

**Issue 6**

# **I Lost My Metaverse Virginity!**

For the sun to rise again,  
technology can set us free ...



TECHNOLOGY IN

# **LAWLAW LAND**

Candid. Controversial. Cathartic.

# Meet the Tech Ambassadors



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**OH DEAR ...** having lost my metaverse virginity over the festive season, the augmented cat is well and truly out of the artificial bag. Although 'what goes on in the virtual court room, stays in the virtual court room' I know this will not be a secret for long. Sooooooooooooo ....

I'm chuffed to share with you all that Mitch Jackson, yep, that's right, Mr Metaverse Yanky Lawyer himself, seduced me and *The Naked Lawyer* to join him in the Engage.oi metaverse along with a handful of other curious ladies and gents. I have to say, my ethereal baptism of the 3D experience was positively mind-blowing. It would, therefore, be an absolute travesty if the tech ambassadors and I did not touch on the hottest tech obsession today and share our musings with y'all in this issue, obvs! But more on that later ...

Also, during the Christmas and New Year break - which seems a whole other (uni)verse and lightyear away already - I spent a LOT of time catching up with previously aired talent shows. As painful as it is for me to admit, I should confess I really do enjoy watching and listening to Simon Cowell's global success XYZ '...Got Talent'. Love him or hate him, you must admit, the guy knows how to put on a great show, choose the right candidates, appeal to our curiosity, and grab our attention. One 'star in the making' caught my eyes and ears who had a profound impact on me emotionally and thereby inspired the theme and title of this roundtable.

So, without further ado, let's crack on ...

Archie Williams, an American citizen who was wrongly convicted for the rape and attempted murder of a woman in Louisiana in 1982 was incarcerated for 37 years before being exonerated in 2019<sup>1</sup>. Shortly after release, he shot to fame on *America's Got Talent* in May 2020 due to his tragic story and powerful rendition of Elton John's song 'Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me.'

For years, Archie worked with the Innocence Project in the hopes of having evidence in his case revisited. As DNA technology advanced, the fingerprints found at the scene were run through a national database that matched them to a serial rapist. Without technological advancement Archie may never have been freed.

At some point during the covid pandemic all of us were incarcerated in our homes - not once, but many times. We all suffered curtailment of our freedoms, even if in varying degrees. But, unlike Archie, at least we had access to technology that enabled and empowered us to get on with our working, leisure, family, and social lives. Which begs the question ...

**Can technology help set us free?**

1. <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/entertainment/a32686481/agt-2020-archie-williams-true-story/>





*\*Whizz-bang\* \*Whoosh\* \*Zing\* ... Incoming ...  
The Naked Lawyer hurled her first muse bomb  
into the ring as she zoomed along on her  
Segway to spark the roundtable gathering. As  
per usual, first out of the corner to spar was  
Martyn who piped up ...*

**Martyn:** Since the dawn of the wheel, technology has been setting us free – it's just that sometime we humans don't know which direction to take. The two vectors of tech being created and adopted, and the understanding to use it well do not travel at the same speed – and sadly, like Archie Williams, there will be innocent casualties along the way. The trick here is to learn from these lessons and do not be afraid to share those lessons. So, whose responsibility is that? Well – of course, as many as possible – although those who have a position to protect may be less willing. We, though, should not let the example of Archie go wasted, or we shall never progress.

**Martyn Best**  
Document Direct,  
Managing Director



**Jo:** Can technology help set us free? Absolutely it can! Technology can automate the mundane, pull data together so you don't need to, streamline processes, remove repetitive tasks, automate and generate reports, to name a few. It creates valuable extra time to free your intellectual and creative brain to do its best work!

However, before embracing any new system or applications, I encourage you to do some soul searching and talk to colleagues to share thinking and ideas together. Think about this from an individual and organisational perspective. Consider what they do well, and if they can do even better, what benefits this could realise? Contemplate what they don't do that they wish they did do. What do they want to do better and why? What do their customers say? Is there a recurring theme on their employee's dissatisfaction survey that has failed to be addressed? It can be useful to approach this from the perspective of the personas of their employees and customers. Which tasks are solitary? Which tasks require collaboration with others, how did you keep customers updated, how did you manage upwards, what data did you need to obtain, how easy or difficult was this? Also consider what instigated the process – was it a pro-active or reactive task? What are the tedious tasks that eat into time that zap joy out of your employees?

I'd encourage legal businesses to use an external organisation to facilitate a discovery programme to expose the challenges, quantify the opportunity and document ideas and make recommendations. These can be done by a series of workshops, observing and shadowing, meeting and interviews with key personnel, ensuring there is a wide range of contributors from your organisation, and maybe even your customers. This exercise will always respect that your business is unique but will help to define your desired Target Operating Model and how this compares to where they are right now, but more importantly, show a path to get there. It is also a great way to get your employees involved from the start.

I'd encourage Legal Tech firms not to focus too soon on the products or platforms to achieve their desired future state. Think about defining and streamlining business processes, how data informs this, how you collaborate and never forget the desired business outcome and customer experience. I can wax lyrical about the benefits of moving all IT into the cloud, but the technology products available (Microsoft, Salesforce, Oracle, SAP plus a plethora of bespoke offerings) are usually incredibly flexible and it's best to avoid those that aren't as you need to consider your desired state, as well as the unknown future state. Most software applications are customisable: that means they can usually be configured to map to your desired state without expensive code changes.

It is also important that you don't neglect change management. By this I mean that you take your employees and customers on the journey. Make them aware of this initiative and announce to everyone. Consistency in messaging really matters. Explain why you are embarking on this technology programme (or whatever you decide to call it) and what the rationale behind it is. Create an environment that encourages employees to ask questions (see above!) and some employees may even come up with suggestions - make sure you listen and capture them. Create the desire for change to happen by helping employees to value what's in it for them so they can see how it will benefit them personally. Invest in training and coaching so you address any skills gap so you can upskill and enhance their knowledge. Get users involved and have practice runs. It is really important that this is monitored, and you listen and take on board feedback. Finally, don't lose sight of why you are doing this. Has it achieved the desired outcome? Use positive feedback like recognition to reinforce the new process and to keep employee morale high; and of course, your customers happy too. Let's celebrate wins and successes together!



WOWee Jo, take a breath girlfriend! I guess you've missed our little get together? Have you been isolated solo by any chance, void of techy social interaction????

\*chuckles\* \*smiles\* \*elbow-prods\* \*hugs\* ...

Seriously now, lots of fabulous stuff raised here, sweetie. I particularly like your passion, enthusiasm, and ideas. Anyone have anything to add? Guys? ...

**Alex:** As Yann LeCun, VP and Chief AI Scientist, Facebook says: "Artificial intelligence (AI) could be said to be a set of techniques that enable machines to perform tasks and solve problems normally reserved for humans and some animals."

