

The Human Touch: Lawyer Leadership in the Age of Generative AI

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*I ain't lookin' for prayers or pity
I ain't comin' round searchin' for a crutch
I just want someone to talk to
And a little of that human touch
Just a little of that human touch*

*Tell me, in a world without pity
Do you think what I'm asking's too much?
I just want something to hold on to
And a little of that human touch
Just a little of that human touch*¹

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era where generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) can draft contracts, answer legal queries, and even simulate empathy, the need for authentic human connection by leaders in the legal profession has never been more urgent.² The question facing today's lawyer leaders is not whether GenAI will change the

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1. BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, *Human Touch*, on Human Touch (Columbia Recs. 1992). While citing Springsteen, known as "The Boss," in a leadership discussion does add a touch of irony, his work captures the emotional depth that is essential to effective leadership. *See id.*

2. *See* Dyane L. O'Leary, *Disconnected Connection*, 78 ARK. L. REV. 561, 562-63 (2026) (exploring how GenAI and videoconferencing tools transform communication, empathy, and rapport-building in legal practice); *see also infra* Section II.C (discussing lawyer leadership in age of GenAI).

practice of law.³ It already has.⁴ The question is whether we will allow it to erode the human-centered foundations fundamental to lawyer leadership.⁵

This Article argues that GenAI, for all its transformative potential, cannot (yet), and should not, replace the essential human skills that define effective lawyer leadership.⁶ As GenAI becomes more capable, the human traits they lack will be indispensable for lawyer leaders to effectively navigate complex challenges with nuance, ethics, and authenticity.⁷

Lawyer leaders are not just technicians; they are community builders, stewards of justice, and guides in moments of uncertainty.⁸ They guide people, organizations, and legal processes toward ethical, effective, and human-centered outcomes.⁹ Yet the pressures of efficiency and automation risk reducing legal work to a series of prompts and statistical outputs without human oversight,

3. See YUEH-HSUAN WENG & DAVID TORABI, *How Artificial Intelligence Will Affect the Practice of Law*, in RESEARCH HANDBOOK ON THE LAW OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE 122, 123, 125-26, 142 (Woodrow Barfield & Ugo Pagallo eds., 2d ed. 2025) (conveying that accelerated legal GenAI development merits technology training in law).

4. See THOMSON REUTERS INST., 2025 GENERATIVE AI IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES REPORT 2-3 (2025), <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/content/dam/ewp-m/documents/thomsonreuters/en/pdf/reports/2025-generative-ai-in-professional-services-report-tr5433489-rgb.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/L89B-7ZQM>] (reporting 95% of legal professionals expect GenAI central to workflows within five years); see also *infra* Section II.C (explaining leadership dilemma).

5. See LEAH W. TEAGUE & ELIZABETH M. FRALEY, FUNDAMENTALS OF LAWYER LEADERSHIP: A SKILLS GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION xxvi-xxix (2d ed. 2024) (discussing impact of technology on legal profession and leadership); see also Jordan Furlong, *The Rise of the “Human Skills” Lawyer*, JORDAN FURLONG (June 14, 2023), <https://jordanfurlong.substack.com/p/the-rise-of-the-human-skills-lawyer> [<https://perma.cc/7GQT-2GSG>] (highlighting lawyers’ personhood, not technical expertise, resonates most with clients).

6. See Nick van Dam & Katie Coates, *More Human than Machine: 5 Leadership Traits That AI Can’t Replace*, IE UNIV. (Oct. 9, 2025), <https://www.ie.edu/insights/articles/more-human-than-machine-5-leadership-traits-that-ai-cant-replace/> [<https://perma.cc/MG65-BTWQ>] (noting humans’ reliance on other humans, not on AI tools, for judgment, direction, and meaning); see also Aric K. Short, *Who’s the Lawyer Now? Professional Identity in a GenAI World*, J. LEGAL EDUC. (forthcoming 2026) (manuscript at 12-18) (on file with the Suffolk University Law Review) (discussing aspects of legal work remaining human and whether human skills will survive automation era).

7. See José Miguel Díez Valle & Nikita, *AI Is Revolutionizing Decision-Making, but It Can’t Replace Human Leaders*, LSE BUS. REV. (Jan. 3, 2025), <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2025/01/03/ai-is-revolutionising-decision-making-but-it-cant-replace-human-leaders/> [<https://perma.cc/76D8-W2Y8>] (noting AI lacks emotional intelligence, empathy, and ethics, and thus cannot replace nuanced human leadership).

8. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 1, 24-29, 40, 246 (discussing practices essential for cultivating professional identity and leadership in law); see also *infra* Section IV.C (discussing value of integrating technological competence with emotional intelligence).

9. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at xxvi-xxix (discussing lawyer leaders in society and including “lawyer leadership” in book title); DEBORAH L. RHODE, LAWYERS AS LEADERS 1-39 (2013) (arguing leadership critical skill for lawyers). Unlike lawyering, which often focuses on technical legal tasks, lawyer leadership encompasses the broader role lawyers play in shaping team dynamics, such as stewarding individuals, organizations, and systems; making strategic decisions under uncertainty; modeling professional integrity; and preserving fairness, dignity, and trust. See *infra* Parts III-IV (outlining human leadership qualities and how to adapt to the use of GenAI). In short, lawyer leadership is the human governance of the profession, including how lawyers mobilize others to achieve shared goals, exercise judgment under conditions of uncertainty, and safeguard values, all while technologies like GenAI transform how legal work is done. See *infra* Parts III-IV (explaining essential traits of lawyer leaders).

devaluing the very qualities that make lawyer leaders effective advocates and advisors.¹⁰ In this context, empathy, cultural intelligence, judgment, and trust emerge not as soft skills but as “human skills” necessary for building connections,¹¹ none of which a lawyer leader should wholly outsource to GenAI.¹²

GenAI offers unprecedented opportunities for innovation, productivity, and scale.¹³ Yet it also invites us to reimagine the lawyer leader’s role: not as one who competes with machines, but as one who complements them with distinctly human wisdom.¹⁴ It is time to shift the focus from what artificial intelligence (AI) *can* do to what humans *should* do.¹⁵ The rise of GenAI provides an opportunity to recognize the importance of human traits for an effective lawyer leader.¹⁶

This Article recommends a new model of lawyer leadership: One that blends tech fluency with timeless human strengths to lead with authenticity, courage, and vision in a rapidly changing global world.¹⁷ Part II of this Article provides an overview of the GenAI disruption in law and leadership.¹⁸ It summarizes historical advances in technology and the shifts in what skills are valued.¹⁹ It highlights the capabilities of GenAI while illustrating the leadership dilemma it presents.²⁰ Part III discusses the limits of GenAI in leadership contexts and the

10. See AMANDA LITMAN, WHEN WE’RE IN CHARGE: THE NEXT GENERATION’S GUIDE TO LEADERSHIP xix (2025) (observing that with increased automation, leadership will need to accentuate humanity).

11. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (recasting nice-to-have “soft skills” into critical “human skills” for modern lawyers).

12. See van Dam & Coates, *supra* note 6 (identifying fundamental requirements for lawyers include legal intuition, professional integrity, and trustworthiness); see also Roger E. Barton, *How Will Leveraging AI Change the Future of Legal Services?*, REUTERS (Aug. 23, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/how-will-leveraging-ai-change-future-legal-services-2023-08-23/> [<https://perma.cc/4YVP-XUWG>] (noting empathy, judgment, and trusted relationships represent unique human capabilities GenAI cannot replicate).

13. See Matthew N. O. Sadiku, Samuel A. Ajayi & Janet O. Sadiku, *Artificial Intelligence in Legal Practice: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions*, 27 J. ENG’G RSCH. & REPS. 68, 72, 77 (2025) (emphasizing GenAI’s transformative impact on legal practice and critical need for discernment in verifying outputs).

14. See 1 MARK SIMON DAVIES, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: LAW & LITIGATION § 15.03 (Matthew Bender 2025) (clarifying humans design legal GenAI tools and emotional intelligence remains essential in litigation).

15. See Sapthagiri Chapalapalli, *How Human-Centric AI Can Shape the Future of Work*, WORLD ECON. F. (Sep. 16, 2025), <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/09/human-centric-ai-shape-the-future-of-work/> [<https://perma.cc/KM58-8GUM>] (clarifying that keeping humanity at center of work greatest challenge for GenAI-partnered professionals).

16. See Joshua Rothman, *In the Age of A.I., What Makes People Unique?*, NEW YORKER (Aug. 6, 2024), <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/open-questions/in-the-age-of-ai-what-makes-people-unique> [<https://perma.cc/JV7C-K263>] (arguing when GenAI’s aptitude increases, humans’ ability to articulate their professional strengths intensifies).

17. See PAULA DAVIS, NALP, WHEN WELL-BEING & AI COLLIDE: WHY THE FUTURE OF LAW IS HUMAN 11 (2023), https://www.nalp.org/uploads/PDQuarterly_uploads/NALPBulletinNov2023_WhenWellBeingandAICollide.pdf [<https://perma.cc/H55D-SY5F>] (prioritizing human-centered skills in lawyer leadership while adapting to technological change).

18. See *infra* Part II (considering impact of GenAI on lawyer leadership).

19. See DAVIS, *supra* note 17 (agreeing with Furlong’s view on GenAI impacts).

20. See Léa Aboumoussa & Jennifer Pfister, *Leadership Development in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* 9-14 (Harv. Kennedy Sch., Working Paper No. 244, 2024), <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/cent->

risks of abdicating human-centered leadership to GenAI.²¹ Finally, Part IV provides recommendations and best practices for the GenAI-enhanced lawyer leader, illustrating how leaders can blend tech fluency with human strengths.²²

II. THE GENAI DISRUPTION IN LAW AND LEADERSHIP

A. Historical Context

Technological disruption is not new to the legal profession.²³ From the introduction of word processors and email, to the rise of legal research platforms like Westlaw and Lexis, to the post-pandemic lessons in remote lawyering, lawyers have long adapted to tools that enhance efficiency.²⁴ Each wave of innovation has transformed legal workflows and redefined what competencies matter most.²⁵

Just as the calculator did not eliminate the need for mathematicians, nor the internet the need for librarians, the arrival of GenAI does not signal the extinction of lawyer leaders.²⁶ Rather, it reframes which skills are most valued.²⁷ The current disruption echoes prior technological revolutions but bears a crucial distinction.²⁸ GenAI does not merely accelerate legal processes; it begins to emulate

ers/mrcbg/Final_AWP_244.pdf [https://perma.cc/42UG-D3UX] (describing how integrating GenAI in human-centric leadership enhances productivity and connectedness).

21. See *infra* Part III (discussing challenges associated with GenAI and leadership); Rothman, *supra* note 16 (arguing that “something . . . is lost” when GenAI’s data predictions replace human developers’ lived experiences).

22. See *infra* Part IV (discussing recommendations for blending technological fluency with human strengths in lawyer leadership).

23. See Lauren Colbeck, *The History of Law Firm Automation*, L. SOC’Y (Oct. 6, 2022), <https://www.law-society.org.uk/topics/ai-and-lawtech/the-history-of-law-firm-automation> [https://perma.cc/TD8Y-5J8N] (describing how technological advances, from Wang word processor to email attachments, helped automate case management).

24. See Samantha A. Moppett, *Preparing Students for the Artificial Intelligence Era: The Crucial Role of Critical Thinking Skills*, 52 MITCHELL HAMLINE L. REV. 240, 245, 252-54 (2025) (discussing GenAI and its impact on practice of law).

25. See THOMAS G. MARTIN, *GENERATIVE AI AND THE DELIVERY OF LEGAL SERVICES*, at ch. 1 (2025) (ebook) (tracing waves of AI innovation and framing transformative inflection point of GenAI era).

