

Septuagenarian lawyer's AI caution: Requires child supervision

By **Marcel Strigberger**

Law360 Canada (March 2, 2026, 10:58 AM EST) -- Can you teach an old boomer lawyer new tricks?

I am a septuagenarian who is uncomfortable adapting to technology. I thought we had it all with the invention of the stickie note. At a supermarket or big box retailer I never use self-checkout, as not only do I prefer the banter with a live cashier but that voice from the machine saying "Place the item on the tray" spooks me. It sounds like a police megaphone ordering me at gunpoint to "drop it."

I actually retired from my law practice a few years ago when email communication became the norm, and everybody expected an instant reply. Clients and colleagues treated silence longer than seven minutes as worthy of reporting the delinquent lawyer to the law society's disciplinary committee. Which gets me to AI.

All I know about AI is that my kids and grandchildren swear by it, using it for answers to questions from where to find a great Mediterranean restaurant to opinions on whether the Maple Leafs will advance to the Stanley Cup finals this season. They recently ganged up on me insisting AI can be a lifetime game changer. Reluctantly I allowed them to install an app on my iPad (which they actually bought for me as a birthday gift).

I decided to give AI a try as if I was still actively in the trenches. After all, I am open-minded. But firstly I decided to test it. From what I hear it can render wrong answers. I had read about "hallucinations," those occasions when AI confidently invents cases and citations, leaving unsuspecting counsel explaining to a judge why *Smith v. Atlantis* does not, in fact, exist. Yikes!

My experiment began modestly. I downloaded the "free" version. My experience went something like this.

I cautiously asked a simple test question: "What is the capital of France?"

Hey, lawyers must proceed with caution. Best to test the waters.

I got an instant answer: "The capital of France is Paris."

Suddenly I regretted asking that question. I realized that AI registers all queries, and now I am likely marked for not knowing the capital of France and looking like a dimwit.

I almost expected the thing to note as the title of the chat something like, "Lawyer does not know what every grade twoer knows".

I tried to correct the situation, typing in, "I already knew the answer to that question. I'm not an ignoramus."

The creature replied, "Got you. Any other questions on this topic? Would you like me to give you a list of good restaurants near the Eiffel Tower?"



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I changed directions.

I decided to redeem myself and show it my quest for knowledge had greater depth. I asked: "What is the Miranda case about?" I thought I would demonstrate my vast knowledge of American criminal law dealing with rights police must read to people upon arrest. Hey, that France question still bothered me.

I will digress slightly. I actually liked the name Miranda as Madame Miranda was my favourite grade schoolteacher. Little known fact.

The bot replied noting the principles of this iconic decision. It offered to answer further questions about *Miranda*. I passed.

I then decided to go for broke and see how intelligent AI actually is.

I keyed in, "What is the meaning of life?"

To my surprise I actually got another quickie answer. The robot said, "That's one of the biggest questions humans have ever asked."

I did not need AI to tell me that.

It did suggest I check out Aristotle, who found meaning in reason and moral duty and Sartre, who argued that life has no meaning. I did not find this answer to be a game changer.

However, a pattern I noticed was that an AI sessions seem endless, giving an answer and then always inviting more questions. I almost expected it to ask me, "Do you want a list of restaurants frequented by Jean-Paul Sartre?"

I thought I would ask one more legal query: "Does law school prepare students adequately for the real world?"

I got a surprise reply. It said something like, "You are timed out for today on this free version. Try again at 3:27 A.M. We suggest you upgrade to Plus to get more comprehensive service."

Hmmm. I had enough. I concluded I gave AI a reasonable shot.

I reported my AI journey to my heirs, advising them that it was not overly helpful. My granddaughter Laya asked me whether I really did not know the capital of France. How did she know about my test question? Did she ChatGPT my name and the reply was "blockhead?"

And it certainly was not helpful regarding my meaning of life query. I don't intend to dive deeper and see what Aristotle or Sartre have to say. Nor do I care where either of these gentlemen enjoyed going for dinner near the Opera.

They suggested I upgrade.

I let my Generation X, Z and Millennial offspring know that if they wanted to get me a birthday present, they can't go wrong surprising me with a box of pencils. No subscription required. No usage caps. And when I stop writing, the pencil does not gently prompt, "Would you like to explore this topic further?"

So is it a game changer for lawyers?

Possibly. Used carefully, it can assist with research, brainstorming and framing issues. But like any eager junior, it requires supervision. It does not replace judgment. It does not intuit nuance. And it does not bear professional responsibility.

I will say I am tempted to ask it one more question. I have the feeling it will reply, "Tell me exactly what more you want to know about Madame Miranda."

*Marcel Strigberger retired from his Greater Toronto Area litigation practice and continues the more serious business of humorous author and speaker. His book, *Boomers, Zoomers, and Other Oomers: A Boomer-biased Irreverent Perspective on Aging*, is available on Amazon (e-book) and in paper version. His **new(!)** book *First, Let's Kill the Lawyer Jokes: An Attorney's Irreverent Serious Look at the Legal Universe*, is available on Amazon, Apple and other book places. Visit www.marcelshumour.com. Follow him on X: @Marcelshumour.*

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