I guess the main applications with AI in the legal sector are: analysis of case law - most used arguments, most cited articles of law, consolidation of information (amounts, corporate names, jurisdictions...); analysis of contracts - drafting of used clauses, retrieving information, consolidation of information (amounts, company names, jurisdictions...); generation of contracts - capitalize on already drafted clauses, index the information; automate contract review during drafting; typology of tasks processed - acceleration of searches, suggested results, decision support, assisted comparison.

The consequences on the initial training of lawyers are: a decrease in mass review tasks - due-diligence, regulatory impact audit; an awareness of the scientific nature of law and the understanding of data and statistical issues; and an active participation in the use and configuration of tools. So yes, technology can free us from work.

**Can you suggest/imagine the kind of tech/apps/platforms that could/should be developed to help set us free? For example, what types of legal use cases could be built? And who should build them? Lawyers, techies, unskilled techies such as non-lawyers and/or citizens?**

**Alex:** When was the last time you used a good-old fashioned folding map to take a trip? Not so long ago, we were dependent on those maps, to get us where we needed to go. Today, we just use Google Maps, we access the route we need directly through our phone, and it makes us go faster. Tech makes our daily lives easier, less stressful and less complicated, and that is what frees us really. Many types of legal use cases could be built, the sky's the limit!

But who should build them? This is, actually, I think, the most interesting question, because it goes to the heart of a really classic problem in LawTech and LegalTech.

And JusticeTech, Alex. \*wink\*

Let me ask you this question in return: is Elon Musk an astronaut? Is he NASA qualified? Has he been trained in a spaceship? Does he have experience of space? No. Yet, he created Space X, aka one of the most if not THE most successful space companies. So, there you go: I don't see why lawyers should automatically build LegalTech. Also, it is important not to confuse the two professions. You need real expertise to develop reliable software.

I also draw attention to the fact that artificial intelligence is there to automate certain tasks. It is not there to write code. It's a question of efficiency: it can be interesting for a lawyer to understand the mechanism, it makes the technology less "nasty", it's less scary.

In the LawTech sector much of the various software being developed is bringing added value to a particular problem. All these different solutions should be able to be aggregated in the future.



**Jo Liston**  
Wipro, Senior Commercial  
Manager

# freedom

Taking your point on aggregation, Alex, what's your thoughts on this, Vinnie, as I'm aware you guys at Salesforce are keen on the aggregation < > integration conundrum?

**Vinnie:** Poorly integrated point solutions and siloed data need to be a thing of the past and replaced with technology platforms that are capable of being fully integrated across a firm's application stack. Our world has changed, with flexible working arrangements and work from anywhere, law firms must adapt to this change and make sure the technology they have, or are looking to invest in, meets these demands. The work from anywhere world has created increased demand across the firm regardless of role or department, to access key critical data from anywhere at any time.

**Vincent Perrin  
(aka Vinnie)**

Salesforce UK,  
Regional Vice President -  
Professional Services



Firms need to invest in technology platforms which allow them to be fully collaborative, take a client-centric approach, as well as being proactive to allow clients to self-serve, moving away from what was traditionally seen as reactive responses to clients' requests.

Ah, yes, the client-centric approach... Circling back then to what I mentioned about the Innocent Project. It took over 10 years for Archie to succeed in achieving the DNA testing because he had to wait for the law to catch up with the science ... and technology. More specifically, Archie had to wait for Louisiana to pass a new law entitling convicted people to access DNA testing after trial to prove innocence. It's rather disappointing then that if "the science of today is the technology of tomorrow" (said Edward Teller: 1908 - 2003) what does that tell us about legal systems' ability around the world to keep pace with science, technology and 'NewLaw'? Hmmm ...

It is well known and reported that (historically) law, and regulation for that matter, lag behind new technology, innovation by pioneers and market activity, which is frustrating for the lawyers and also business/law people, particularly when disputes end up in expensive litigation. Not all pioneers and innovators are as fortunate as wunderkinds Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg who managed to make their fortunes before revised, or new, law and regulation caught up with them.

I guess therefore I was chuffed to read recently that LegalUK<sup>2</sup> is calling for the establishment of a National Institute for Legal Innovation - to co-ordinate and intensify the UK's investment in LawTech and innovation because the English legal system must keep pace with technological advancements globally.

*The Financial Times* recently ran a story on this<sup>3</sup>. The proposed institute would highlight areas of law that have failed to accommodate tech innovation, that is, spot gaps in the law thrown up by technologies such as AI and crypto and promote the greater use of English law in global business contracts to global companies as the law of choice to govern transactions in new areas such as blockchain.

This is a huge welcome and 'not before time' endeavour methinks as new research predicts that the use of AI by businesses will more than double in the next twenty years, with more than 1.3 million UK businesses using AI by 2040<sup>4</sup>. It shows that in 2020, UK businesses spent around £63 billion on AI technology and AI related labour and this is expected to reach more than £200 billion by 2040. The UK is already successful in this field. According to Tech Nation<sup>5</sup>, the UK now has more than 1,300 AI companies – a 600 per cent increase in the number of firms over the last decade.

Professor Richard Susskind believes the "challenge will be providing a platform for the supporting law for these new technologies." Sir Geoffrey Vos, master of the rolls, said that he believed every lawyer would require familiarity with the blockchain, "smart" legal contracts, agreements where contractual obligations are laid down in computer code rather than in words, and cryptoassets<sup>6</sup>.

2. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/legaluk/>

3. <https://www.ft.com/content/5867d869-6a86-46b4-a65f-18836ea1df09>

4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-activity-in-uk-businesses>

5. <https://technation.io/news/talent-key-to-helping-ai-sector-unlock-huge-opportunity/>

6. <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/every-lawyer-will-require-familiarity-with-crypto-says-mr/5111085.article#Yd7qYRpCpY.twitter>

# familiarity

And so, illustrious tech ambassadors ...

**What are your thoughts on what should be the best way for lawyers and/or law firms to gain 'familiarity' with the new technologies?**

Jeroen, you've been quiet so far, understandably as the newbie. Unlike the regular crew who have had their shyness bombed out of them by *The Naked Lawyer's* mischief over the last five gatherings, may I say a "HUGE WELCOME" on behalf of us all. Everyone, say "Hi" to Jeroen, all the way from Amsterdam, he is the most recent tech ambassador to join us...

\*applause\* \*high-fives\* and a passing peck on the cheek from *The Naked Lawyer* as she sneakily let a muse bomb slip which exploded on Jeroen's toe causing him to lose his balance and fall into her arms.

\*laughter\* \*guffaws\* \*sniggers\* ...

Blushing, but inspired and energised, Jeroen gathered himself together, grinned and began ...

**Jeroen:** That lawyers and law firms need to onboard and gain familiarity with new technologies is an undeniable fact. At this point it is a matter of riding the tech wave, or drowning trying to stand in its way.

