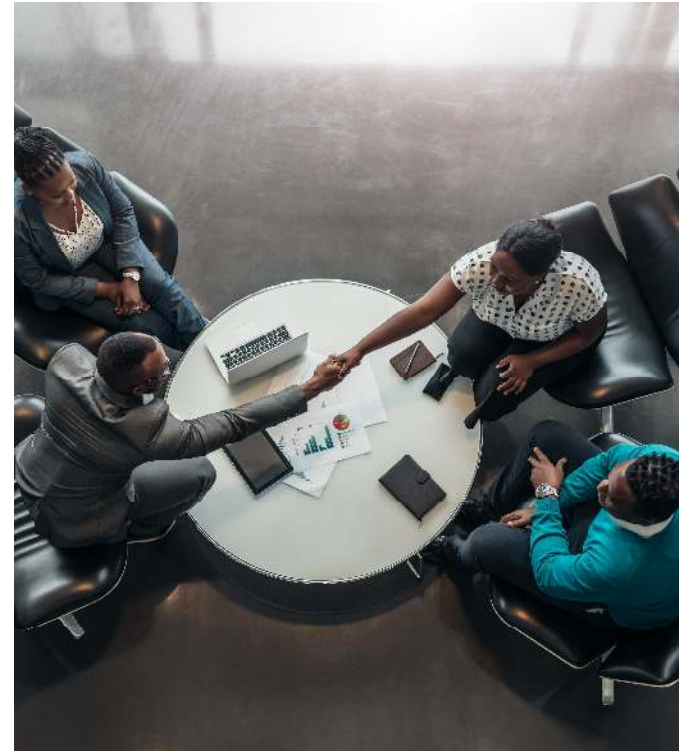
First: the elephant in the room – will AI take lawyers' work?

- No, lawyers are safe, ChatGPT-4 and software like CoCounsel will not take your work, but...people, like Alternative Legal Services Providers (who short-sighted snobs say are not "proper" lawyers), who are not afraid to use these products, will!



How will a typical South African future law firm look?

- It's not going to be big
- Its overheads are going to be low
- It's going to have a hybrid work arrangement
- It's going to be very technology-enabled
- Its lawyers are going to be multi-skilled
- It will rely on loose collaborations with other professionals and service providers



What are its challenges going to be?

- Alternative Legal Service Providers
- Failure to change and adopt a more entrepreneurial approach
- Failure to adopt more current technology like better devices and practice management software
- A failure to learn new ways of doing things
- Failure to ensure continuous learning – Peter Reynolds, a senior partner at a large law firm, was about to retire when email was new, but still insisted on learning how to use it



Overcoming challenges: where to start

Start with the basics: as simple as email rules

Become more efficient: billing software & cloud storage

Better technology: laptops, phones, back-up power

Hybrid working: shared space, hot desking, noise-cancelling headphones – Dick Fosbury was laughed at when he first did things differently

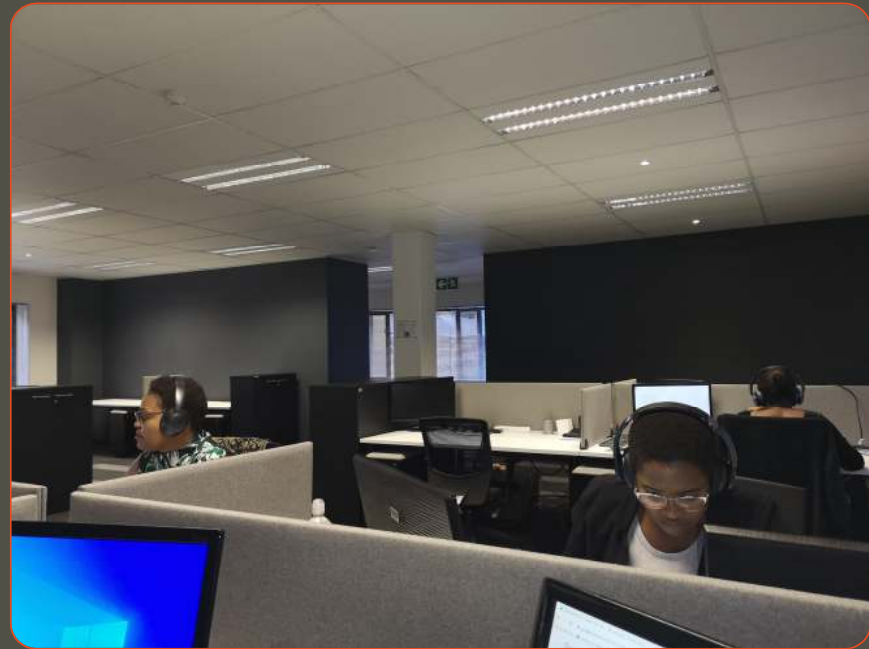
Collaboration: use loose networks of other lawyers & professionals to scale up/down



Takeaway

Lawyers and legal organizations that can adapt and are proactive – using a growth and learning mindset to take measured risks to discover new solutions – can turn changing market drivers into opportunities. Lawyers who are reactive, and maintain a fixed mindset, will be left behind. In “a traditionally risk-averse profession, lawyers who don’t adapt to change are making the riskiest move of all”, as “the illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn”.

Eric Sigurdson, Future-Ready Mindsets to Succeed in the New Legal Economy – an introduction for lawyers and legal leaders



Any Questions?

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