26. While GenAI tools may perform some legal tasks susceptible to automation, it is unlikely at this time that GenAI tools will replace lawyers entirely, as human lawyer leaders are still necessary for critical thinking and human connection. See Barton, *supra* note 12 (discussing how AI will change legal services in future); see also Moppett, *supra* note 24, at 242-43 (discussing how AI performs rote, monotonous work, but human lawyers’ critical thinking skills remain important). Perhaps the record-high national employment rate of recent law graduates supports the point that human lawyers are still necessary. See *Class of 2024 Receives Record Employment*, NALP (Sep. 2025), <https://www.nalp.org/0925research> [https://perma.cc/8AEN-7JA4] (reporting national employment rate of class of 2024 graduates 94%, defying most industry predictions). See generally GEOFF WOODS, *THE AI-DRIVEN LEADER* (2024) (promoting augmentation, not replacement, of human expertise).

27. See ETHAN MOLICK, *CO-INTELLIGENCE: LIVING AND WORKING WITH AI* 180-97 (2024) (highlighting importance of working with AI); WOODS, *supra* note 26, at 92-96 (explaining strategies for using AI for strategic thinking).

28. See *Generative Legal Minds*, HARV. L. SCH. CTR. ON THE LEGAL PRO. (Mar./Apr. 2023), <https://clp.law.harvard.edu/knowledge-hub/magazine/issues/generative-ai-in-the-legal-profession/generativelegal-minds/> [htt-

human reasoning.²⁹ GenAI raises profound questions about the unique and irreplaceable role of the lawyer as a leader.³⁰

Technological developments throughout history have impacted what skills are valued.³¹ The industrial era prized precision and productivity.³² The information era rewarded speed and access to knowledge.³³ In contrast, the GenAI era demands lawyer leaders have technical fluency, think critically, lead with empathy, and make principled choices amidst complexity.³⁴ A successful lawyer leader is not only measured by their operational excellence, but also by their strategic, authentic, and human-led leadership.³⁵

While technology has changed over the years, the question of whether to trust and rely on it has not.³⁶ Whether GenAI's impact is positive or negative lies not in the technology itself, but in the leader using it.³⁷ Lawyer leaders who harness

ps://perma.cc/7Z7J-8R52] (observing legal work beyond AI capability requires deep legal reasoning with sustained client demand).

29. See MARTIN, *supra* note 25, at Glossary (describing “Generative AI” as creating content through learned patterns).

30. See *infra* Section II.C (discussing value of human leadership); see also Jennifer Wondracek, *Generative AI for the Legal Profession: A Guide to Tool Selection, Risks, and Rewards*, A.B.A. (June 10, 2025), https://www.americanbar.org/groups/tort_trial_insurance_practice/resources/brief/2025-spring/generative-ai-legal-profession-guide-tool-selection-risks-rewards/ [https://perma.cc/XVC5-4YRE] (advocating for data verification and encryption to reduce risk from GenAI hallucinations and confidentiality breaches).

31. See Marina Gorbis, *Re-Working the Future: Strategies for Building Enterprises in the 21st Century*, MEDIUM (June 21, 2022), <https://medium.com/institute-for-the-future/re-working-the-future-1a9caedd1ded> [https://perma.cc/5G2R-GN6E] (noting how GenAI algorithms convert jobs into tasks and redefine how professional skills valued).

32. See Hershey H. Friedman, Nakato Hirakubo & Barbara Jo Lewis, *The Receptive and Resilient Leader: Thriving in an Era of AI and Digital Disruption*, 19 J. VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP 96, 96-98, 100, 108-09 (2026) (contrasting industrial-era technical control with digital-era adaptability and influence in determining leadership potential).

33. RICHARD SUSSKIND, *TOMORROW'S LAWYERS: AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUR FUTURE* 34-41 (3d ed. 2023) (advising lawyers adapt to technological disruption by rethinking delivery of legal services).

34. See SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR COLLEGE OF LAW, *2025 Judy Stinson Lecture Series ft. Professor Michael Murray*, at 13:20-15:15 (YouTube, May 1, 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWkAgs682AY&t=1s> [https://perma.cc/65PR-DEFU] (on file with the Suffolk University Law Review) (emphasizing that knowledge, experience, imagination, and vision support effective AI transitions for legal professionals); see also *infra* Section IV.C (discussing tech fluency).

35. See Lindsey P. Gustafson, Aric K. Short & Robin Thorner, *Breaking Down Silos and Building Up Students: The Transformational Possibilities of Professional Identity Formation*, 20 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 1027, 1035-58 (2024) (promoting interdisciplinary lawyer leadership for law students' professional development).

36. See Piers Gelly, *What Happened When I Tried to Replace Myself with ChatGPT in My English Classroom*, LITERARY HUB (July 28, 2025), <https://lithub.com/what-happened-when-i-tried-to-replace-myself-with-chatgpt-in-my-english-classroom/> [https://perma.cc/4FNX-Z2BT] (contrasting student trust in historical learning tools with skepticism about novel GenAI models).

37. See Adnan Masood, *Co-Intelligence: The New Architecture of Work—Inside Ethan Mollick's Field Manual for Surviving, and Thriving in the AI Economy*, MEDIUM (July 20, 2025), <https://medium.com/@adnan-masood/co-intelligence-the-new-architecture-of-work-inside-ethan-mollicks-field-manual-for-surviving-0a309-b47773f> [https://perma.cc/Q2FB-7UL2] (discussing Mollick's human-AI partnership advocacy); see also *How Stetson Leads the Way in AI and the Legal Profession*, STETSON TODAY (Jan. 10, 2025), <https://www2.stetson.edu/today/2025/01/how-stetson-leads-the-way-in-ai-and-the-legal-profession/> [https://perma.cc/4ZU7-44K-J] (prioritizing human lawyerly judgment in GenAI collaborations).

GenAI will replace those who do not.³⁸ History demonstrates that evolving technology itself did not drive progress; rather, leaders' strategic thinking and decision-making in using technology were what truly transformed innovation into improved outcomes.³⁹ While technical literacy is a fundamental competency of an effective lawyer leader, human literacy is equally critical in helping clients achieve goals in ethical, fair, and positive ways.⁴⁰

B. Capabilities of GenAI

Before exploring whether GenAI can replace the human touch of a lawyer leader, it is helpful to understand what GenAI is.⁴¹ There is no shortage of scholarship on what GenAI is and how it works.⁴² Rather than reinvent the wheel by providing a detailed technical explanation of GenAI, this Article provides a broad overview of the current state of GenAI as of the time of writing, and how it has impacted the legal profession.⁴³

GenAI is a branch of AI designed to create new content, such as text, images, audio, video, and even computer code, by identifying and reproducing patterns learned from large datasets.⁴⁴ Unlike earlier AI systems that were largely rules-based or confined to narrowly defined tasks, GenAI relies on advanced machine learning models, most notably large language models (LLMs), to produce outputs that mimic human-created work and appear as original and humanlike.⁴⁵ These systems generate responses not by retrieving preexisting material, but by predicting what words, images, or sounds are most likely to follow given a particular input.⁴⁶

38. MOLLIĆK, *supra* note 27, at 115-16 (arguing human expertise and cultural fluency required to unlock GenAI's potential).

39. See *Corporate Disruption*, NEW YORKER (June 30, 2014), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/07/07/1564621> [<https://perma.cc/54KP-T82G>] (describing Netflix's success over Blockbuster); see also Doaa M. Salman Abdou & Ranim Hussein, *How Fear of Change, Lack of Innovation Led to Nokia's Failure?*, 2 INT'L J. BUS. ECOSYSTEM & STRATEGY 43, 44-45 (2020) (arguing Nokia's resistance to innovation precipitated its financial decline).

40. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 237-39 (noting completely avoiding GenAI noncompliant with contemporary legal ethics standards); see also *infra* Section IV.C (discussing blending tech fluency with human strengths).

41. See Moppett, *supra* note 24, at 245 (describing AI technology mimics human intelligence, including virtual assistants, self-driving cars, and facial recognition tools).

42. See, e.g., *id.* at 245-52 (explaining AI and describing its benefits and drawbacks).

43. See Andrew Perlman, *The Implications of ChatGPT for Legal Services and Society*, HARV. L. SCH. CTR. ON THE LEGAL. PRO. (Mar./Apr. 2023), <https://clp.law.harvard.edu/knowledge-hub/magazine/issues/generative-ai-in-the-legal-profession/the-implications-of-chatgpt-for-legal-services-and-society/> [<https://perma.cc/ZEZ8-WDCJ>] (discussing impact of ChatGPT on legal industry).

44. See Moppett, *supra* note 24, at 247 (distinguishing traditional AI from GenAI, which produces new content via neural networks and machine learning).

45. See *id.* at 245 (citing National Institute of Standards and Technology's guidance on human-like artificial intelligence capabilities).

46. See *id.* at 247 (explaining that GenAI's complex neural networks enable it to fluently predict and generate content).

GenAI systems are trained by processing vast amounts of data, often drawn from books, articles, websites, and other digital sources.⁴⁷ Machine learning techniques that enable GenAI models to identify patterns, relationships, and linguistic structures also allow them to generate new content by predicting the most probable next word, phrase, or element based on prior examples.⁴⁸ After a GenAI model is trained on massive datasets, it undergoes a process of fine-tuning and deployment.⁴⁹ Developers refine the model with additional data or human feedback to improve the accuracy, tone, and specialization of its outputs.⁵⁰ Once fine-tuned, the model is put into use and generates responses to user prompts by predicting the most probable next word or sequence based on everything it learned during training.⁵¹ In this post-training phase, GenAI shifts from learning patterns to applying them, producing new text and ideas that appear fluent and analytical, but remain grounded in probabilistic prediction rather than true understanding.⁵² Developers also generally implement safeguards and guardrails to try to mitigate bias and prevent misuse.⁵³

The popularity of GenAI surged with the public release of ChatGPT by OpenAI in late 2022, which quickly became one of the fastest-growing consumer applications in history.⁵⁴ Following ChatGPT's success, major technology

47. See *id.* at 250-51 (expressing that widespread GenAI training on consumer and legal datasets raises privacy and provenance concerns).

48. See Moppett, *supra* note 24, at 246-48 (noting that GenAI often yields repetitious outputs because it lacks individuality and recombines existing sources).

49. See *id.* at 246-50 (explaining how prompt engineering steers GenAI, whereas allowing pattern-matching to operate unchecked increases hallucinations).

50. See ANTONIO PESCAPE, *Exploring the Current State and Future Potential of Generative Artificial Intelligence Using a Generative Artificial Intelligence*, in MIND, BODY, AND DIGITAL BRAINS 37, 37-56 (Flavia Santoianini, Gianluca Giannini & Alessandro Ciasullo eds., 2024) (discussing GenAI refinement strategies of pretraining, fine-tuning, conditional generation, and continual learning).

51. See Rui PEDRO MESQUITA SOARES, USING AI AS A DEVELOPMENT ACCELERATOR 1, 28-50 (June 2024) (Master's dissertation, Instituto Superior de Engenharia do Porto) (on file with the Suffolk University Law Review) (describing how Copilot and Amazon Q's API integration into Visual Studio Code enhanced corporate productivity).

52. See John Kaag, *What AI Can Never Understand*, BOS. GLOBE (Oct. 12, 2025), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/10/12/opinion/asking-chatgpt-questions-ai-weirdness/> [<https://perma.cc/CGL6-SW6T>] (explaining how GenAI solves problems through data processing rather than sharing lived experiences).

