Will AI Replace Paralegals?

Written by Erin Walker

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping how legal work gets done, and paralegals are right at the center of that shift. As AI becomes more embedded in everyday workflows, it's natural to ask: will AI replace paralegals?

The data tells a more nuanced story. According to the *2024 Legal Trends Report*, 69% of hourly billable work performed by paralegals could be automated by AI.

While this statistic may be alarming, understanding how to make the most of automation while leveraging your unique skill set presents new opportunities for paralegals.

Rather than replacing paralegals, AI is changing how their work gets done. By taking on routine, time-consuming tasks, AI gives paralegals the ability to work more efficiently and focus on the parts of legal work that require judgment, organization, and client understanding.

In this article, we'll explore how AI is transforming paralegal work, which tasks can be automated, and where human expertise remains essential.

Will AI replace paralegals?

AI will not replace paralegals. Instead, it's changing how their work gets done. As routine tasks like document review, legal research, and drafting become more automated, paralegals can spend less time on repetitive work and more time managing matters, coordinating filings, and supporting attorneys and clients throughout a case.

Addressing concerns about AI replacing paralegals

With AI poised to automate a significant portion of paralegals' hourly billable work, the rise of AI has (understandably) sparked concerns among paralegals about the potential threat of automation and job displacement.

Many fear that AI technologies will eventually replace human paralegals entirely, rendering their skills and expertise obsolete.

However, paralegals should approach AI as an opportunity to spend more time on the strategic tasks they excel at, and less time doing the repetitive work they may not enjoy anyway.

Focus on the human experience

Instead of worrying about job displacement, it's important to focus on the unique human skills that AI can't touch—like nuanced judgment, empathy, and strategy—that are crucial in the legal space.

For example, by leveraging AI, paralegals can free up more time in their day to focus on the more human aspects of their role, like providing a client-centered experience, focusing on high-level case strategy, and tackling other business areas that often go under-addressed due to time limitations, like networking and business development.

Get strategic with where you spend your time

Think of AI as an assistant. It won't replace paralegals, but it can take over many of the repetitive tasks that consume large portions of the workday, like summarizing documents, organizing case materials, or preparing first drafts of routine filings.

For example, our research found that tasks like "providing consultation and advice" and "developing objectives and strategies" have low automation potential. These tasks, which require a more strategic, human touch, are critical areas for paralegals to spend their time.

Power up your paralegal toolkit

When routine administrative work becomes faster, paralegals gain more room to build skills that increase their impact within a firm.

This might include learning how to work effectively with AI tools to summarize documents, organize discovery materials, or prepare draft communications. It can also mean developing stronger expertise in case management systems, legal technology platforms, and workflow tools that keep matters moving efficiently.

Ultimately, the value of AI depends on how well legal professionals know how to use it. Focusing on AI training can help paralegals leverage AI to its fullest potential, including navigating tools, using effective prompts, and avoiding (or identifying) AI-created errors.

Remember your value

AI is not a paralegal, and it can't perform tasks that require human judgment, like offering creative strategies or building lasting relationships with clients.

It's important to note that the integration of AI into legal workflows raises questions around data privacy, security, compliance, and ethical considerations. Strict protocols and guidelines must be established and maintained to protect client confidentiality and ensure that AI systems are operating within legal and ethical boundaries.

Ultimately, any work product produced by AI will need to be reviewed (and corrected, when necessary)—meaning that AI is not a wholesale replacement for paralegals.

Upskilling for paralegals in the age of AI

The faster paralegals can adjust their mindset to embracing these changes in technology, the faster they will be able to use them to their benefit. As AI continues to advance, it's crucial for paralegals to upskill and acquire new knowledge and abilities to complement the capabilities of AI systems, and doing so will make one more competitive in the job market.

Mastering data analysis

One of the most important skills for paralegals in the AI era is data analysis and interpretation. AI systems excel at processing vast amounts of data, but human expertise is still required to interpret the results, draw insights, ask the right follow-up questions, and make informed decisions.

