Thomson Reuters Report Highlights Legal Departments' View of Tech, AI

Two-thirds of in-house attorneys are confident and ready to try new technology, according to a new Thomson Reuters report, **"Ready or Not: Artificial Intelligence and Corporate Legal Departments."** The report measures the perceptions of more than 200 in-house attorneys regarding their use of artificial intelligence (AI) and the perceived benefits and concerns once adopted.

"There is this lingering fear among some of our survey participants that AI will possibly replace lawyers," said Mark Haddad, head of the Corporate segment for Thomson Reuters. "But technological advances in the legal industry have always focused on evolving the business and practice of law and improving how legal professionals work and process information. While tasks may be managed by a new technology, the work that lawyers perform — the work that only a lawyer can do — will not be outsourced to machines. And new timesaving or data-crunching technologies will act as facilitators to corporate in-house professionals to better serve their business."

The report notes that more than half (56%) of in-house attorneys either perceive that AI technology is not used or are not yet familiar with the use of AI technology in their legal department. And for others, there is skepticism about its reliability and cost-effectiveness. Despite the unknown, some in-house attorneys surveyed envision AI as being beneficial in increasing efficiency (17%), reducing costs (13%), minimizing risk (7%) and supporting document review (6%).

One key area where AI may be applied for legal departments is in understanding their own data better. Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed said they have access to data regarding outside counsel and legal costs, yet less than half (49%) feel they are effectively using this data. Additionally, only 14 percent believe their department is using data to more effectively deliver legal services.

The top concern among respondents in using AI was cost (19%), as the mantra of doing more with less and budget constraints were key factors to adoption. Reliability (15%) was another concern, especially in areas of ethical considerations and confidentiality. A third concern is a constant with any new technology or process: change management (9%).

According to the report, legal departments aren't the only ones wrestling with the impact and implications of AI. Technology companies are reassuring workers across all industries that AI is intended to augment employees' capabilities, not replace them.

"It's clear that corporate counsel are comfortable with technology and accustomed to incorporating new technologies into their practices," added Haddad. "In-house attorneys must ensure that the potential perceived hurdles, like cost and reliability, don't prevent them from realizing the potential of AI to transform legal departments. Besides, corporate counsel have already been using sophisticated AI tools in some of their mainstream workflows, such as legal research, for years."

Download the report.

Join Our LinkedIn Group