Legal companies with a low level of digital maturity hinder automation and innovation, encounter constantly growing workloads and diminished service levels amongst lawyers delayed by administrative tasks and manual processes, and experience an over-dependence on IT departments. Crucially, legal companies lagging behind in their digital transformation are losing clients to their tech-savvy competitors and innovative legal-tech companies surfing miles ahead.

Outsourcing tech solutions and developers, however, is often an expensive and lengthy process resulting in solutions that do not map perfectly onto the business' problems. Instead, legal companies should be investing their tech budgets into the knowledge and expertise of their existing workforce. It is the law firm and its workforce itself which should be gaining familiarity with new technologies.

The best way to achieve this? The establishment of a fusion team which uses a low-code / no-code (LCNC) platform as a surfboard to ride the tech wave. No-code allows legal professionals (or business professionals from other departments) to join forces with IT professionals to collaborate in their development of tech solutions. At Betty Blocks we call this a fusion team.

Fusion teams and LCNC development provides the perfect solution to the pain of spending excessive time and money resources to digitize and familiarize a company with tech solutions. The simplicity and rapidly deployable nature of the solution is in the name; users require no code or low code to onboard and gain familiarity with these new technologies. There is no need to divert resources and time to technology or coding training. Meanwhile, a LCNC platform is built for the rapid development and deployment of applications, ensuring that the time put into it pays off immediately through solutions that digitize and accelerate various processes.

Additionally, using fusion teams means that tech solutions and toolings are built rapidly by those most directly impacted by their absence, the legal professionals themselves. This process is governed and guided by IT professionals, supplying the developers with more tailored solutions and custom building. A fusion team, then, is the necessary first step in the digital transformation journey of the legal industry. Through fusion teams, the lawyers of tomorrow are fully tech-literate citizen developers, able to build their own solutions. Imagine the surfing legal companies will be doing in fusion-team enabled LCNC development.



**Jeroen Versteijne**  
Betty Blocks,  
Legal Tech Expert

So, in effect, just get stuck in and get your hands dirty, right? I love the surfing analogy btw, Jeroen. Looks like *The Naked Lawyer* does too as she has swapped her Segway for a surfboard and is now doing her Pamela Anderson (Baywatch style) surfing impression! Oh dear, focus guys!!!!!!

### Vinnie, Martyn, Alex, ladies. What's your view?

**Vinnie:** New roles are already emerging in law firms looking at how they innovate and digitally transform. Many firms are now looking outside of what was the traditional legal technology bubble and evaluating what technology is considered best in class. Lawyers, IT and technologists might be best advised to look at and educate themselves on what is seen as leading technologies and what large corporations are using, as many large corporations have already proven out the use cases. Law firms need to become challengers and adopt technology which meets their needs and requirements, even if this sits outside the traditional legal tech bubble.

**Martyn:** The adoption of technology, at its extreme, is the absolute antithesis of what a lawyer's training demands – an assessment of, and quite often, an aversion to risk. So, there in a nutshell is the outcome of innovation vs law, imho.

New technology and innovators will always lead, and if they always adopted what Spiderman (well, Peter Parker, actually) was told, “With great power comes great responsibility”, then we would have a better chance of keeping the law in tune with the tech leaders.

So, we need a focus in two areas really – enhance the moral imperative of inventors and reduce the fear of risk amongst the lawyers. It's an education thing, and it's a long-term thing – so we need to start early, and we need to open all the fine channels of communication between everyone.

Mmmm, my Spidey senses are tingling. Methinks you are on to something here, Martyn ...

**Alex:** I think learning about technology should be mandatory as part of lawyers' and legal experts' training, simply because the LegalTech market has already given birth to a new kind of lawyer: a hybrid one. Tech is already transforming the legal environment and mindsets.

For instance, LegalTech startups often look for marketing or project managers or sales executives who have had “a life as a lawyer before”, because it is a great asset to understand the issues that clients may encounter. They're betting more on soft skills and state of mind than on skills that are acquired with practice, common-sense and training.

Second, the adoption of LegalTech tools makes the lawyer more efficient. Contract automation tools relieve lawyers of time-consuming tasks. Will this change the role of the lawyer? Probably, because the legal department will save time on paperwork and cooperate harmoniously with operational staff. The good news is that lawyers will finally be able to be seen as a performance lever.

Third, some lawyers have the will to make their profession evolve. This is good news for my first point! Legal personnel are looking for a new way to practice law. Why? Quality training courses are finally introducing lawyers to everything they never learned in college: business, project management, legal design etc.

One could imagine, for example, including training in LawTech software. How can we orient it towards everyday tools? This may be the case with the rise of Chief Legal Officers, who value the way things are done as much as what is actually being done. In France, I find that training courses devalue the tools more than anything else. But there are more and more bridges and opportunities if you are a lawyer and you want to work as a legal expert in LegalTech for example; and this phenomenon is likely to lead to many more changes. Finally, the fact that law companies are maturing on digital issues will help the legal profession become more technophile.

# traditional



Hmmm, I'm sure we would all love to believe this, Alex. In theory this sounds fabulous, but in practice - and as an eternal optimist - even I have my doubts. Being privy to Becki's experience I'm not sure she would agree with you. What's your take on this Becks?

**Becki:** Recent personal experience has really highlighted to me the size of the abyss that exists between the ideology of innovators and the reality of life on the ground.

A few weeks ago we sent some documents to a law firm. You can imagine my amazement when they told us that they were unable to accept Service electronically, so we would need to either fax everything over to them, or print it all off and send it by post or courier. The irony that they were telling us this on email seemed to be completely lost to them. Yes, they were playing games, as we could see from the DocuSign metadata that they had accessed and downloaded it all. That they then went on to send their own documents to us via email truly left me at a loss for words, but that's not the point I am making here...

Having spoken to a lot of lawyers, it would appear that it is generally accepted that "things usually end up getting dragged out and costs can easily spiral out of control". Does anyone ever stop to question the morality of this? And you have to ask how technology fits in the legal world, where success is defined by the amount of revenue (and profit) generated per lawyer. The business world has already been changed by technology and the sad truth of it is that the legal world is limping behind because all the while the clients are picking up the tab for delay tactics and inefficiencies; there is no real incentive to change. Learning / training / gaining familiarity with new technologies to benefit both the firm and the clients, isn't going to happen by simply trusting people to "do the right thing".

As we experienced at the start of the pandemic, change can be driven quickly from the top down. Overnight, law firms adapted to remote working and took on new technologies because they were forced to do so by circumstance. Skilful regulation needs to "step up to the plate" to protect clients and achieve in a more manageable timeframe that which the pandemic achieved "overnight". Innovators are already providing professionals with the interface; ensuring that technology is usable and user friendly. The profession needs to take the helm and look beyond short-term profit margins.

Ouch! Did you really just say "does anyone ever stop to question the morality of this? And you have to ask how technology fits in the legal world, where success is defined by the amount of revenue (and profit) generated per lawyer." ... "Do the right thing" eh? BOOM! Let's pursue your thinking further ...