Paralegals who can effectively analyzeAI tools ROIand communicate data-driven findings will be invaluable assets to legal teams. Try using AI to find patterns in your client reviews or to figure out the best Excel formula to use.

Enhancing project management

Another essential skill is project management and process optimization. AI can automate many routine tasks, but paralegals with strong project management skills can ensure that AI systems are integrated seamlessly into existing workflows, maximizing efficiency and productivity.

Consider using AI to prioritize and organize your task list, design a project plan, or even coach you on how to be more productive day-to-day.

Tech proficiency in legal practice

Additionally, paralegals should develop a deep understanding of legal technology, including AI systems, document management software, and legal research tools. Familiarity with these technologies will enable paralegals to leverage them effectively and identify opportunities for further automation and optimization.

Learning opportunities and resources

To stay ahead of the curve, paralegals should actively seek out training and educational opportunities in AI and legal technology. Many colleges, universities, and professional associations offer courses, certifications, and workshops specifically designed to help legal professionals upskill in these areas.

Online resources, such as webinars, tutorials, guides, and online courses can also be valuable tools for paralegals looking to expand their knowledge and skills.

At Clio, we offer an abundance of resources and educational materials on AI and legal technology, including our on-demand webinar, AI for Law Firms: How It's Reshaping Legal and Why You Should Care, our Legal AI Fundamentals Certification and, AI for Law Firms resource hub.

By embracing continuous learning and actively upskilling, paralegals can position themselves as valuable assets in the AI-driven legal landscape. Paralegals who proactively develop the necessary skills will collaborate with AI, enhancing their productivity and value to legal teams, rather than fearing that AI will replace them.

Free AI Course: *Build your legal AI expertise with our free Legal AI Fundamentals Certification where you'll learn from real AI experts how to write better prompts, identify the best AI tools, and how to introduce AI into your daily work.*

How Clio's AI helps paralegals work more efficiently

Clio's AI is designed to support the way paralegals already work, inside the matter, alongside existing workflows, and grounded in firm data. Instead of switching between tools or piecing together information manually, paralegals can complete key tasks faster and with greater accuracy.

Here's how Clio's AI improves day-to-day efficiency:

- **Summarize documents instantly:** Quickly generate clear summaries of contracts, pleadings, or case files using Clio Work to get up to speed without reading every page.

- **Accelerate legal research within the matter:** Quickly find relevant information tied to a matter with Clio Work, and move directly from research to drafting and next steps, without losing context.
- **Connect work across the matter:** Because tools like Clio Work operate within the matter workspace, outputs aren't generic, they reflect the specific client, case details, and prior work, making them immediately usable.
- **Draft legal documents faster:** Use Clio Draft's AI to generate legal documents from smart templates by populating client information collected through questionnaire forms, helping reduce repetitive drafting and manual data entry.
- **Surface key case details:** Ask questions about a matter and get instant answers based on client information, case history, and related documents within Manage AI.
- **Stay on top of tasks and deadlines:** Automatically identify next steps, prioritize work, and keep timelines organized with support from Manage AI.

These capabilities align with what high-performing firms are already doing: using AI to reduce time spent on administrative and preparatory work, so staff can focus on higher-value contributions.

The result is not just faster task completion, but more consistent, organized, and scalable workflows, helping paralegals support more matters without increasing workload.

Conclusion: Will AI replace paralegals?

The arrival of AI in the legal field is transforming how paralegals work. While AI can automate tasks and improve efficiencies, it's clear that it does not replace the unique human insights and emotional intelligence that paralegals bring to their roles.

We've seen that by embracing AI, paralegals can enhance their work, making it more precise and effective–allowing them to close cases faster, and help more clients. However, critical thinking and interpersonal skills remain irreplaceable. As the industry evolves, paralegals who invest in skills like data analysis and legal technology will continue to excel.

Looking ahead, the key to success lies in balancing technology with the indispensable human aspects of legal work. By adapting to change and upgrading their skills, paralegals will not only stay relevant but also thrive, cooperating with AI to provide superior, empathetic legal services.

Save time on drafting, research, and case management with Clio's AI. Focus on higher-value work while staying organized and efficient.

Book a Clio demo

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.