53. See ALEX TAMKIN ET AL., CLIO: PRIVACY-PRESERVING INSIGHTS INTO REAL-WORLD AI USE 7-10 (2024), <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2412.13678v1> [<https://perma.cc/LGF5-B7T9>] (explaining how deploying AI tools to analyze aggregated Clio and Claude inputs enhanced studies' privacy). But see Bruna Santos & Shirin Anlen, *The Grok Disaster Isn't an Anomaly. It Follows Warnings That Were Ignored*, TECH POL'Y PRESS (Jan. 9, 2026), <https://www.techpolicy.press/the-grok-disaster-isnt-an-anomaly-it-follows-warnings-that-were-ignored/> [<https://perma.cc/4FM2-SN25>] (highlighting Grok's lack of safeguards and resulting harm).

54. See Rehan Rupawalla, *Grounds of Generative Giants: Building Successful GenAI Products* 1, 4-7 (Apr. 23, 2024) (Honors thesis, University of Texas at Austin) (on file with the Suffolk University Law Review) (charting how wider investment and computational power evolved 2000s-2010s chatbots into modern multimodal GenAI tools).

companies accelerated their own GenAI development.⁵⁵ For example, Google introduced Gemini (formerly Bard), Anthropic launched Claude, and Meta developed LLaMA and its consumer-facing tools.⁵⁶ Other programs, such as Microsoft's Copilot and Amazon's Q, integrated GenAI capabilities directly into productivity and business platforms.⁵⁷ In the legal field, GenAI has evolved beyond general-purpose chatbots to include specialized platforms from major legal research providers.⁵⁸ LexisNexis introduced Lexis+AI and its own legal research assistant, Protégé.⁵⁹ Similarly, Westlaw AI Deep Research by Thomson Reuters applies GenAI to enhance legal research.⁶⁰ Other AI-powered legal tools, such as Harvey AI and Casetext's CoCounsel (now part of Thomas Reuters), use GenAI to assist with document review, contract analysis, and drafting.⁶¹ These law-specific systems are designed to maintain higher accuracy, security, and reliability than general GenAI models.⁶²

GenAI tools have become ubiquitous, transforming how individuals and institutions generate, access, and interact with information.⁶³ These tools can engage in conversation, draft documents, summarize information, or simulate

55. See generally Samuel Hasudungan Tampubolon, *The AI Race Is the New Gold Rush*, 1 J. INTELLIGENT COMPUTING, SYS. & APPLICATIONS 30 (2025) (comparing GenAI era to Gold Rush for its impact on global technological rivalry).

56. See Lauren M. E. Goodlad & Matthew Stone, *Beyond Chatbot-K: On Large Language Models, "Generative AI," and Rise of Chatbots—An Introduction*, CRITICAL AI, Apr. 1, 2024 (forecasting GenAI chatbot impacts); see also Moppett, *supra* note 24, at 247-48 (summarizing key participants in development of GenAI).

57. See THOMSON REUTERS INST., *supra* note 4, at 3 (detailing GenAI use nearly doubled in past year, additional 50% of respondents planning future adoption).

58. See Laura Safdie, *AI and Legal Aid: A Generational Opportunity for Access to Justice*, THOMSON REUTERS (Feb. 3, 2025), <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/ai-in-courts/ai-legal-aid-generational-opportunity/> [<https://perma.cc/UTN6-9DDN>] (explaining GenAI's pivotal role in expanding access to legal services).

59. See *Introducing Protégé Legal AI Workflows*, LEXISNEXIS, <https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/protége.page> [<https://perma.cc/3SBY-T3P8>] (last visited Jan. 27, 2026) (describing Lexis's development of Protégé to improve research accuracy for law students and legal professionals).

60. See *Introducing AI-Assisted Research: Legal Research Meets Generative AI*, THOMSON REUTERS (Nov. 15, 2023), <https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/legal-research-meets-generative-ai/> [<https://perma.cc/R9UV-BQCG>] (explaining how Westlaw Precision AI answers users' queries by synthesizing legal authorities and editorial enhancements).

61. See generally *Accelerate Deals, Enhance Outcomes*, HARVEY, <https://www.harvey.ai/solutions/transactional> [<https://perma.cc/8ZZT-CT8L>] (last visited Feb. 24, 2026) (discussing Harvey applications); *CoCounsel Legal*, THOMSON REUTERS, <https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/en/products/cocounsel-legal> [<https://perma.cc/V-853-5EPB>] (last visited Feb. 24, 2026) (noting CoCounsel's abilities).

62. But see Facey v. Fisher, No. 152088/2025, 2025 WL 2645361, at *3 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. Sep. 15, 2025) (questioning whether incorrect and fake citations in motion resulted from AI use); see also Debra Cassens Weiss, *Citation Errors and Hallucinated Cases Turn Up in Boies Schiller Brief in "Artificial-Intelligence Debacle"*, A.B.A. J. (Sep. 24, 2025), <https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/boies-schiller-partner-takes-responsibility-for-brief-with-hallucinated-cases> [<https://perma.cc/U6B8-MKAG>] (discussing attorney responsibility for AI-generated citation errors in court documents).

63. See THOMSON REUTERS INST., *supra* note 4 (reporting 95% of members of professional firms surveyed expect GenAI controlling workflows within five years).

reasoning processes in ways that feel remarkably human.⁶⁴ Yet, they remain probabilistic systems, not conscious actors, and their outputs may be plausible, but not always accurate or reliable.⁶⁵

Ultimately, GenAI represents a powerful tool with profound implications for reshaping legal work.⁶⁶ Already, GenAI tools can analyze vast datasets, summarize complex documents, draft standard contracts, perform legal research, conduct document review, and even generate memoranda and arguments.⁶⁷ Chat-based platforms are currently deployed to determine client eligibility, answer common legal questions, and support internal firm correspondence.⁶⁸ These tools excel at pattern recognition, natural language processing, and rapid synthesis of information, making them valuable for repetitive, high-volume legal tasks.⁶⁹ As GenAI further integrates with legal databases, its potential to enhance productivity, reduce costs, and expand access to justice only increases.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, GenAI chatbots present significant drawbacks that limit their reliability and raise concerns.⁷¹ These systems are prone to “hallucinations,” generating information that appears credible but is misapplied, irrelevant, or entirely fabricated.⁷² The risk of GenAI is only magnified in fields like law, where accuracy is pivotal to protecting clients’ interests.⁷³ Further, because GenAI

64. See Jory Heckman, *AI & Data Exchange 2025: LexisNexis’ Jake Nelson on Potential of GenAI to Support Legal Services*, FED. NEWS NETWORK (Feb. 27, 2025), <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/federal-insights/2025/02/ai-data-exchange-2025-lexisnexis-jake-nelson-on-potential-of-genai-to-support-legal-services/> [<https://perma.cc/GC9S-9YZE>] (explaining how GenAI can assist with summarizing cases and synthesizing legal research).

65. See Kaag, *supra* note 52 (clarifying how GenAI lacks moral positioning and creates outputs through statistical predictions of user values); see also A.B.A. Comm. on Ethics & Pro. Resp., Formal Op. 512 (2024) (cautioning lawyers about GenAI hallucinating case law and professional responsibility implications).

66. See MARTIN DE SAULLES, *THE AI AND DATA REVOLUTION: UNDERSTANDING THE NEW DATA LANDSCAPE* xvi–xvii (2025) (contending step-change of GenAI in professionals’ ability to extract new value from data).

67. See Michael D. Murray, *Artificial Intelligence and the Practice of Law Part 2: Working with Your New AI Staff Attorney*, 88 KBA BENCH & BAR MAG. 40, 40–41 (2024) (delineating how GenAI tools assist with research, document review, drafting, and synthesis).

68. See Martin, *supra* note 25, at ch. 4 (describing chatbots’ use in legal aid triage and rural access to justice).

69. See Gerry Aue et al., *Scaling AI for Success: Four Technical Enablers for Sustained Impact*, MCKINSEY & CO. (Sep. 27, 2023), <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/tech-and-ai/our-insights/tech-forward/scaling-ai-for-success-four-technical-enablers-for-sustained-impact> [<https://perma.cc/AJ7S-CNQY>] (noting GenAI can scale through reusable data assets, modular code, standard protocols, and robust management).

70. See Safdie, *supra* note 58 (explaining how AI can expand legal aid services to meet unmet needs).

71. See Nicole Black, *From Resistance to Reality: Lawyers Can No Longer Ignore AI*, DAILY REC. (Feb. 21, 2025), <https://nydailyrecord.com/2025/02/21/from-resistance-to-reality-lawyers-can-no-longer-ignore-ai/> [<https://perma.cc/T3ZX-7SP6>] (outlining bar association ethical guidance for responsible AI adoption to preserve competence, supervision, and accuracy).

72. See Varun Magesh et al., *Hallucination-Free? Assessing the Reliability of Leading AI Legal Research Tools*, 22 J. EMPIRICAL LEGAL STUD. 216, 216 (2025) (finding legal GenAI tools hallucinate 17–33% of time despite recalibration efforts).

73. See *Mata v. Avianca, Inc.*, 678 F. Supp. 3d 443, 448, 466 (S.D.N.Y. 2023) (sanctioning attorneys for submitting brief with hallucinated cases generated by ChatGPT).

models are trained on vast datasets drawn from the internet and other sources, they may also perpetuate and amplify biases related to race, gender, or ideology.⁷⁴ Beyond accuracy and bias, the environmental impact of GenAI is substantial: Training and maintaining large-scale models require enormous computational power, resulting in high energy consumption and significant carbon emissions.⁷⁵

Equity and access also pose growing challenges.⁷⁶ Those with the resources to afford premium GenAI tools or proprietary integrations may gain disproportionate advantages, widening the digital divide between well-funded institutions and those with limited means.⁷⁷ The possible misuse or malicious application of GenAI is another risk it presents, particularly in the context of copyright, intellectual property, and security issues.⁷⁸ Additionally, the exploitation of human labor of marginalized communities in training GenAI raises ethical concerns.⁷⁹ Finally, client confidentiality may be compromised by GenAI's data privacy practices.⁸⁰ These issues underscore that while GenAI can enhance efficiency and innovation, its benefits are neither universal nor free from ethical consequences, reinforcing the need for responsible human leadership and oversight in its use.⁸¹

74. See Press Release, UNESCO, Generative AI: UNESCO Study Reveals Alarming Evidence of Regressive Gender Stereotypes (Mar. 7, 2024), <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/generative-ai-unesco-study-reveals-alarming-evidence-regressive-gender-stereotypes> [https://perma.cc/Z5ES-Z3QR] (reporting LLMs reproduce gender stereotypes); see also YUFEI GUO ET AL., BIAS IN LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS: ORIGIN, EVALUATION, AND MITIGATION 1 (2024), <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2411.10915v1> [https://perma.cc/2XEL-924K] (surveying evidence that LLMs amplify racial, gender, and ideological biases from training data).

75. See Adrian Berthelot et al., *Understanding the Environmental Impact of Generative AI Services*, 68 COMM'NS ACM 46, 48 (2025) (discussing lifecycle assessments and new tools for evaluating GenAI's environmental footprint).

76. See Maroussia Lévesque, Article, *Analog Privilege*, 26 N.Y.U. J. LEGIS. & PUB. POL'Y 625, 630 (2023) (observing administrative work risks GenAI displacement, whereas jobs requiring judgment and interpersonal skills safer).

77. See Mennatullah Hendawy, *The Intensified Digital Divide: Comprehending GenAI*, INTERNET POL'Y REV. (June 14, 2024), <https://policyreview.info/articles/news/intensified-digital-divide-comprehending-genai/1-772> [https://perma.cc/PBP3-GNS2] (discussing problem of digital divide); see also Drew Simshaw, *Access to A.I. Justice: Avoiding an Inequitable Two-Tiered System of Legal Services*, 24 YALE J.L. & TECH. 150, 156, 187-88 (2022) (addressing equity risks in GenAI deployment).