Michio Kaku, Professor, City University of New York, USA, is a futurist (and physicist). He predicts that in the future, capitalism will have infinite knowledge of supply and demand, but 'Perfect Capitalism' is where it's all headed. For example, the internet will be in your contact lens and, when you blink, you'll see the prices of every object around you. You'll know the laws of supply and demand infinitely precisely; you'll know who's cheating you, what the prices are really like, the profit margins, who the middlemen are and where to find the bottlenecks.

Michio poses this question and then proffers an explanation: "Why is Jeff Bezos one of the richest men in the world? Because he digitized the middleman, part of the friction of capitalism and eliminated in perfect capitalism. That's why people like Jeff Bezos, whatever you think of him morally, are part of perfect capitalism. He's making capitalism more perfect by eliminating middlemen - unnecessary, redundant layers, bottlenecks, and friction... Artificial intelligence and computers have just accelerated that trend. The trend is towards perfect capitalism, where all the middlemen, layers and choke points are eliminated, giving us direct contact between supply and demand. (This, of course, says nothing about the morality and ethics created by perfect capitalism, only that perfect capitalism is the inevitable by-product of these technological revolutions.)."<sup>7</sup>

7. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/01/michio-kaku-says-physics-will-create-a-perfect-capitalism/>

**Becki Cassia** –  
Transparently, CEO  
and Co-Founder



# capitalism

# middlemen

**Are lawyers middlemen? Are they unnecessary, redundant layers, causing bottlenecks and friction?**

**Jeroen:** Increasingly, the development of AI and tech solutions are enabling the digitization of human efforts and labour. This, too, applies to the legal industry and begs the question: are lawyers unnecessary middlemen, and can they be digitized?

For lawyers, an ever-growing workload is diminishing their service levels and stifling innovations. On-top of a multitude of responsibilities, lawyers lose countless hours performing manual and administrative tasks of reviewing, calculating, and drafting which can be automated and optimized through digitization. These bottlenecks and frictions are a hindrance to overall performance, quality of customer service, and blocks innovation within a firm.

The solution? Using technology and applications to automate all legal professionals' time-heavy, mundane, and manual tasks end-to-end. With the digitization of various processes and data, legal companies create searchable systems that allow employees to apply filters so they create different views on data and generate new insights for themselves and their customers.

As I mentioned earlier, by establishing a fusion team within a legal company, a team of professional and business developers can create tech solutions that map directly onto lawyers' needs. Development through fusion teams enables legal professionals to onboard technology and applications which free them from mundane tasks, shifting their primary focus to providing the best service for customers. Through this digitization and automation, lawyers can speed up resolve time, pick up more cases, and have more room to improve their work and client support. A solution as simple as an audit pre-assessment tool can save a lawyer countless precious hours through allowing tech to take over easily digitized tasks.

Going one step further, LCNC development through the use of fusion teams allows legal professionals to steer and lead the development of customer facing applications and digital products. Nobody understands the service and innovation needs of a customer better than those in direct contact with them: the lawyers. Therefore, there is nobody better suited to lead the digital transformation of a legal firm. Putting lawyers at the forefront of tech development makes them the most efficient and beneficial middlemen there can be.

Crucially, lawyers can never be fully digitized or replaced. While machines and technology can present and optimize solutions which are selected and decided on by humans, they are unable to carry out the most crucial tasks required of lawyers. Humans possess that which machines do not: the ability to apply creativity, empathy, nuance, ethics, and justice. Throughout human existence, lawyers will remain the necessary forces upholding and interpreting the law.

Thus, it is at the intersection of playing to both of their strengths that human lawyers and technology should collaborate, not replacing but supporting one another. By automating and digitizing a multitude of lawyers' tasks, technology can be used to remove the bottlenecks and frictions experienced by lawyers. Perfect capitalism, then, is not achieved not by removing but by optimizing lawyers as middlemen.

So, what you are saying is, lawyers can be beneficial middlemen if they use technology correctly for the benefit of themselves and their clients? I can get onboard with that ... \*wink\* What do you think, Sonia? ...

**Sonia:** Will there always be a place in our societies for lawyers playing the role of an intermediary? At the core, it started with lawyers pleading on behalf of someone who could not. It is worth pausing to ask ourselves the question of "should" we want to replace all forms of human collaborations and intermediations based on trust as part of the fabric of human societies. What model of society are we building? And what place do lawyers want to have in it?



**Sonia**

**Hadjadj -**

Legal Counsel and  
Legal Ops Consultant

Even if corporate lawyers play the role of a middleman for some transactions and instances, they are not for all. They are also an advisor and strategist, risk mitigator, or mediator. These roles can't be "replaced" by automated processes supported by technology in all instances – areas which require creativity, or strategy, imagination, emotions, oratory and influence skills will remain the primary realm of lawyers. Also where human relations are at the heart of the exchange. Some trust based transactions can be relied upon a blockchain for integrity and reliability of the transactions but other exchanges are built on trust coming out of human relationships networking.

It is now certain a lot of areas will fundamentally change; most where frictions and blockages are due to repetitive tasks with "little human brain power" behind their executions and with similarity of patterns are going to be supported by technology entirely or for parts. This will change some lawyers' roles in some areas and could raise concerns over employability and career paths. An optimistic view would be to see this as an opportunity to shift lawyers' brilliant minds towards more strategic and creative work, but also in more human interactions based project delivery – supported by technology freed from the time constraints of dull or purely administrative filing tasks.

**Martyn:** Can you imagine a world where no-one lied, and it was absolutely clear what everyone wanted when they had any sort of interaction? In 2009, the Ricky Gervais movie, 'The Invention of Lying', used some form of that – and I do not recall a single lawyer being in the movie. There was clarity and acceptance by everyone, and the net mutual result was happiness.

So, without being rude to many of my friends, what do they do? They solve disputes, manage differences of opinions, and generally help people meet in a place of least mutual unhappiness. So, in a sense they are clearly a middleman, but with a great engaging purpose – and could their subjective input be replaced by technology? I don't think they will be replaced - aided, but not replaced - because there is clearly a million nuances in any dispute, and people prefer to deal with people on the important issues in their lives.

Now – that idea of perfect capitalism! Don't you think that is a beautiful reflection of perfect listening; of matching real needs by all parties, and creating value by removing waste? What fine lessons for lawyers and the legal sector. If we take Amazon, it's not rocket science (oh, maybe in the case of Jeff Bezos, it is) – but it's the adaption and adoption of proven tech to offer quicker and more efficient solutions for their businesses and their clients. It's the approach that is needed to avoid the fear of trying something new – and it's the way to bring tech into a risk-averse arena. Let's look at how others do it successfully, and follow their lead.

