

CORPORATE, COMMERCIAL & IP (CCIP)

Smart contracts: Ally... or Foe?

By **Ady Nordman**
(Opinion)

In 2060 (or perhaps sooner?!) will our legal profession be obsolete? Will our children's grandchildren still have LL.B, LL.M or J.D. programmes at Ivy League schools, universities or colleges? Will machines simply offer complex tools to assist us in our jobs or will they replace us? Will AI have evolved enough for machines to not only have the requisite skills but also the emotions that humans must have to act as lawyers and/or Judges? The Smart Contract as detailed in Ade Molajo's article (next page) might serve as our ally... or our foe.

Over two years ago, a large law firm (over 900 attorneys) in the US was the first to recruit ROSS, an AI machine powered by IBM's Watson technology, as a legal researcher for the firm. Besides sifting through tens of thousands of legal documents and data, ROSS is continually learning the actions of the lawyers pertaining to writing, decisions, remarks etc. Several companies



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are currently offering impressive applications that attempt to predict decisions in court cases regarding all the relevant laws as well as a close analysis of the results that a certain presiding Judge on a certain case might decide. Recently, (on 15 January, 2018) AI programs built by Alibaba and Microsoft scored higher than humans on a Stanford University reading comprehension test.

Will this remain true in 2060? Or by then will ROSS and others like it have learnt enough to predict the result and reasoning for each and any case presented? Will they be able to improve their comprehension capabilities and replace judges, making 'human like' decisions?

Obviously I don't have an answer; I can only assume (and pray!) that laws and regulations will always be initiated, debated and written by humans and as such, I question the quality and education of our future human lawyers. What will their education be composed of? How skilled will they be in researching and finding the necessary resources for a certain predicament? How profound

will their writing skills be if they are dependent on forms and templates? ROSS has already replaced countless interns that until recently dutifully did the grunt work as part of their schooling. We have no doubt that machines have endless capability to research and store limitless data. But isn't doing the grunt work part of every young lawyer's education?

I am constantly intrigued by the world of endless possibilities for technological advancement. Our firm, Soroker Agmon Nordman, although not considered a large firm, has always kept up to date, boasting the best possible complex software tools relevant to our field of work and jurisdiction.

I strongly believe that any law firm and the services it provides are a sum of their recruited talent and that as long as Watson (IBM's technology) is used solely as a tool to assist professionals – be it in law, medicine or any other context – to make the most informed judgments, and humans are still making the calls, then I'm all in! Remember, human beings have wisdom whilst machines do not.

**GGI European
Regional Conference,
Berlin, Germany
Friday, 20 April 2018**

I have invited Mr Ade Molajo to be the guest speaker during the CCIP session. Read his informative article on the next page on Smart Contracts and join us for what is certain to be a fascinating session. Ade Molajo is dedicated to educating corporates about the power of Blockchain in their various industries.

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