78. See Rothman, *supra* note 16 (reporting scholarly concern that humans will forget innate virtues in GenAI-dominated environment).

79. See David Streitfeld, *How This A.I. Company Collapsed Amid Silicon Valley's Biggest Boom*, N.Y. TIMES (Sep. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/31/technology/builder-ai-collapse.html> [https://perma.cc/8FDN-SFPE] (exposing Builder.ai's GenAI model built upon hundreds of underpaid human workers who hand-produced outputs).

80. See APRIL G. DAWSON, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY 57-58, 82-84 (2023) (discussing potential for confidentiality concerns with AI use); see also Mopett, *supra* note 24, at 251 (explaining risks of unmonitored GenAI use in legal practice, such as compromising client confidentiality); A.B.A. Comm. on Ethics & Pro. Resp., Formal Op. 512 (2024) (highlighting risks of inputting client information into GenAI).

81. See Deb Hughes, *Responsible Transparency in the Era of AI: 5 Important Keys*, HRMORNING (Oct. 28, 2024), <https://www.hrmorning.com/articles/responsible-transparency-in-the-era-of-ai/> [https://perma.cc/HK-4X-X2ZF] (explaining how leaders can maintain transparency during GenAI-supported workplace communications).

As these tools grow in sophistication, the line between what is *technologically possible* and what is *professionally appropriate* becomes increasingly blurred.⁸² GenAI's potential, limitations, and risks must be understood against the backdrop of its fundamental nature as a statistical word prediction model lacking human consciousness, judgment, and ethical reasoning.⁸³ Lawyer leaders now face not only questions of adoption, but also questions of discernment.⁸⁴ When should lawyer leaders use GenAI, and when should it be set aside in favor of human judgment, context sensitivity, and relational understanding?⁸⁵

C. Leadership Dilemma

Lawyer leadership has long been recognized as integral to the profession, even if not always explicitly labeled as such.⁸⁶ From the conception of lawyers as officers of the legal system who are entrusted with maintaining the rule of law, lawyers have long been called upon to guide others through uncertainty and to uphold social order.⁸⁷ Lawyer leaders are not only advocates, but they are also problem solvers, negotiators, institution builders, and community leaders.⁸⁸ Their role requires more than technical expertise: It demands empathy, judgment, ethical grounding, and the ability to inspire trust amid conflict.⁸⁹ In this sense, lawyer leadership encompasses the skills and disposition necessary to guide or steward others, to shape institutions, and to advance justice.⁹⁰

Effective lawyer leadership begins with *leading oneself*—developing self-awareness of your own values, preferences, leadership style, and mindset.⁹¹ It extends to *leading others* by cultivating collaboration, empathy, and effective

82. See A.B.A. Comm. on Ethics & Pro. Resp., Formal Op. 512 (2024) (discussing ethical obligations for lawyers to disclose GenAI use and obtain informed client consent).

83. See Jordan Furlong, *Three Core Attributes of Tomorrow's Lawyers*, JORDAN FURLONG (Oct. 9, 2025), <https://jordanfurlong.substack.com/p/three-core-attributes-of-tomorrows> [<https://perma.cc/5499-77Y2>] (discussing how sound judgment and integrity enable lawyers to add value to post-AI legal sector).

84. See A.B.A. Comm. on Ethics & Pro. Resp., Formal Op. 512 (2024) (clarifying that proactive client communication required when GenAI used to draft or edit legal materials).

85. See *infra* Part III (identifying dangers of overreliance on artificial intelligence for strategic decision-making).

86. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at xxvi–xxvii, 22–27 (describing methods for cultivating leadership traits and outlining practical steps for professional identity formation).

87. See MODEL RULES OF PRO. CONDUCT pmbl. (A.B.A. 1983) (emphasizing attorneys' responsibilities in broader legal system); see also Rothman, *supra* note 16 (positing exposure to AI-generated "virtues" may erode humans' natural capacity for empathy and ethical reasoning).

88. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 24–30 (highlighting diverse role of lawyers).

89. See Furlong, *supra* note 83 (explaining that legal intuition, integrity, and trustworthiness are essential lawyer competencies for future).

90. See Jordan Furlong, *Stewardship and the Post-AI Legal Profession*, JORDAN FURLONG (May 2, 2025), <https://jordanfurlong.substack.com/p/trusted-oversight-a-role-for-the> [<https://perma.cc/28AR-675L>] (proposing lawyers offer peace of mind through stewardship alongside GenAI automation); see also Short, *supra* note 6, at 17 (suggesting practical wisdom represents distinctly human aspect of legal work remaining irreplaceable by GenAI).

91. See C. CLINTON SIDLE, EMPOWERED: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION 10–12 (2019) (outlining leadership development hierarchy of personal, interpersonal, team, and system mastery).

communication.⁹² It also requires *leading change*, particularly in moments of disruption, when lawyer leaders must help institutions and individuals adapt and navigate conflicts.⁹³ These facets underscore that leadership is not tied to title or rank; every lawyer, regardless of position, has opportunities to lead.⁹⁴

Leadership in lawyering is increasingly recognized as a vital area of professional development.⁹⁵ The practice of law has always involved more than analytical reasoning and advocacy; it requires the ability to guide clients through uncertainty, collaborate effectively, and influence institutions toward justice.⁹⁶ As the legal profession faces rapid technological, cultural, and societal change, leadership skills rooted in empathy, ethical judgment, and trust have become essential for lawyers to serve effectively in every sector of practice.⁹⁷ Leadership is not an optional supplement to technical expertise, but a core professional competency integral to fulfilling lawyers' public and professional responsibilities.⁹⁸

Recognizing its importance, many law schools and professional organizations have developed curricula and programs focused on lawyer leadership.⁹⁹ These and other similar initiatives further reflect the profession's growing recognition that leadership is a learned skill, essential to advancing justice, strengthening

92. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, xxvi-xxix (highlighting influential leadership role of attorneys); see also *infra* Part IV (discussing insights on leading others).

93. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 124-25, 236-38, 378 (identifying challenges of leading change and sustaining growth despite organizational conflict).

94. See *id.* at 15 (encouraging lawyer leaders to identify strengths and align professional identity with ethical leadership).

95. See, e.g., *id.* at 23 (describing emphasis on development of leadership skills in law school).

96. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (noting central shortcoming of traditional lawyer development lies in insufficient attention to interpersonal skills).

97. See *id.* (arguing that law's future depends on lawyers grounding practice in humanity and adaptability).

98. See RHODE, *supra* note 9, at 1-39 (outlining leadership at core of lawyering).

99. See Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions, UNIV. OF ST. THOMAS SCH. OF L., <https://law.stthomas.edu/about/centers-institutes/holloran-center/> [https://perma.cc/4NSB-G84A] (last visited Jan. 21, 2026) (describing pioneering research and programs); *Leadership Development*, BAYLOR UNIV., <https://law.baylor.edu/students/leadership-development> [https://perma.cc/L9D8-96K2] (last visited Feb. 24, 2026) (highlighting practical integration of leadership curriculum); *Leadership in Law Firms*, HARV. L. SCH., <https://hls.harvard.edu/executive-education/programs/in-person-programs/leadership-in-law-firms> [https://perma.cc/HTD9-D4DT] (last visited Feb. 24, 2026) (training practitioners in organizational and ethical leadership); *Professional Identity/Professionalism & Leadership Program*, TEX. A&M UNIV. SCH. OF L., <https://www.law.tamu.edu/degrees-programs/jd-degree/student-experience/professional-identity.html> [https://perma.cc/DG4H-GXUN] (last visited Mar. 6, 2026) (discussing leadership training programs); *Course Offerings*, SUFFOLK UNIV. L. SCH., <https://www.suffolk.edu/law/academics-clinics/academic-resources/law-course-offerings> [https://perma.cc/B7-25-55G3] (last visited Feb. 24, 2026) (search "leader" in the "Search" option) (offering upper-level leadership elective courses); *Upper-Division Courses*, UNIV. OF TENN., <https://winston.utk.edu/admissions/degree-programs/courses/two-year-course-list/> [https://perma.cc/67YA-CNYF] (last visited Feb. 24, 2026) (choose "Leadership, Professional Identity, Well-Being" from the dropdown options) (offering several courses on leadership, professional identity, and well-being); see also Amanda Robert, *ABA Young Lawyers Division Accepting Applications for Leadership Academy*, A.B.A. J. (Mar. 25, 2022), <https://www.abajournal.com/web/article/aba-young-lawyers-division-accepting-applications-for-leadership-academy> [https://perma.cc/W2W8-GNYM] (noting ABA's program for cultivating leadership among new entrants to legal profession).

institutions, and maintaining the profession's legitimacy in a changing world.¹⁰⁰ In the GenAI age, understanding lawyer leadership takes on new urgency.¹⁰¹

The rise of GenAI presents a dilemma at the heart of lawyer leadership.¹⁰² On one hand, it empowers legal professionals to be more productive, precise, and responsive by streamlining research, writing, and analysis.¹⁰³ On the other hand, it risks eroding the distinctly human lawyer leadership dimensions of leading self, leading others, and leading change.¹⁰⁴ GenAI lacks the capacity at this time to model integrity, inspire trust, or navigate the emotional and cultural complexities inherent in legal practice.¹⁰⁵ As such, examining lawyer leadership today requires affirming the enduring human touch that technology cannot yet replicate.¹⁰⁶ As lawyers become more efficient, they risk disconnecting from the human elements of their work, including the client's voice, the team's morale, the cultural context, their judgment when decision-making, and trust.¹⁰⁷

This dilemma of efficiency gains but connectivity losses is especially evident in leadership communication.¹⁰⁸ A GenAI-assisted email may be grammatically flawless and "tonally appropriate," yet still fall flat in moments that demand vulnerability and emotional resonance.¹⁰⁹ When leaders attempt to automate empathy, they risk alienating others and compromising their own credibility.¹¹⁰ Clients may receive GenAI-generated updates that inform, but do not reassure.¹¹¹

100. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at pt. I (providing overview for identifying leadership fundamentals and forming professional identity).

101. See *id.* at 23-24, 416-18 (discussing lawyer leadership and ethical obligations of technology).

102. See *infra* note 103 and accompanying text (summarizing benefits of GenAI on legal leadership); cf. SHIRZAD CHAMINE, POSITIVE INTELLIGENCE 6-13 (2012) (explaining how leaders who cultivate positive intelligence sustain performance through psychological safety and resilience).

103. See Tojin T. Eapen et al., *How Generative AI Can Augment Human Creativity*, HARV. BUS. REV. (July-Aug. 2023), <https://hbr.org/2023/07/how-generative-ai-can-augment-human-creativity> [<https://perma.cc/JB8N-FY6Q>] (proposing GenAI transcends humans' resistance to novel ideas and scalability concerns).

104. Cf. CHAMINE, *supra* note 102, at 6-13 (highlighting importance of leadership for entire teams); see also *supra* notes 90-93 and accompanying text (discussing different dimensions of leadership).

105. See CHAMINE, *supra* note 102, at 6-13 (demonstrating how leadership rooted in positive psychology strengthens group trust, innovation, and well-being).

106. See *infra* Part III (providing examples of risks when substituting GenAI for human-led leadership).

107. See *infra* Part III (illustrating scenarios failing to preserve human-centered leadership); see also Mutoni Uwase N., *Future Communication Strategies for Law Firms*, 11 IAA J. COMM'N 42, 42-43 (2025) (analyzing emerging communication approaches fostering transparency and trust in attorney-client relationships).