**Such:** Lawyers are already being replaced and have been for several years. It started before the adoption of technology when firms realised they could employ cheaper labour abroad for certain legal tasks. Much of that continues today but now firms have adopted technology to handle any element of the legal process that can be automated. This isn't new. OCR software (optical character recognition) has been in use for several years...reading documents and extracting relevant information to serve up to the lawyer saving them time reading it word for word. In some circumstances, AI is used to then interpret that document to action a subsequent task or set of tasks.

**Sucheet Amin**  
(aka Such)  
inCase, CEO  
and founder



The role of the lawyer has changed dramatically in the last 10 years and will change probably just as dramatically in the next 5 years. As a lawyer myself, I'm biased when I say I don't believe they should, or, will be, replaced. Lawyers have an important part to play where technology or AI is far from being a decent alternative. It starts with the client-lawyer relationship. My belief is that while a percentage of consumers may be comfortable with never having a lawyer manage their affairs, most will take great comfort from knowing a person has total oversight and control.

Interpretation and analysis come with experienced lawyers. Sure, AI and machine learning can catch up quickly but there are so many variables and potential outcomes that technology requires a single choice to move forward. Lawyers will be able to consider those options, debate with the client, weigh up the outcomes and decide how best to proceed. That often includes how other parties are treating the matter which again, comes from legal experience and acumen.

So, the consensus appears to be that although in some ways lawyers can be unnecessary, redundant layers, causing bottlenecks and friction, the opposite i.e., converse, in fact, can also be true. That is, aided with technology and/or armed with human emotional intelligence, lawyers are required to reduce such problems. Interesting ... particularly since Thomson Reuters's State of the Market Report 2022 revealed that Law firm spend on technology went up by over 7% in 2021<sup>8</sup>. I'm curious ...

8. <https://www.legaltechnology.com/2022/01/11/tr-state-of-the-market-report-2022-law-firm-spend-on-tech-goes-up-by-over-7/>



Standing in the shoes of a legal buyer, and from your personal experience and knowledge of the legal market, where are you seeing (or would like to see) law firms and legal departments dedicating some of their 'tech spend' in particular? Why?



*\*Whizz-bang\* \*Whoosh\* \*Ping\* \*Ping\* \*Ping\* \*SPLAT!!!  
#!?!\*... Incoming ... Now back in command of her Segway -  
having grown bored of her latest toy - demanding attention  
and input from the entire cohort, an onslaught of muse  
bombs was hurled in every direction across the room by  
The Naked Lawyer. Most of us managed to duck and dive,  
avoiding a direct hit. James was not so fortunate ...*

Sat on the ground shaking and brushing the dust and smoke from his person, a bewildered and dazed James was helped to his feet by Jeroen and Nick. I cast a stern glare with frown and snake eyes toward *The Naked Lawyer* and proceeded to admonish her verbally (quietly and privately) for her overzealous act. "Naughty girl! Off to the HR department with you, young lady to atone for your behaviour!!" Of course, she did not intend to cause any harm and James, being a tough Yorkshire cookie with a solid sense of humour, laughed it all off like a jolly good chap. Excitement and enthusiasm had gotten the better of her, as ever. But, rightly so, she felt ashamed, apologised profusely to James, then bowing her head with embarrassment she skulked through the exit corridor at a limp pace.

With *The Naked Lawyer* expelled from the room I turned to the group, smiled comfortingly at James and motioned him to sit alongside myself ...

James, we haven't had the pleasure of your grey matter insights with eloquent sage expression in the discussion yet; what say you on this subject?

**James:** In my opinion as a buyer and a supplier, I'd like to see legal firms aligning themselves to the advancements in customer/client service that are inherent in other sectors. Customer support is now becoming increasingly automated pre-purchase and post-purchase and in the delivery of product and/or service.

A major aspect of brand loyalty today, is how a company communicates purchase progress, how it follows up with ongoing communications. In other words, how it manages perceptions and expectations, to best effect. As a consumer of legal services and a supplier to the sector, I'd like to see legal firms improve communication, automate customer/client support tickets to keep me informed/updated/settled and 'managed'. Often, it's a lack of clarity around process, or lack of communication, the 'not knowing' which unsettles us as buyers of services.

When I buy something online, my expectations are managed by automated process. Even if it's coming from the States, I'm told what stage in the shipping process it is, and more importantly I can go and find out exactly where it is, and when it will be delivered.

This 'peace of mind' is delivered using workflow and communications automation, using Apps and automation. Legal firms could adopt these processes to do two things:

Firstly, to give confidence that service is being delivered 'proactively' and that we've not been forgotten. This in turn will inevitably save legal teams time and effort in managing clients.

Secondly, to enable cross-selling and repeat 'purchase' to happen. The opportunity to offer additional services as well as build customer confidence is built on the bedrock of delivery.

Invest in the tech to support and inform delivery and client communications and you'll build confidence, trust and a 'stronger for longer' client relationship.

**James Moore -**  
Kulahub, Director



# customer



# competition

Indeed! You must have read my mind, and Martyn's, I reckon ...

**Martyn:** Yep. Two things should be in their minds: 1) Reduced internal costs of compliance, and 2) Better customer/client experience. Just copy Amazon!

Despite *The Naked Lawyer's* intense muse bomb assault on the entire room causing at least one casualty, it did succeed in having the communal and collaborative inspirational effect as Nick chimed in for the first time during this session ...

**Nick:** As a rule, it is safe to assume that when someone is looking to engage with a lawyer or law firm it is because they need help, advice, or support with something important in their lives – either personally or professionally. If I am in that position, I want access to the right expertise at a fair price and to feel a sense of confidence (trust) that I will get the outcome I am looking for.

In years to come it is possible that technology (AI/blockchain/the “next big thing”) will fundamentally change the way legal services are sourced and delivered but, in the short to medium term, there are many advantages to be realised through the targeted, smart, and cost effective spend on technology.

Our expectations of a legal service are shaped by the myriad of other service experiences we have that are almost universally facilitated by technology in some way. So, when considering where to direct some of your tech spend there is much to be gained by addressing the three “don'ts” I outline below.



**Nick Cousins –**  
Exizent, CEO and Founder

1. Don't make it difficult or inconvenient for me to deal with you and your firm. Do you really need me to print something and go to the post box? Is email or landline really the only way to contact you (between the hours of 9-5)? Why do I have to give you this piece of information again? It sounds so obvious but by allowing a client to feel like they are engaging with you on their terms and not yours is critical. Even basic modern client communication technology like messaging, online calendars and the use of digital documents can make an enormous difference and help you and your client feel more connected. Through research done at Exizent over the last couple of years the themes of communication and transparency (where am I in the process) have been remarkably consistent.
2. Don't make me feel like I'm being ripped off by charging for your inefficiencies or non-value-add activities. Nowadays it's obvious when companies have not invested in operational technology to make themselves more efficient internally because who hasn't been clobbered with a £50 admin fee for “re-booking” or had to repeat the same story and information to numerous entities on an unnecessarily long phone call? It's frustrating and these days avoidable. Good workflow or CRM (customer relationship management) software is plentiful, relatively cheap, and much simpler to adopt than ever for firms of any shape and size via SaaS (software as a service).
3. Finally, please, please, please don't subject me to sub-standard versions of technology you've built yourself when there are excellent tools available to use in the market. There may be some deeply proprietary elements of your business that are worth the time, effort, and investment to develop technology around in-house, but for many critical elements that really enhance service provision, software solutions have been developed, enhanced, and deployed that do a great job. For example, would your own in-house payments application be better than Stripe? Lawyers and law firms should be investing their tech spend on the client and user experience design to properly understand the problems faced by clients and create the right experiences and journeys to solve them – integrating the right technology from innovative partners in the market that deliver the outcomes you want.

