access Legal

The history of automation in law firms

A trip down memory lane for solicitors

1950
The Dictaphone
revolutionary at the time!

1970
The Photocopier
Major ink-to-toner breakthrough triggered mainstream use of the photocopier

1973
The UBIQ
appeared on lawyers' desks - it was used for searching for case law

1978
Wordprocessing arrived...
a huge step forward for law firm document creation

1980s
The Fax Machine
although it was invented in 1843 it didn't appear en masse in offices until the 1980s

1981
The IBM Personal Computer
A game changer – throughout the 1980s a wide range of applications began to evolve

1985
LAN (Local Area Network)
enabled document sharing and printer sharing

1990s
Electronic Mail (Email)
Traced back to the 1960s but didn't become mainstream for law firms until the 1990s

1992
SMS Text Messaging
The first ever text message was sent

1993
Early Web Browser Mosaic
this is when surfing the net first began

1997
Speech to text
Although the earliest speech-to-text device can be traced back to 1952, it wasn't until 1997 that the technology achieved widespread adoption amongst law firms

1999
The Blackberry
Very popular with lawyers – as they could take calls and handle emails with the same device whilst out and about

1999/2000
The Millennium Bug
threatened to cause havoc

2002
First virtual law firm
- with no physical bricks-and-mortar. Ironically Covid-19 in 2020 forced all law firms to follow suit.

2005
eDiscovery
A powerful means of managing digital evidence.

2006
Cloud Computing
The phrase was coined to describe software-as-a-service

2007
iPhone
Gave solicitors powerful tech in their hands 24/7.

2009
Huge advancements in case management
Although it arrived in the 1980s it wasn't until 2009 that the proliferation of the internet enabled it to make mammoth strides.

2011
Zoom
Initial release of the popular cloud-based meetings application (Microsoft Teams came later in 2017)

2013
The Smart Contract
(Blockchain) became a reality.

2016
Chatbots
emerged and we saw a flurry for the legal sector

2020
Mainstream use of Artificial Intelligence
Oxford University revealed over half of solicitors surveyed admitted some form of AI is used to run their firms.