108. See SHANNON VALLOR, THE AI MIRROR: HOW TO RECLAIM OUR HUMANITY IN AN AGE OF MACHINE THINKING 9-12 (2024) (addressing risk that AI inhibits human creativity, innovation, and evolution).

109. See Maggie Sass, *Smarter Together: Why AI Needs Emotional Intelligence to Lead the Future*, TALENT-SMARTEQ (May 7, 2025), <https://www.talentsmarteq.com/why-ai-needs-emotional-intelligence-to-lead-the-future/> [<https://perma.cc/ARC6-WT3F>] (describing how emotional intelligence bridges gap between GenAI's data and relational needs of organizations).

110. TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 264-73, 309-19 (discussing how leaders with strong emotional intelligence successfully foster trust and build relationships).

111. See James O'Donnell, *Help! My Therapist Is Secretly Using ChatGPT*, MIT TECH. REV. (Sep. 9, 2025), <https://www.technologyreview.com/2025/09/09/1123386/help-my-therapist-is-secretly-using-chatgpt/> [<https://perma.cc/44G5-HA79>] (raising concerns about therapists' undisclosed GenAI use in session and effect on client trust).

Team members may be thanked by a message that sounds more like a press release than a genuine acknowledgment.¹¹² In these cases, the efficiencies of GenAI come at the cost of authenticity.¹¹³ Even more troubling is the growing temptation for lawyer leaders to delegate not only their tasks, but also their legal reasoning itself to GenAI.¹¹⁴ What results is not augmented leadership, but rather artificial leadership.¹¹⁵

As GenAI transforms the pace and structure of legal practice, including how lawyers research, write, and advise, it simultaneously sharpens the need for distinctly human leadership traits.¹¹⁶ In a world where legal GenAI tools can answer legal questions, research and summarize case law, and draft court documents at an unprecedented pace, legal professionals must lean into the leadership skills that GenAI cannot yet replicate.¹¹⁷ GenAI cannot replace the distinctly human dimensions of leadership, such as recognizing behavioral nuances, exercising moral responsibility, and forging trust through shared lived experiences.¹¹⁸ These qualities are not ancillary to the practice of law: They are foundational to what it means to lead as a lawyer.¹¹⁹

112. Cf. Raveendra K. Wagh & Premalatha Packirisamy, *Emotional Labor in the Digital Workplace: A Study of Its Effects on Job Satisfaction Among Remote Professionals*, 9 INT'L J. RSCH. & INNOVATION SOC. SCI. 4523, 4523-27 (2025) (identifying increased emotional labor and decreased job satisfaction in remote work environments).

113. See Danah Henriksen et al., *Social-Emotional Learning and Generative AI: A Critical Literature Review and Framework for Teacher Education*, 76 J. TCHR. EDUC. 312, 319 (2025) (acknowledging that GenAI tools still struggle with depersonalization and cultural misapplication in training contexts).

114. See, e.g., AFTON PAVLETIC, MASS. BD. OF BAR OVERSEERS, *THE WILD WEST OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE USE OF AI IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW* 3-8 (2024), https://bbop-public.massbbo.org/web/f/The_Wild_West_of_Artificial_Intelligence.pdf [<https://perma.cc/DE7Y-3XEX>] (analyzing ethical duties for lawyers when integrating GenAI in practice); Jim Ash, *Board Reviews Guidelines for the Use of Generative AI in the Practice of Law*, FLA. BAR NEWS (Dec. 5, 2023), <https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/board-reviews-guidelines-for-the-use-of-generative-ai-in-the-practice-of-law> [<https://perma.cc/6QNY-S77G>] (discussing efforts to regulate AI use); STATE BAR OF CAL., *PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW* 2-5 (2023), <https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Portals/0/documents/ethics/Generative-AI-Practical-Guidance.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/73TU-VR2F>] (surveying ethical recommendations for GenAI adoption in legal services).

115. See Marissa Matozzo, *College Grads Shocked as Names Are Read at Commencement—by AI: “What a Beautiful Personal Touch!”*, N.Y. POST (May 23, 2025), <https://nypost.com/2025/05/23/tech/college-grads-shocked-as-names-are-read-at-commencement-by-ai-what-a-beautiful-personal-touch/> [<https://perma.cc/5AKL-NT9G>] (highlighting students' objections to AI-powered commencement and nuances of authentic engagement).

116. See *AI for Self-Help and Legal Aid at the Innovations in Technology Conference*, LEGAL TALK NETWORK (Feb. 13, 2024), <https://www.lsc.gov/media/podcasts/talk-justice/talk-justice-episode-76> [<https://perma.cc/8U6K-LH25>] (discussing deployment of GenAI-powered chatbots for intake and access initiatives in legal aid).

117. See O'Leary, *supra* note 2, at 632 (demonstrating human connections and personal engagement remain essential components of effective legal work).

118. See Kaag, *supra* note 52 (affirming GenAI lacks experience and genuine accountability for outputs, necessitating human oversight).

119. See Aric K. Short, *Infusing Leadership Competencies into 1L Professional Identity Formation*, 62 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 113, 123-25 (2022) (emphasizing synchronization of law students' values with career choices builds leadership and confidence).

To lead effectively in the GenAI era, lawyer leaders must do more than adopt new tools; they must adapt their mindset.¹²⁰ Lawyer leadership must be human-centric, not efficiency-centric.¹²¹ By embracing a new lawyer leadership model that blends the capabilities of GenAI with the irreplaceable strengths of the human experience and human oversight, lawyers can effectively navigate technological transitions with integrity and authenticity.¹²²

III. THE RISKS OF GENAI AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR HUMAN-LED LEADERSHIP

As GenAI becomes increasingly embedded in legal practice, it is tempting for lawyer leaders to adopt it as a default assistant in every context without human oversight.¹²³ Such overreliance, however, comes with significant risks.¹²⁴ When lawyer leaders abdicate essential human functions to machines, they do not merely delegate tasks; they erode the foundation of human connection, judgment, and trust.¹²⁵ When leaders fail to interrogate the ethical implications of GenAI deployment, they may unintentionally contribute to a system that increases inequality, reduces transparency, and erodes human dignity.¹²⁶

Lawyer leaders must serve as the human anchor in a GenAI-supported environment, course-correcting when GenAI-generated communications may compromise their client's or team's experience or trust to preserve clarity, respect, and relationships.¹²⁷ A commitment to human-centered leadership requires more than any one individual virtue: It requires awareness and courage.¹²⁸ This

120. See Jordan Furlong, *The Identity Opportunity for Lawyers*, JORDAN FURLONG (Aug. 28, 2025), <https://jordanfurlong.substack.com/p/the-identity-opportunity-for-lawyers> [<https://perma.cc/R8LN-EJDX>] (arguing that GenAI's ascendancy requires lawyers to ground their roles in judgment and trust).

121. See Matan Rubin et al., *Comparing the Value of Perceived Human Versus AI-Generated Empathy*, 9 NAT. HUM. BEHAV. 2345, 2351 (2025) (finding people consider knowingly human-generated messages more supportive than GenAI outputs).

122. See Carol A. Needham, *Regulation of the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools in the Delivery of Legal Services: Verification and Accountability*, 77 WASH. U. J.L. & POL'Y 184, 184-98 (2025) (explaining imperative of ongoing human oversight by lawyers using GenAI).

123. See JEROME KILEY, *Benefits, Pitfalls, Ethics and Realities of GenAI in Research*, in HOW TO KEEP YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT ON TRACK 43, 43 (Keith Townsend & Mark N. Saunders eds., 2d ed. 2024) (analyzing how widespread adoption of GenAI in research platforms heightens need for source verification).

124. LITMAN, *supra* note 10, at xxiv (noting leaders gain trust by persuading other to embrace their vision and values).

125. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (arguing "the whole post-AI ballgame is going to come down to trustworthiness" for legal professionals); see also Short, *supra* note 6, at 15-17 (discussing bias against GenAI creations and how capacity for practical wisdom uniquely human).

126. See Weiss, *supra* note 62 (detailing risks of AI hallucinations and ethical obligations of lawyers for output accuracy).

127. WOODS, *supra* note 26, at 153-67 (describing how human skills of risk analysis and relationship management must inform GenAI tasks).

128. See Patrick Camuñez, *The Lawyer as Storyteller: What Discovery Taught Me About Writing*, A.B.A. J. (Sep. 24, 2025), <https://www.abajournal.com/voice/article/the-lawyer-as-storyteller-what-discovery-taught-me-about-writing> [<https://perma.cc/X65Y-WZLJ>] (describing how empathetic, narrative-driven communication unites legal, military, and creative leadership).

section explores some risks in the GenAI era of failing to preserve human-centered leadership, focusing on empathy, cultural intelligence, judgment, and trust.¹²⁹

A. Empathy

Following a mass shooting at Michigan State University, an administrator from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College sent an email to the university community expressing sympathy and solidarity.¹³⁰ The message appeared empathetic, until readers reached the final line: "Paraphrase from OpenAI's ChatGPT AI language model."¹³¹ The backlash was immediate and intense.¹³² Students, faculty, and public commentators criticized the university for outsourcing a message of grief to a machine.¹³³ What should have offered comfort instead sparked outrage and was perceived as emotionally disengaged and ethically tone deaf. After criticism, the officials involved temporarily stepped down.¹³⁴

In the GenAI era, emotional intelligence (EI) is not a luxury for lawyer leaders; it is a leadership imperative.¹³⁵ Studies show that EI accounts for nearly 85-90% of the difference between average and high-performing leaders.¹³⁶ Psychologist Daniel Goleman defines EI as encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management.¹³⁷ While all are critical EI skills for leading individuals and organizations through complex, high-stakes

129. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (reviewing human connection skills that lawyers need and GenAI tools cannot replicate). The scenarios in this section illustrate bad uses of GenAI because they were implemented ineffectively without proper human judgment and critical thinking, but they may not necessarily be bad use cases for GenAI when implemented responsibly. See *supra* Section II.C (discussing need for responsible use of GenAI). A human-centric approach to leadership does not exclude using GenAI; rather, it should focus on learning how to leverage GenAI to enhance human capabilities, combining the best of human leadership with the power of GenAI. See Section Part IV.C (discussing synergy of human and tech fluency).

130. See Daniel Wu, *Vanderbilt Apologizes for Using ChatGPT to Write Message on MSU Shooting*, WASH. POST (Feb. 21, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/02/21/vanderbilt-chatgpt-michigan-shooting/> [<https://perma.cc/X528-C3EH>] (describing how GenAI-generated condolence message lacked authentic empathy and provoked campus-wide backlash).

131. See Rachael Perrotta, *Peabody EDI Office Responds to MSU Shooting with Email Written Using ChatGPT*, VAND. HUSTLER (Feb. 17, 2023), <https://vanderbilthustler.com/2023/02/17/peabody-edi-office-responds-to-msu-shooting-with-email-written-using-chatgpt/> [<https://perma.cc/BG2Y-KDZT>] (citing email sent to Peabody College community).

132. See Wu, *supra* note 130 (describing aftermath of email among community members).

133. See *id.* (addressing criticism received from students and faculty).

134. See *id.* (noting consequences of "poor judgment").

135. See ROB DURR & CLIFF ZIMMERMAN, *LEADING IN THE LAW WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE* 1-6 (2025) (providing practical strategies to help lawyers and law students develop EI); see also TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 321-36, 416-42 (emphasizing essential need for cultural and technological literacy in today's legal leadership).

136. See Daniel Goleman, *What Makes a Leader?*, HARV. BUS. REV. (Jan. 2004), <https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader> [<https://perma.cc/TVZ7-TVBT>] (arguing leadership success driven by EI more than intellectual ability); see also TRAVIS BRADBERRY & JEAN GREAVES, *EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 2.0* 23-24 (2009) (discussing understanding four EI skills); DURR & ZIMMERMAN, *supra* note 135, at xxvii-xxix (explaining tremendous value of EI).