For all the advances that “next gen” technology like proper AI will bring (and it will happen in some form), so much can be improved by grasping what is here today and investing in the design and technology integration skills to shape services that set you apart from the competition.

So be easy to deal with, charge fairly for adding value and embrace the best of breed technology solutions that are out there right now.

Darn, Nick, it doesn't get more candid than that! Well said, I say Talking of 'best of breed technology', this dovetails nicely with my next question:

**What legal challenges (problems) does your technology address and what differentiates it from other technologies?**

It would be great if you could share this here with your fellow tech ambassadors and our readers so we can understand the benefits your technology offers.

**James:** Simply, our CRM and lead management technology creates workflow and communications automation. This saves an incredible amount of time for our clients, especially using drag and drop functionality to create, amend, edit workflows and reports. The ability to use triggered and sequential communications (email, social media, app-driven notifications) means our clients simply set up workflows and the tech administers everything. This keeps clients/customers updated, it advances processes (case management for example) automatically and creates easy to understand reports at every touchpoint. Oh, and with our new voice integration (coming shortly) we'll add even greater efficiency into the process(es) as well.

**Martyn:** We recognise that the human element will take a long, long time to be unimportant – and bringing tech into the business – which for us is focussed on improving the process – it is vital to engage everyone within that process.

**Vinnie:** We can address multiple law firms' challenges, from connecting siloed data, allowing firms to obtain a unified view of clients firm wide, to Business Development and Marketing activities, as well as helping firms to move from being considered as reactive to proactive to clients' requests. But wider than this, is how do law firms tackle true digital transformation.

Salesforce are in a privileged position, as they have already embarked on the digital transformation journey with many of their corporate clients. Simply put Salesforce's differentiation is that it truly is a platform. Others say they have a platform, however, the Salesforce platform is a single, secure, and scalable platform, that Salesforce applications are built on. It enables true customisation to individual law firms' needs, it is integrated, and has a whole ecosystem through its apps on the Salesforce AppExchange.

**Such:** Where a firm operates in a fixed fee environment, obtaining accurate information from their client, sometimes known as 'right first time' is critical. Errors or missing information can be obstructive, cause delays and increase costs to remedy. Where inCase makes the biggest impact is helping firms reduce the start-finish time of a matter by targeting 'right first time'. While a firm drives all the activity in what information is required, whether that be a digital ID check, questionnaire to complete or form to sign, inCase provides a service tool for the client to action these tasks efficiently but importantly 'right first time'. The impact has been profound with one of our firms improving their transaction times in conveyancing by 42%.

**Jeroen:** Contemporarily, legal firms face the huge challenge to stay competitive and innovative in an increasingly digitized world. By now, customers are not only looking for firms to fulfil their expectations, but to think outside the box and go above-and-beyond. Customers want to be surprised with forward-thinking solutions which save time and provide information and services faster, better, and without unnecessary personal interaction. Customers want to be reassured about their choice in legal representation, and know that they have selected the best and most capable experts in the field. The technological innovations and solutions at a legal firm are crucial within this.

Betty Blocks is the solution to this challenge, providing rapid, governable, and scalable app development for the automation, internal collaboration, and innovation in the legal space. Our enterprise no-code platform is customizable, governable, and scalable on all levels. It is not the one-size-fits-nobody solution. What sets us apart is the endless flexibility and scalability enabled through our platform's mutual low-code and no-code capabilities.

Here is the problem with any standardized models of solutions: eventually, inevitably, you run into limitations and realize that one size fits nobody. Instead, what customers require is adaptation and customization in order to properly benefit from solutions. Using templates which cannot be modified or updated according to learnings and evolving needs, thus, has dangerous limitations.

This is where Betty Blocks stands out against our competition. Our platform simultaneously offers no-code for the business and low-code for professional developers. Therefore, while business developers can create solutions using secured and governed templates which are easy to use and quick to launch, professional developers can fully customize and adapt the platform to support business developers within fusion teams, thereby optimizing everyone's work.

We allow you to automate processes, saving 90% of your time on legal operations. Meanwhile the platform allows collaboration across the organization, enabling you to build MVPs in days while validating and launching apps within weeks. The solutions built within your organization are customizable, governed and secured by IT, and scalable across all levels. Our platform enables innovation to go one step further and create things which weren't previously present in the legal space: customer facing applications, new digital products, and new business models.

It strikes me that your technology, in many ways, offers a remarkable amount of flexibility. A recent survey revealed that many UK professionals would leave their jobs if not offered the flexibility they desire<sup>9</sup>; and some lawyers are actively jumping ship due to the lack of 'technological flexibility' and robust technical support they expect nowadays. Building on what Jeroen has highlighted and these recent surveys and revelations,

How, in your view, can technology help provide such flexibility to help law firms and/or legal departments retain their talent?

**Vinnie:** As millennials grow into more senior roles and Gen Z enter law firms, technology expectations will increase. Which is much the same for current employees, who want the workplace to mirror their personal lives with smart, digital tools that give them instant access to information and data, to share knowledge and collaborate.

Technology within the firm needs to give employees firm wide, the ability to easily get answers to questions, find experts and share knowledge. For example, have the capability to capture best practices and share these with other parts of the firm, as well as having a clear path for issue resolution.

Employee expectations are changing. While the basics might remain the same around job satisfaction, remuneration and career path, other factors are also coming into play. Culture, technology, diversity, inclusion and community engagement, as well as the law firm sustainability efforts is an important factor. Sustainability is an area where there has been a large uptick in employees attraction and retention, as employees firm wide are more likely to be attracted to a firm that is committed to our environment and a sustainable future.

**Martyn:** Well, the pandemic has certainly alerted us to many positive benefits of remote working, and whilst most of that genie will be back in the bottle, there are many good lessons to learn about not just using the technology, but actually trusting it now. We have surely now learned to trust it, to accept the minimal risks attached to the unknown, and embrace the 21st century.

Ah, there it is, that word 'TRUST'... Speaking of which, there's been a great deal in the media recently about the metaverse, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), crypto-currencies and related scams and hacks. I read an article the other day reporting that 82% of NFTs are scams; a marketplace best known for selling a NFT of former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey's first tweet has had to "pause" nearly all sales because they were being used to break the law.

