

RAJAH &amp; TANN ASIA

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## Transforming legal practice for growth in the New Digital Economy

It is an unquestionable fact that we live in a technology driven world, with modern technological developments ubiquitously providing degrees of efficiency and comfort to practically every aspect of our daily lives, and with entire industries being enhanced or even revolutionised by the adoption of new, technology driven business models.

However, the legal industry has to date remained somewhat insulated from these developments – while legal practitioners have become increasingly aware and receptive of the significant benefits to be gained in the incorporation of technological innovations into the provision of legal services, the actual adoption rate among law firms beyond utilising basic email and word processing functions remains relatively low.<sup>1</sup> This largely stems from the notion that the legal industry is one that is deeply steeped in tradition and is inherently resistant to change. On the other hand, the legal industry's clientele has not remained equally insulated to such technological developments. The traditional time-based billing model is becoming increasingly obsolete, with many now clients expecting to receive legal services in a cost-effective, commoditized form. In this regard, laws firms are increasingly facing the need to rethink their service models to meet the demands and expectations of their clients today.

To address this issue, the Singapore Academy of Law introduced the Future Law Innovation Programme ("FLIP") in July 2017, which aims to encourage and accelerate the adoption of legal technology among Singaporean law firms. Among the early participants in FLIP is Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP, one of Singapore's leading full-service law firms and a part of Rajah & Tann Asia, Southeast Asia's largest regional law firm network. Rajah & Tann has chosen to tackle the challenge of modernising its legal practice head on, by implementing major upgrades to the firm's technological capabilities in an aggressive but targeted manner, bearing in mind Bill Gates' now immortalised rules of automation – "The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency".



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Starting from late 2017, Rajah & Tann has been in the process of migrating the entire firm's servers and software capabilities onto the cloud, thereby eschewing the need for localised data servers and document storage space, while providing an updated interface for its lawyers to be more efficient and able to work on the go. Rajah & Tann is also leveraging and supplementing its legal service capabilities in stage, with a key focus on artificial intelligence. For example, Rajah & Tann has adopted the UK-based Luminance's artificial intelligence technology to enhance its due diligence process for mergers and acquisitions; which will save time in the sorting, examining and comparing of thousands of documents in the course of such transactions.

Rajah & Tann is also looking to improve its client engagement experience by launching a password-protected client portal later this year to serve as a one-stop shop for all client matters including legal documentations, correspondences, working drafts, and invoices.

In addition, Rajah & Tann also launched a legaltech business initiative named "Rajah & Tann Technologies" in March 2018, in a move that will make technology the primary driver to reshape its services as well as the way it communicates with the courts, clients and colleagues. By collaborating with technical and forensics specialists, Rajah & Tann aims to provide a holistic set of services to its clients to address their spectrum of technical and legal needs in the new digital economy.

The services that Rajah & Tann Technologies provides include:

- (i) **Data breach readiness and response.** Equipping clients with the knowledge and capabilities to act appropriately in the event of a data breach.
- (ii) **Cybersecurity.** Multi-disciplinary cybersecurity services assist clients to prevent, detect, assess and manage cyber threats and risks.
- (iii) **Virtual Law Academy.** An e-learning platform for clients to engage in seminars and training in various areas of law, thereby making the law more accessible and understandable.
- (iv) **Regtech.** Bespoke solutions utilising algorithms and data analytics to assist its clients to meet their respective legal and regulatory requirements in a nimble and cost-effective manner.
- (v) **E-Discovery.** End-to-end eDiscovery support to efficiently assist its clients in legal proceedings and government investigations.

The foregoing notwithstanding, technology should not be viewed as a means to an end but a catalyst and an enabler for legal process re-engineering. To this end, in addition to embracing and implementing the latest technological advancements in the legal sector, law firms must also take the next crucial step in retooling its legal deliverables into digital ready work products, creating new online client service delivery models and in equipping its lawyers with the necessary skills and mindset to make the most effective use of these technological tools in order to excel in our rapidly evolving legal industry.

<sup>1</sup> Ranajit Dam, 'Taking Up Tech' (Asian Legal Business, 13 June 2018) <<http://www.legalbusinessonline.com/features/taking-tech/75879>>, accessed 3 July 2018.

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