137. See DANIEL GOLEMAN, *EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE* 78-79 (1995) (defining EI).

environments, empathy—a part of the social awareness component of EI—is particularly important.¹³⁸

In legal contexts, EI enables leaders to navigate emotionally charged interactions with clients, build trust within diverse teams, and manage conflict with poise.¹³⁹ It allows lawyer leaders to detect what is *not* being said and to respond with empathy.¹⁴⁰ These are not capabilities that can be delegated to GenAI.¹⁴¹ Indeed, GenAI's inability to detect tone, read body language, or respond to subtle cues underscores the heightened importance of human emotional acuity.¹⁴²

The example scenario at the beginning of this section underscores the risk of leaders substituting simulated empathy for the real thing.¹⁴³ While a leader can create a custom GenAI and give instructions to draft a response in an empathetic way, the GenAI will only be mimicking the *language* of compassion, mirroring signals of empathy; it cannot experience or understand it as a human can.¹⁴⁴ GenAI cannot *feel* or *interpret* human emotion.¹⁴⁵ Even expertly crafted GenAI messages may lack emotional resonance, appearing insincere or emotionally insensitive, or merely simulating empathy but not embodying it.¹⁴⁶ Its output is

138. See *supra* Section III.A (reviewing human traits of empathy and simulated empathy in GenAI era).

139. See Danielle Braff, *Generative Artificial Intelligence Developers Face Lawsuits Over User Suicides*, A.B.A. J. (Sep. 10, 2025), <https://www.abajournal.com/web/article/ai-on-trial> [<https://perma.cc/LG2A-SCPQ>] (reporting emotional litigation requires lawyer empathy).

140. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 312–14 (explaining empathy's vital role in social awareness quadrant of EI).

141. Cf. Rothman, *supra* note 16 (recognizing that cultivating innate human virtues, like empathy, demands time, intentionality, and ongoing reflection).

142. See Ellen Barry, *Human Therapists Prepare for Battle Against A.I. Pretenders*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 24, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/24/health/ai-therapists-chatbots.html> [<https://perma.cc/TPA6-2P6U>] (noting dangers of GenAI for counseling services). But see Sehul Viras, *The Next in GenAI Series: Reasoning Models*, LINKEDIN (Aug. 19, 2025), <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/next-genai-series-reasoning-models-sehul-viras-rlujc> [<https://perma.cc/U86B-HY3B>] (explaining how some GenAI reasoning models designed to mimic human decision-making, communication, and expression).

143. See Julie Jargon & Sam Kessler, *A Troubled Man, His Chatbot and a Murder-Suicide in Old Greenwich*, WALL ST. J. (Aug. 28, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/chatgpt-ai-stein-erik-soelberg-murder-suicide-6b67-dbf6> [<https://perma.cc/F65T-RQ5B>] (chronicling consequences of GenAI-augmented therapy in high-profile tragedy); Wu, *supra* note 130 (explaining scenario where human outsourced empathic message to GenAI).

144. See Kaag, *supra* note 52 (contrasting human experiences of loss, love, and awe with GenAI's lack of feeling and understanding); see also Xavier Rodriguez, *Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Practice of Law in Texas*, 63 S. TEX. L. REV. 1, 25 (2023) (identifying inability of artificial intelligence to replicate empathy).

145. See, e.g., Evan Selinger, *A Chatbot Can Never Truly Be Your Friend*, BOS. GLOBE (July 7, 2025), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/07/07/opinion/ai-friendships-chatbots/> [<https://perma.cc/U5C3-YQ8R>] (arguing true friendship requires reciprocal vulnerability); Sherin Shibu, *Mark Zuckerberg Envisions a Future Where Your Friends Are AI Chatbots—But Not Everyone Is Convinced*, ENTREPRENEUR (May 8, 2025), <https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/meta-ceo-mark-zuckerberg-wants-you-to-make-ai-friends/49134-9> [<https://perma.cc/V8GV-MW34>] (promoting social benefits of GenAI friends); Theodore Schwartz, *Why an AI Will Never Replace a Brain Surgeon*, OP-MED (Oct. 7, 2024), <https://opmed.doximity.com/articles/why-an-ai-will-never-replace-a-brain-surgeon> [<https://perma.cc/8K58-LD5G>] (maintaining that GenAI lacks embodied “wisdom” of human professionals).

146. See Rubin et al., *supra* note 121, at 2345–46 (noting perceived authenticity and true emotional investment strongly affect individuals' experience of empathy); see also Neil Vigdor & Hannah Ziegler, *Their Professors Caught Them Cheating. They Used AI to Apologize*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com>

shaped by probabilistic word prediction, not lived experience or EI.¹⁴⁷ As such, when AI-generated language is used in leadership communication, especially in emotionally charged contexts, the results may appear as hollow, manipulative, or performative empathy, not experiential empathy.¹⁴⁸ What begins as an attempt to connect can instead undermine trust, alienate audiences, and signal a failure of a leader's judgment.¹⁴⁹

This "empathy gap" becomes especially problematic when leaders use GenAI to communicate during times of crisis, loss, or vulnerability.¹⁵⁰ When leaders use GenAI in moments that demand emotional nuance or relational awareness, the result may be more alienating than engaging.¹⁵¹ Messages that lack authenticity, even if technically efficient, can erode morale, damage credibility, and compromise a leader's integrity.¹⁵² The risk is not simply that the message fails to land; it may actively damage trust.¹⁵³

The empathy gap is especially consequential in legal settings, where clients often seek reassurance and dignity, in addition to legal solutions.¹⁵⁴ Thus, in law, where trust and ethical clarity are foundational to leadership, the limits of simulated empathy can be particularly consequential.¹⁵⁵ GenAI may be able to draft condolences, apologies, or affirmations, but only human leaders can mean them.¹⁵⁶ Over time, the widespread use of emotionally-detached, AI-drafted communications may diminish public trust in legal institutions.¹⁵⁷

/2025/10/29/us/university-illinois-students-cheating-ai.html [https://perma.cc/4ZHB-LSHP] (reporting irony of students' AI-generated apologies for AI-assisted cheating).

147. See *Lead with That: What Artificial Intelligence Can Teach Us About Human Communication & Development*, CTR. FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP, <https://www.ccl.org/podcasts/lead-with-that-what-artificial-intelligence-can-teach-us-about-human-centered-leadership/> [https://perma.cc/AHX7-G8YX] (last visited Feb. 25, 2026) (highlighting GenAI models can prompt self-examination but cannot replicate human-centered development).

148. See Rubin et al., *supra* note 121, at 2345 (finding GenAI responses rated more supportive only when perceived human-drafted).

149. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (affirming GenAI outputs may validate clients' emotions but cannot earn trust like human lawyers can).

150. See, e.g., Wu, *supra* note 130 (outlining incident where AI-written notice sparked outrage).

151. See *id.* (describing outrage after university used ChatGPT to write email about school shooting).

152. See *id.* (noting damaged reputation of leaders).

153. See Sina Eslamdoust, Ji Hoon Lee, & Tahmineh Bohrani, *Enhancing Team Performance in the Digital Age: Impact of Technologically Moderated Communication in the Interplay of E-Leadership & Trust*, 5 INT'L J. BUS. & MGMT. STUD. 56, 57 (2024) (examining how technologically-mediated communication affects trust-building in virtual work environments).

154. See Furlong, *supra* note 90 (clarifying clients require human lawyers for stewardship needs).

155. See *id.* (noting lawyers' human ability to earn trust irreplaceable aspect of practice).

156. See Vigdor & Ziegler, *supra* note 146 (observing insincerity of students using GenAI to apologize for GenAI-enabled cheating); see also Soumik Mandal et al., *Utilization of Generative AI-Drafted Responses for Managing Patient-Provider Communication*, NPJ DIGIT. MED., Oct. 2, 2025, at 1, 1-2 (finding that GenAI medical communications appear empathetic, but patients question authenticity).

157. See *Legal Issues with AI*, UNIV. OF WASH. SCH. OF L. (Oct. 16, 2024), <https://www.law.uw.edu/news-events/news/2024/legal-issues-with-ai/> [https://perma.cc/J3ZV-CH8H] (urging cautious GenAI adoption in law firms to avoid alienating clients).

The lesson is not that GenAI must be avoided altogether in leadership communication, but that it must be used with care, transparency, and empathy.¹⁵⁸ Deeper interpersonal competencies, like empathy, are not a formula to be generated or outsourced: It is an understanding and authentic connection to be cultivated.¹⁵⁹ Empathy is not merely a style of communication: It is a relational act.¹⁶⁰ True empathy requires contextual sensitivity.¹⁶¹ GenAI, by contrast, offers instant language and may satisfy a need for responsiveness that humans may struggle to provide at scale; however, it does not possess lived experiences, vulnerability, or accountability that define human connection.¹⁶²

B. Cultural Intelligence

Imagine a scenario in which a general counsel of a U.S. company meets with a potential international client from China and uses GenAI to draft follow-up notes and an email to the potential client, using English when prompting GenAI. While technically accurate, the notes and email use a direct and analytical style. They focus on individual goals and interests and prioritize efficiency over long-term relationship building. They also include American idioms not familiar to the potential client and colloquialisms and greetings that are culturally inappropriate. The potential client likely feels rushed and disrespected, reading the notes and email as disingenuous, impersonal, and manipulative. As a result, the client does not agree to the deal.

This scenario demonstrates how GenAI should support, not substitute, cultural understanding.¹⁶³ It illustrates a cultural miscommunication, misunderstanding, and missed opportunity caused by a leader using GenAI to substitute their

158. See DAWSON, *supra* note 80, at 73 (providing examples of judges requiring attorneys to disclose GenAI use in court filings); see also Bob Ambrogio, *New Bluebook Rule on Citing to AI Generates Criticism from Legal Scholars and Practitioners*, LAWSITES (Sep. 17, 2025), <https://www.lawnext.com/2025/09/new-bluebook-rule-on-citing-to-ai-generates-criticism-from-legal-scholars-and-practitioners.html> [<https://perma.cc/KKG4-HQWM>] (critiquing new Bluebook Rule 18.3 governing GenAI citation).

159. See Caroline Muss, Dana Tüxen & Bärbel Fürstenau, *Empathy in Leadership: A Systematic Literature Review on the Effects of Empathetic Leaders in Organizations*, 76 MGMT. REV. Q. 333, 336 (2025) (reviewing empirical research showing empathetic leadership correlates with psychological safety and job satisfaction).

160. See Tracy Norton, *Each One, Teach One: Engaging Students in Professional Identity Formation Across the Law School Curriculum with Fully Anonymous Peer Review*, 8 PROMPT 73, 74-78 (2024) (promoting peer review for professional identity formation method).

161. See BRADBERRY & GREAVES, *supra* note 136, at 38-39 (explaining how social awareness requires listening and observing others' emotions).

162. See Marc Zao-Sanders, *How People Are Really Using Gen AI in 2025*, HARV. BUS. REV., (Apr. 9, 2025), <https://hbr.org/2025/04/how-people-are-really-using-gen-ai-in-2025> [<https://perma.cc/N85B-LM6Z>] (reporting top three uses of GenAI for therapy, companionship, and productivity); S. Gabe Hatch et al., *When ELIZA Meets Therapists: A Turing Test for the Heart and Mind*, PLOS MENT. HEALTH, FEB 12, 2025, at 1, 2 (2025) (suggesting GenAI may create satisfactory responses initially but turn negative once told GenAI created responses).