\*Gulps\* \*murmurs\* \*Jaws dropping\* ... .. \*silence\*

In our previous issue of Technology In Law Land you will recall my concluding remarks involved an introduction to the Metaverse (MLM 56 TiLLL 5; pages 100-101, Dec 2021 - Malcontents). Since then, only a period of 2-3 months ago btw, it feels as though this topic, and progress (or regression) in relation to metaverses per se, has exploded. It seems like every other day there are reports of additional law firms and lawyers venturing into - and setting up shop in - a metaverse. In your opinion, therefore ...

**Could we see the use of the metaverse by lawyers and/or law firms become mainstream within the next five years?**

**Martyn:** That is so easy to answer: "NO!"

The metaverse has barely developed beyond a gaming or practice regime, and whilst it has a lot of fun applications, and a brilliant array of virtual stuff you could do, I think we need to shake ourselves up and not seriously believe the tongue in cheek antics of certain US firms.

It's cute, and it's gained some fine column inches, but seriously folks? I can see certain aspects of a Minecraft inspired metaverse being useful for inductions or demonstrating an issue, but get real, and stay real. It's an interesting communication tool, and a fun PR tool, but my Spidey senses believe that we all be remaining on good old planet Earth for a good time yet.

9. <https://londonlovesbusiness.com/majority-of-uk-professionals-would-leave-their-jobs-if-not-offered-the-flexibility-they-desire/>



# reality

Crikey, Martyn, I have no doubt that we will continue to wreak havoc on this precious earth but let's keep an open mind re the AND, not the OR buddy \*wink\*. It may have many advantages and benefits particularly if we find ourselves as a species incarcerated in the future again due to further pandemics ... or wars; meaning it is not safe to venture out IRL therefore we may need a 'safe' alternative. Let's not forget that tens/hundreds of £billions are being invested in its evolution and £millions are being exchanged for services, products, and land etc in the many metaverses already. It's a whole new economy, culture and business model that is evolving for Humankind.

Back me up here, Vinnie?

**Vinnie:** Well, the short answer is yes. But of course there is a caveat, no one is 100% sure what the metaverse will bring and if we run the risk of this being another Google Glass!

Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality are some of the most debated and intriguing technologies around today. Salesforce are already exploring the power of AR/VR/MR, emerging use cases and intersections with the Salesforce Platform, and potential scenarios for how these technologies will shift the future of client engagement and collaboration.

With the use of these technologies the client experience for law firms could be a great deal different. Becoming more immersive and collaborative, with a more rich and realistic environment than by email, phone or video conferencing. Covering multi-jurisdictional and geographical challenges, imagine a world where clients and lawyers can collaborate on matters such as elaborate contract negotiations or even confidential merger & acquisition activities. As well as the use of these technologies to promote the firm for example through a pitch process, or the presenting the firm's service offering to a prospective client.

Why not spend time (even if you don't think it's within your core role), understanding and immersing yourself in AR / VR technology? Don't hold it at arm's length, embrace the unknown! As an example of this, Pfizer Brazil turned to Grand Theft Auto in a bid to encourage young Brazilian gamers to get vaccinated, they created an immersive roleplay where the Covid-19 vaccination protected players in both real-life & in the game. #InGameVaccine.<sup>10</sup>

Having spent some time in the metaverse on the Engage platform and immersed myself in a virtual courtroom, a meeting room, an exhibition hall, and stroll around (virtual) Mars I can excitedly vouch for this environment. It's ... oh ... soooooooo ... cool! For those with imagination, creativity and entrepreneurial flair who can envisage new business models I believe the metaverse holds an abundance of opportunity.

**Such:** The metaverse is a very interesting concept and it is only a matter of time before it dominates the way we engage, absorb content, spend and share online. When it comes to the legal sector, its biggest challenge (and threat) to adoption is the sectors cautious approach to 'new things'. I recall a time when firms dismissed the need for a website...believing that their reputation, word of mouth and physical presence was more than enough to take them through to the 21st century. While firms need to really think how the metaverse is relevant to their future, taking a dismissive approach would be short-sighted and could offer competitors a very big advantage. It would be smart for leaders in firms to speak to their junior staff (the future leaders) and gather their views. They may already be engaging in the metaverse socially and will be able to bring their experiences to the table and offer suggestions for how it may apply to the business.

As a former litigation solicitor, I can easily see a courtroom in the metaverse. Certain hurdles need to be overcome such as sanctioning the virtual room as a court of law and ensuring body language can be replicated from the real to the virtual. However, the consequence would be a significant saving in costs and resources not to mention the avoidance of delays caused by any future pandemic when courts were forced to close.

Hear hear, Such.

**Alex:** I feel like discussing the metaverse is a bit like trying to give the precise definition of the Internet before the 2000s. With the metaverse, we are witnessing the beginnings of a new form of communication, yes, but no one can really know what it will look like. What we do know on the other hand, is that in a few years' time we'll be able to do almost anything in a metaverse: go shopping, take a trip, visit a museum, play games, do some sports, buy insurance, pay claims... The monetization potential is insane!

10. <https://gameworldobserver.com/2021/11/24/pfizer-launches-campaign-on-gta-tp-server-to-urge-players-to-get-vaccinated>



The metaverse will be tomorrow's market and will therefore be the place where tomorrow's multi-channel digital customer experience will take place. We can imagine lawyers will meet their clients in the metaverse and that trials will be held in it. I am sure that soon enough, all lawyers will have their stores & services on Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. But in the metaverse, it's a real virtual world, with virtual money and virtual actions, so we will have to build new law. If one commits a crime in Law Land, what will happen? How will this new law be promoted? How will lawyers defend people?

**Alex Grux**  
Hyperlex, CEO  
and Co-Founder



Jurisprudence makes law, whereas in France, jurisprudence can inspire judgments, which raises the question: will the actors of today's law be able to create the law of tomorrow's metaverse?

Arguably, it is already today's market, Alex. Lawyers are already meeting and doing business with their clients in the metaverse. Existing laws are being challenged and new (or revised) laws and regulation are either being considered or already in the works.

**James:** The metaverse is truly a fascinating subject. Mind boggling on one hand, with regards to the possibilities for virtual interaction and how that may play out, or indeed integrate with actual interaction. Yet on the other hand there are some very real application challenges that the legal world will need to address when it comes to how the metaverse is governed.

A 'boundless marketplace' – who owns what and how is ownership proven? Where does intellectual property start and stop?

Will cryptocurrency prevail and how will NFTs, that can include things like works of digital art are used to monetise sales, be regulated? And more importantly, how will ownership be attributed?

How will data protection and regulation work? One report I read recently has suggested that in the virtual world data processing could include facial expressions and gestures of an avatar. Wow. When it comes to GDPR, it's the location of the data processing that is governed by the rules. But where is the avatar when the data is being processed?

