

Applying Artificial Intelligence to Speed-up Conveyancing

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“Aim for simplicity in Data Science. Real creativity won’t make things more complex. Instead, it will simplify them.” **Damian Duffy Mingle**

The very best technology allows staff simply to ‘get on with their job’. It works away in the background and we don’t even notice it’s there. There are in-fact, probably many examples of where every day process are taking advantage of Artificial Intelligence or AI and we don’t even realise. In the near future, we anticipate machine learning will start to be used in the conveyancing process too. It will be used to check documents and recognise images with the aim of speeding-up the overall workflow. In fact, AI machine learning can be trained to establish patterns in data better than a human can which can be used to drive interesting insights and make better strategic decisions.

However, just as large-scale, end-to-end IT implementations designed to solve total workflow processes often result in an unsatisfactory outcome, wading in with AI introduction on a large-scale will also fail. Therefore, the best way forward is by tackling and safely approaching individual elements of the conveyancing process, gradually over time. In this way, staff will learn to trust technology and be able to unlock the advantages of machine learning.

We currently see two immediate areas which warrant further development which are of most relevance to solicitors: cognitive services which is where the computer learns to recognise images and AI decision making where the technology can make intelligent decisions based on data.

One application of cognitive services is file plan validation. Around 10% of addresses provided by solicitors for property searches are ‘not standard addresses’. This may be because the property is a new build or a parcel of land. My personal favourite was described by one law firm as ‘land next to the M62’! In this situation, file plans are not sufficient for searches to be completed and this results in a delay while another plan is produced.

Using cognitive services for file plan validation means a computer is trained to recognise a polygon shape marked on a map to indicate the area where a search needs to be completed. The technology will ask ‘is this a good file plan?’ and the solicitor immediately informed with a percentage of confidence.

The key is trusting the technology. If the confidence level is not 100%, then this can be checked manually and the computer informed of the result. This is how the system learns to be more accurate next time.

There are other potential applications too. You have probably parked your car somewhere which has used number plate recognition to identify your vehicle. Similarly, cognitive services could be used to identify documentation such as passports, confirming the identity of a purchaser. Computers can be taught to recognise other legal documents too, such as forms

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for 'fixtures and fittings' or any forms that need address matches. This offers the potential to cut down on administration, reduce the chance of human error and potentially speed-up processes. These developments may sound subtle but when combined, in time, could transform the efficiency of overall workflows.

AI decision making has further interesting potential applications. Take pricing for example. During busy periods, the technology could be automatically taught to raise fees while at quieter times, fees could be reduced to encourage more customer enquiries. Using market dependant data, AI can make intelligent decisions to influence the bottom line positively.

Consumer expectations and demand are driving the need to speed up the conveyancing process through digitalisation. As a result, many forward-thinking legal firms are looking into ways to expediate processes as far as possible. The introduction of new technologies such as cognitive service and AI decision making could have significant potential to influence the improved speed of the conveyancing process in the future. However, technology must be proven and trusted to be introduced safely and successfully over time.

For further information please contact: info@poweredbypie.co.uk

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