163. See Rida Qadri et al., *The Case for "Thick Evaluations" of Cultural Representation in AI*, 8 PROCS. EIGHTH AAAI/ACM CONF. ON AI, ETHICS, & SOC'Y 2067, 2071-75 (2025) (explaining how human cultural biases reinforce biased AI outputs, requiring active bias-challenging); see also JAY CLARK, *THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP* 125 (2015) (defining global leaders: people leading across cultures).

cultural intelligence.¹⁶⁴ As legal practice becomes increasingly global, cultural intelligence is no longer optional.¹⁶⁵ Lawyer leaders must be able to work effectively across cultures, including differences of nationality, language, gender, class, and belief systems, if they are to represent clients effectively, manage international teams, or lead in transnational negotiations.¹⁶⁶ While useful for translation and basic cultural references when using cultural prompts strategically, GenAI cannot replicate the depth of understanding or the relational trust built through real intercultural lived engagement and an understanding of consequences.¹⁶⁷

Cultural intelligence involves more than learning etiquette or avoiding *faux pas*; it is about connecting on a deeper level.¹⁶⁸ It requires a willingness to learn from others' perspectives and address your own implicit bias.¹⁶⁹ It means understanding and respecting differences in power dynamics, historical contexts,

164. See Kathleen Elliott Vinson & Rosa Kim, *Fostering Cultural Intelligence and Leadership in the Age of GenAI*, SUFFOLK UNIV. BOS. LEGAL WRITING MATTERS (July 9, 2025), <https://sites.suffolk.edu/legalwritingmatters/2025/07/09/fostering-cultural-intelligence-and-leadership-in-the-age-of-genai/> [<https://perma.cc/LUJ3-DL-LC>] (identifying strategies for using GenAI to foster cultural learning); see also P. CHRISTOPHER EARLEY & SOON ANG, CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE 54-61 (2003) (defining cultural intelligence as capacity for effective functioning in culturally diverse settings); Ederlina Co, *Teaching Cultural Competence as a Fundamental Lawyering Skill*, 23 J. LEGAL WRITING INST. 4, 4-6 (2019) (distinguishing cultural competence from cultural humility); TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 323-24 (defining culture, cultural competence, cultural humility, and cultural intelligence).

165. See Rosa Kim, *Globalizing the Law Curriculum for Twenty-First-Century Lawyering*, 67 J. LEGAL EDUC. 905, 907-12 (2018) (advocating for internationalizing legal curriculum to develop students' cultural competency).

166. See *id.* at 910 (identifying cultural awareness pivotal component of modern legal practice); see also TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 330 (explaining cultural intelligence vital for leaders); CLARK, *supra* note 163, at 4 (recognizing challenges in cross-cultural communication for global leaders). See generally Susan Bryant, *The Five Habits: Building Cross-Cultural Competence in Lawyers*, 8 CLINICAL L. REV. 33 (2001) (arguing all lawyering cross-cultural); MODEL RULES OF PRO. CONDUCT r. 8.4(g) (A.B.A. 1983) (prohibiting discrimination and obligating lawyers to mitigate cultural biases); STANDARDS AND RULES OF PRO. FOR APPROVAL OF L. SCHS. Standard 303(c) (A.B.A. 2025) (requiring law schools to teach cross-cultural competency).

167. Ways to harness GenAI for cultural learning include asking it: To simulate multicultural case studies, conduct comparative law analyses, identify cultural assumptions in one's thinking, examine the accuracy of cultural perspectives, analyze information from different cultures, act as an advisor to review content for inclusivity, summarize cultural histories while revealing potential gaps in understanding, and asking it to adopt a specific culture's perspective. See Vinson & Kim, *supra* note 164 (highlighting GenAI's capability to identify lawyer leaders' cultural biases and inspire curiosity about diverse perspectives); see also Dylan Walsh, *Generative AI Isn't Culturally Neutral, Research Finds*, MIT SLOAN SCH. OF MGMT (Sep. 22, 2025), <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/generative-ai-isnt-culturally-neutral-research-finds> [<https://perma.cc/K6D5-3Y-U4>] (explaining identical prompts in different languages yield culturally distinct AI responses).

168. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 323 (discussing central role of cultural intelligence in effective leadership); Pat Wilson, *Jury Challenge: Cultural Intelligence*, TRAINING LAWS. AS LEADERS (July 1, 2021), <https://traininglawyersasleaders.org/2021/07/01/july-challenge-cultural-intelligence/> [<https://perma.cc/37UV-X-9UN>] (explaining methods for lawyer leaders to develop cultural intelligence); see also STANDARDS FOR THE PROVISION OF CIV. LEGAL AID Standard 4.4 (A.B.A. 2021) (endorsing of foundation cultural humility for effective legal aid); STANDARDS AND RULES OF PROC. FOR APPROVAL OF L. SCHS. Standard 303(c) (A.B.A. 2025) (requiring law schools to teach cross-cultural competency).

169. See Vinson & Kim, *supra* note 164 (explaining cultural intelligence demands more than legal acumen).

values, customs, and legal traditions.¹⁷⁰ Leaders who exhibit cultural fluency are better positioned to spot ethical tensions, navigate nuanced disputes and ambiguity, and build inclusive legal institutions.¹⁷¹

Despite their vast data capabilities, GenAI models struggle to accurately interpret context and culture beyond a surface level.¹⁷² GenAI cannot replicate the insight that comes from deep interpersonal and intercultural experience.¹⁷³ It cannot replace understanding and trust built through a real human connection.¹⁷⁴ GenAI can miss cultural context or subtext and fail to recognize how history, power imbalances, and differing legal traditions shape relationships.¹⁷⁵ Even well-intentioned messages, if stripped of cultural fluency, can derail negotiations and damage relationships.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, GenAI cannot sense tone, interpret non-verbal cues in a room, understand what is left unsaid, or consistently intuit when not to say something, all of which are subtle yet critical leadership communication skills across many cultural contexts.¹⁷⁷

GenAI tools also reflect the limits of data they are trained on, much of which centers on Western-centric information and perspectives that can reflect racial, gender, socioeconomic, and cultural biases.¹⁷⁸ Without careful human oversight, these tools can amplify discriminatory outcomes in client communication and legal analysis.¹⁷⁹ While GenAI may create an illusion of cultural understanding, it may inadvertently reinforce cultural biases or fail to adapt language appropriately in a nuanced way for diverse audiences.¹⁸⁰ For lawyer leaders building

170. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 393-94 (arguing humility requires lawyer leaders to move beyond themselves and recognize individuals' different experiences).

171. See *id.* at 392-94 (emphasizing cultural fluency aids with communication).

172. See LEIF WEATHERBY, *LANGUAGE MACHINES* 161-62 (2025) (describing how LLMs generate meaning through pattern recognition and lack human intentionality).

173. See Vinson & Kim, *supra* note 164 (providing strategies for using GenAI to foster cultural learning).

174. See *id.* (emphasizing that global legal leadership requires distinctly human strengths, including emotional intelligence and contextual judgment); BRENÉ BROWN, *THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION* 28-30 (2010) (highlighting deep human connection from shared experiences).

175. See Vinson & Kim, *supra* note 164 (recommending lawyers prompt GenAI strategically to surface biases and cultural blind spots).

176. See *id.* (illustrating how GenAI may derail cross-cultural negotiations); see also TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 392-94 (explaining how cultural intelligence is vital to successful negotiations); Bryant, *supra* note 166, at 42 (noting that absent shared cultural background, lawyers and clients face challenges in establishing trust).

177. See YUAN LIAO & DAVID C. THOMAS, *CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORLD OF WORK: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE* 3-15 (Sharon Glazer & Catherine T. Kwantes eds., 2020) (identifying foundational model of cultural competence for navigating relational and task differences across cultures).

178. See Vinson & Kim, *supra* note 164 (questioning whose cultural lens GenAI reflects and promoting thoughtful prompting to challenge cultural assumptions); see also VALLOR, *supra* note 108, at 9-12 (explaining how unregulated GenAI algorithms reinforce most extreme viewpoints and enable users' confirmation bias).

179. See *AI for Legal Professionals*, BLOOMBERG L., <https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/insights/technology/ai-in-legal-practice-explained/#the-future-of-legal-ai> [<https://perma.cc/66RJ-PUMH>] (last visited Oct. 16, 2024) (documenting bias in GenAI-generated legal analysis and client communication); see also VALLOR, *supra* note 108, at 133-38 (describing GenAI perpetuating biases due to Eurocentric, male-focused training data).

180. See Vinson & Kim, *supra* note 164 (emphasizing human review and intentional prompting help identify GenAI's culturally inappropriate language and assumptions). What may seem professionally acceptable in one

more inclusive legal organizations and serving clients across cultures, this can result in serious miscommunications, misunderstandings, and missed opportunities.¹⁸¹ Leaders who rely too heavily on GenAI risk flattening the complex textures of cross-cultural dialogue.¹⁸² Human-centered leadership is, therefore, not only about *being* human, but is also about *understanding other humans*.¹⁸³

C. Judgment

Consider a scenario in which a law firm partner asks GenAI to draft an email to a long-term client whose business is facing bankruptcy. The message expresses “sympathy for this turbulent chapter” and suggests “exploring strategic options for pivot and recovery.” The client, already stressed and confused, finds it impersonal and trite, emailing back: “Did you even write this? I thought we had a relationship.” Such are the risks when GenAI is left to its devices.¹⁸⁴

Leaders are responsible for understanding people, context, and consequences.¹⁸⁵ Legal leadership often requires navigating relationships and managing conflicts between competing principles, such as justice and mercy, transparency and discretion, or institutional loyalty and public accountability.¹⁸⁶ Mere pattern recognition cannot resolve these dilemmas: They require moral discernment and embodied, contextualized human judgment.¹⁸⁷ GenAI cannot reason ethically in the way that humans must.¹⁸⁸

culture may not be appropriate for another. *See id.* (noting GenAI capable of identifying cultural differences with proper prompting).

181. *See* Bryant, *supra* note 166, at 43 (explaining cross-cultural legal practice requires lawyers to address biases and respect clients’ perspectives).

182. *See* Vinson & Kim, *supra* note 164 (encouraging leaders to question cultural biases of human colleagues and GenAI models alike); *see also* CLARK, *supra* note 163, at 126-28 (explaining that global leadership principles include integrity and compassion, which GenAI cannot provide).

183. *See* SANDRA DAY O’CONNOR COLLEGE OF LAW, *Legal Writing Workshop #3: Practical Considerations for AI in the Legal Writing Classroom*, at 41:38 (YouTube, May 30, 2023), <https://youtu.be/7nVPgS6JsXk> [<https://perma.cc/AFW3-Y5KY>] (strategizing GenAI integration that prioritizes law students’ human professional development); *see also* KATE BERARDO & DARLA K. DEARDORFF, *How to Use This Book*, in BUILDING CULTURAL COMPETENCE 1-11 (Kate Berardo & Darla K. Deardorff eds., 2012) (outlining tools to build cultural competence and acknowledging intentionality required to develop skills over time); Susan Bryant & Jean Koh Peters, *The Five Habits of Cross-Cultural Lawyering and More*, YALE UNIV., <https://fivehabitsandmore.law.yale.edu/jean-and-sues-materials/habits/> [<https://perma.cc/T42Z-4LFG>] (last visited Feb. 26, 2026) (providing teaching materials for lawyers to improve cross-cultural competencies).

184. *See* Andrea Bucher, Comment, *Navigating the Power of Artificial Intelligence in the Legal Field*, 62 HOU. L. REV. 819, 821 (2025) (explaining AI cannot replicate human element).

185. *See* Selinger, *supra* note 145 (explaining only humans feel emotions and face consequences; chatbots calculate responses using statistical probabilities).