As for human interactions – actual bodily harm Vs virtual bodily harm. How do you prove 'actual' in a virtual world? How will legal personas work with avatars?

And what kind of standards need to be in place to distinguish between a "legal" avatar and the actual person who operates that avatar? These are the challenges that will need to be addressed before the metaverse becomes mainstream.

Indeed, James. Let's hope brilliant legal brains can get their heads around all this sooner rather than later and have some major influence in steering the regulation and laws that need to be in place to safeguard activity and livelihoods in this warp-speed space!

**Becki:** Ahhh Chrissie, you know my thoughts on tech vs human, especially when it comes to building and maintaining relationships. Honestly, (and this might seem controversial), I really hope that the metaverse does not become mainstream within the next five years.

I get why people are drawn to it; it's practical, it saves time and makes us so much more efficient. We have all experienced the benefits of virtual conferences and meetings, but for me, it does feel like we are losing the human element.

The most meaningful relationships I have (business and personal) have all been built and maintained in person - not through a virtual space. I can still remember our first meeting all those years ago and what a laugh we had. On that day we made a connection. Today, however, many years on, I can pick the phone up to you as we did this week and talk. That wouldn't have been achieved if that first meeting had been a virtual event in the metaverse. And that's what I mean about the human element.

When you are face to face with someone, you pick up on subtle cues, facial expressions and the changing atmosphere. You work with the dynamic that evolves after spending time together. It could be that I am starting to show my age, but when it comes to the metaverse, I still have too many questions, such as how will the designers ensure that a virtual human can display things such as empathy? What will happen to my data? Will every movement be tracked? Will my physiological responses be recorded somewhere? Who will have access to all of this information? What happens if I don't consent to my data being collected, but others do - will I become a blurred face in the background?

I am interested to see where things are going, but at the moment, for me, the jury's still out on this one...

# chriessie's frank finale

Ahhh, Becks ... I 'get' where you are coming from. Truly. And I reckon that many people will feel exactly as you do. Including me btw. I absolutely agree that there is no substitute for the physical but there is an argument that the virtual has its benefits as an alternative; as an and, and not an or, too, btw. I will bet my entire fortune that *The Naked Lawyer* will hold this view also \*wink\* ...

With the mention of her name *The Naked Lawyer* poked her head around the corner of the entrance door and trundled tentatively toward me, glancing sheepishly at each of the tech ambassadors avoiding full-on eye contact for any length of time. Obviously, she still felt ashamed of her behaviour and was uncertain as to whether she would be welcomed back into the fold.

One by one the group flashed her a smile with a head-tilt. In return, casting her sparkling blue eyes toward the sunlight glaring through the skylight, as she manoeuvred a 360-degree spin, she fluttered her eyelids in a flirty fashion causing a kaleidoscope of light twinkles to cascade like fairy-dust falling from the stars onto us all. Together with an enormous grin she managed to melt our hearts. It's difficult to remain angry with her. She's just so darn mischievous and cute! The atmosphere in the room turned instantly to one of warmth and welcome. The feeling of forgiveness was palpable. Needing no further encouragement, she brought her Segway to a halt by my side.

Let's continue, shall we gang?

Think of the metaverse as social networking (business and leisure/pleasure) in 3D on steroids, in contrast to 2D as you experience LinkedIn, facebook, Zoom, YouTube or twitter etc now. It is one small step in thinking and behaviour but a gigantic leap in how you experience once you step inside.

Peter Diamandis explains this exceptionally well. "We no longer live in only one place. We have real-world personae and online personae, and this delocalized existence is only going to expand. With the rise of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), we're introducing more layers to this equation. You'll have avatars for work and avatars for play, and all of these versions of ourselves are opportunities for new businesses." For example, "today we have all mastered Zoom. Tomorrow, we'll be diving deep in the SpatialWeb—moving back and forth between multiple virtual worlds and our physical reality using technologies like Vatoms (virtual atoms) and SpatialWeb.net to navigate the Metaverse."

Technology is so advanced nowadays that even if you are in a virtual world if you wear particular/special gloves or eyewear you will actually 'feel'/'touch' and 'see' as if you are in real life as tech is enabling 'seamless' integration. It's astonishing and dreamlike how the boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds are already blurring in such metaverse environments.

Web3, 5G, edge computing, quantum, VR, AR, AI, blockchain, NFTs, crypto, DAOs (decentralised autonomous organisations) are (or will be) all part of the metaverse matrix. It's the next giant step in humankind's communication and relationship evolution – the human machine osmosis / transhuman experience. It's not simply hype or a trend imho. Albeit, if we are not careful, it could be our swansong!

# metaverse

Gartner has produced a brilliant paper on 'what is a metaverse' and its elements<sup>1</sup>. I implore you to read it together with Mitch Jackson's recent release 'The Metaverse Handbook'<sup>2</sup>. There's a reason he was 'my first' in the metaverse btw. Losing my 'metaverse virginity' to this guy was a memorable occasion indeed. He knew how to show *The Naked Lawyer* a good time! They do say you never forget your first!

I could talk forever on this fascinating subject – the metaverse, not losing my virginity btw – although, if coaxed appropriately *The Naked Lawyer* may be persuaded. Moving swiftly on ...

Circling back to where we began in this session, after reflecting on our input and discussions, it is fair to say that clearly, technology can set us free, in a myriad of ways. As a lawyer, entrepreneur or business(wo)man, being able to see around the corner of tomorrow and being agile enough to adapt through embracing existing and emerging technology will no doubt be critical to our survival, success and freedoms.

I'm convinced that Archie Williams would agree. Without technological advancement Archie would still be rotting away in an isolated jail cell...

Reflecting once again on the wonderful experience of losing my metaverse virginity, I'm delighted to say that I won't be letting the sun go down on me IRL ... or in the metaverse. And thankfully, due to technology setting him free, neither will Archie.

Well, we could all continue to sit around here and debate the pros and cons of the metaverse until the sun goes down, but we'd better wrap this session up as I can see *The Naked Lawyer* is still feeling rather sorry for herself. With sad puppy eyes (still twinkling though) I can tell she is in need of some 'Chrissie love', with heartfelt hugs conveying forgiveness ... It is Valentine's weekend, after all ...

I shall leave you all with this thought. Even if you are pessimistic and of the opinion that the real world and/or virtual world is going to hell in either a real or virtual handcart, remember this ...

On the brink of an imminent (nuclear) invasion by Russia into his country, the Ukrainian president ended a speech to his people on an optimistic note: "Now you may think it's darkness all around. But tomorrow the sun will rise again over our peaceful sky."

Good-day, goodnight and God bless! xxx

1. <https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/what-is-a-metaverse>
2. <https://mitchjackson.com/metaverse-book/>

**By Chrissie Lightfoot Chief Tech Advisor and Writer to Modern Law (Chair of the 'Technology in Law Land' roundtable).**

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