186. *See* TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 384 (emphasizing leadership involves adapting communication styles to navigate scenarios); *see also* Erika Pont, Jennifer Cook & Denitsa Mavrova Heinrich, Global Humans, Global Lawyers: Preparing Students for Practice in an AI World at the Global Legal Skills XVII Conference Program (May 29, 2025) (presenting about human skills AI cannot replace, including cultural judgment, empathy, and professionalism).

187. *See* WOODS, *supra* note 26, at 74-75 (explaining GenAI lacks human context).

188. *See id.* at 228 (clarifying using GenAI like tool, not end goal).

GenAI operates without a moral compass.¹⁸⁹ It does not understand harm, responsibility, or fairness beyond the statistical associations in its training data.¹⁹⁰ As a result, it cannot weigh values, assess intentions, or account for power dynamics in ethically fraught decisions.¹⁹¹ If asked to draft a response to an incident, for instance, GenAI may produce language that appears neutral, calculated, or focused on optics over people—as illustrated in the scenario above—when a genuine acknowledgment of responsibility or harm is needed.¹⁹²

The lawyer leader's role includes thinking through options and making principled decisions under pressure.¹⁹³ It may involve having difficult conversations and giving clients unwelcome information or advice when necessary.¹⁹⁴ Delegating this responsibility to GenAI not only undermines ethical leadership, but it also exposes leaders to unforeseen reputational and legal risks.¹⁹⁵ GenAI tools cannot be blamed for poor judgment: leaders can.¹⁹⁶ Lawyers have a duty of independent professional judgment.¹⁹⁷ Lawyers cannot outsource their ethical duty and judgment to GenAI.¹⁹⁸

189. See Rothman, *supra* note 16 (cautioning GenAI lacks virtuosity).

190. See Kashmir Hill, *A Teen Was Suicidal. ChatGPT Was the Friend He Confided in*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/26/technology/chatgpt-openai-suicide.html> [<https://perma.cc/TR-2H-ZU2G>] (reporting wrongful death lawsuit by parents of Adam Raine, alleging ChatGPT encouraged son's suicide). But see *Safety at Every Step*, OPENAI, <https://openai.com/safety/> [<https://perma.cc/94S2-EURQ>] (last visited Feb. 26, 2026) (describing systematic safety guardrails including content moderation, child protection, and crisis intervention protocols).

191. See Kaag, *supra* note 52 (explaining that GenAI solves problems through data processing, not lived experiences, therefore lacking moral values).

192. See *supra* Part III (highlighting necessity for empathy, cultural intelligence, judgment, and trust that GenAI cannot provide).

193. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 122-23 (noting lawyer leaders must exercise sound judgment).

194. See KERRY PATTERSON ET AL., *CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS: TOOLS FOR TALKING WHEN STAKES ARE HIGH* 19-28 (2d ed. 2011) (highlighting dialogue skills necessary for effective leadership and required for navigating conflict).

195. TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 416-18 (outlining ethical obligations regarding innovation, technology use, and client relations).

196. See DAWSON, *supra* note 80, at 69 (illustrating consequences when lawyers fail to verify GenAI-fabricated cases); *Dastou v. Holmes*, No. 2381CV02212, 2025 WL 1907624, at *1-2 (Mass. Super. Ct. Jan. 1, 2025) (sanctioning Boston attorney for submitting ChatGPT-drafted pleadings containing nonexistent citations); *Smith v. Farwell*, No. 2282CV01197, 2024 WL 4002576, at *7-8 (Mass. Super. Ct. Feb. 15, 2024) (imposing \$2,000 sanctions under Mass. R. Civ. P. 11 for fictitious AI-generated case law); HEATHER L. LAVIGNE, OFF. BAR COUNS., *TWO YEARS OF FAKE CASES AND THE COURTS ARE RATCHETING UP THE SANCTIONS* 2-4 (2025), <https://bbopublic.massbbo.org/web/f/Two%20Years%20of%20Fake%20Cases%20and%20the%20Courts%20are%20Ratcheting%20up%20the%20Sanctions.pdf> [perma.cc/2XNQ-KP3S] (cataloging disciplinary cases holding lawyers liable for failure to verify GenAI-supported filings).

197. See MODEL RULES OF PRO. CONDUCT r. 2.1 (A.B.A. 1983) (explaining candid advice may consider moral, economic, social, and political factors relevant to client). The Model Rules clarify that in representing clients, lawyers must “exercise independent professional judgment and render candid advice.” See *id.* (emphasizing lawyers’ duty to exercise independent judgment).

198. See *id.* (explaining lawyers’ role of advisor or counselor); TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 417 (explaining American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct relevant to technological innovation). Such rules include Model Rule 1.1 regarding the duty of technological competency; Model Rule 1.6 regarding the duty of confidentiality; Model Rule 8.4 regarding misconduct, as well as an attorney’s obligation to protect client data and privacy; Model Rule 1.5 regarding reasonable fees; and Model Rule 5.5. regarding

Historically, society has always feared that new technologies would ruin people's ability to think.¹⁹⁹ The professional concern here is not one of intellectual laziness, but one of abdication of lawyers' experiential wisdom to the convenience of automation.²⁰⁰ Lawyer leaders thrive on the rigorous development of their independent reasoning skills.²⁰¹ If GenAI is used to shortcut that process, outputs may be technically correct but reflect shallow thinking.²⁰² This problem is compounded when users do not critically evaluate GenAI's output, assume its recommendations are neutral, or fail to cross-check for accuracy and bias.²⁰³

Cognitive offloading is the tendency to rely on external systems for thinking, remembering, and decision-making.²⁰⁴ In legal education and practice, this manifests when students or professionals turn to GenAI for not just support, but substitution.²⁰⁵ When GenAI generates arguments, answers hypotheticals, or suggests case strategies, the user may become less engaged in analytical reasoning, ethical reflection, and legal judgment.²⁰⁶ Research on cognitive offloading shows that people often over-trust automated outputs, particularly when the information appears grammatically or visually polished.²⁰⁷ In the legal domain, where precision and ethical context are paramount, overreliance on GenAI can

unlicensed practice of law, data security, and privacy. See MODEL RULES OF PRO. CONDUCT rs. 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 5.5, 8.4 (A.B.A. 1983) (listing Model Rules of Professional Conduct relevant to technological innovation).

199. See Ethan Mollick, *Against "Brain Damage"*, ONE USEFUL THING (July 7, 2025), <https://www.oneusefulthing.org/p/against-brain-damage> [<https://perma.cc/4J8B-3PZK>] (analogizing modern GenAI anxiety to how Plato feared writing would undermine wisdom).

200. See *id.* (arguing that while using GenAI may not damage leaders' thinking, human laziness does).

201. See Kaag, *supra* note 52 (cautioning GenAI may only synthesize known data patterns and cannot offer human understanding or foresight). See generally DAVID ROMANTZ & KATHLEEN ELLIOTT VINSON, *LEGAL ANALYSIS: THE FUNDAMENTAL SKILL* (4th ed. 2025) (emphasizing critical skills of legal reasoning).

202. See NATALIYA KOSMYNA ET AL., *YOUR BRAIN ON CHATGPT: ACCUMULATION OF COGNITIVE DEBT WHEN USING AN AI ASSISTANT FOR ESSAY WRITING TASK 2* (2025), <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2506.08872> [<https://perma.cc/RE4C-8AXS>] (finding GenAI-assisted essay writers performed worse on neural assessments than non-AI-supported writers).

203. See Samantha Moppett, *The Importance of Critical Thinking in the Age of AI*, SUFFOLK UNIV. BOS. LEGAL WRITING MATTERS (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://sites.suffolk.edu/legalwritingmatters/2025/04/28/the-importance-of-critical-thinking-in-the-age-of-ai/> [<https://perma.cc/8LCX-RF92>] (emphasizing increased importance of human critical thinking skills when GenAI tools integrate into legal practice).

204. See KOSMYNA ET AL., *supra* note 202, at 10 (reporting ChatGPT-assisted students exhibited lower neural engagement, poorer memory recall, and less essay originality).

205. See Mollick, *supra* note 199 (arguing "unthinking" GenAI use can hinder cognitive development).

206. See Ethan Mollick, *15 Times to Use AI, and 5 Not to*, ONE USEFUL THING (Dec. 9, 2024), <https://www.oneusefulthing.org/p/15-times-to-use-ai-and-5-not-to> [<https://perma.cc/BVS9-F3EK>] (identifying domains where AI use counterproductive). Mollick maintains that human intelligence bests artificial intelligence "[w]hen you need to learn and synthesize new ideas or information," "[w]hen very high accuracy is required," and in "the deep work that made us experts." See *id.* (explaining when human intelligence superior to AI).

207. See Michael Gerlich, *AI Tools in Society: Impacts on Cognitive Offloading and the Future of Critical Thinking*, SOC'YS, Sep. 10, 2025, at 1, 6 (noting relationship between AI, cognitive offloading, and increased trust in AI).

lead to serious errors, such as missed precedents, hallucinated cases, inappropriate tone, or flawed logic.²⁰⁸

Leadership itself suffers when decisions are made reactively, based on GenAI suggestions, rather than deliberately, through ethical and contextual analysis.²⁰⁹ While GenAI is not a substitute for human judgment, it can supplement it.²¹⁰ Lawyer leaders can use GenAI as a thought partner, directing GenAI to augment their leadership, but should not use it for cognitive offloading and abdicating their leadership to GenAI.²¹¹ Lawyer leaders should not replace critical thinking and human judgment with machines, but instead stay rooted in their humanity.²¹²

D. Trust

Picture a scenario in which a senior associate finishes a tough conversation about job performance with a junior associate and then asks GenAI to “soften” the written summary. The AI-generated email includes lines like: “Your efforts are appreciated during this transformative period,” but lacks any specific, sincere feedback. The associate, already demoralized, reads between the robotic lines and wonders: *Was I even worth five minutes of real reflection?*

Thus, legal leadership is not merely about output, it is about relationships with people founded upon trust.²¹³ Clients, colleagues, and communities look to lawyer leaders for credibility, authenticity, concern, discretion, and humility, which

208. See *Lawyer Sanctioned Over False AI-Generated Content*, MASS. LAWS. WKLY. (Feb. 13, 2024), <https://masslawyersweekly.com/2024/02/13/lawyers-sanctioned-over-false-ai-generated-content/> [https://perma.cc/V2WY-VTAZ] (reporting Superior Court judge fined attorney for filing AI-generated memoranda on non-existent cases).

209. See *supra* notes 185-191 and accompanying text (highlighting role of leaders and negative impact of GenAI use).

210. See Kirsten K. Davis, *A New Parlor Is Open: Legal Writing Faculty Must Develop Scholarship on Generative AI and Legal Writing*, STETSON L. REV. F., Spring 2024, at 1, 15-17 (arguing lawyer intelligence still necessary to make ethical and effective use of artificial intelligence).

211. See WOODS, *supra* note 26, at 33-34 (advocating for GenAI support for human thought leadership); see also Daniel Schwarcz et al., *Thinking Like a Lawyer in the Age of Generative AI: Cognitive Limits on AI Adoption Among Lawyers* 9-10 (Minn. Legal Stud., Working Paper No. 25-31, 2025) (discussing impact of GenAI on legal profession); John Nosta, *Is Empathy the Missing Link in AI's Cognitive Function?*, PSYCH. TODAY (Oct. 19, 2024), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-digital-self/202410/is-empathy-the-missing-link-in-ais-cognitive-function> [https://perma.cc/A4TQ-JGZ8] (discussing limits of AI's cognitive capabilities in absence of empathy).

212. See WOODS, *supra* note 26, at 146-51 (proposing leaders treat AI like executive coach that asks intentional questions to enhance strategic thinking).

213. See Manuj Dhariwal & Shruti Dhariwal, *AI Can't Really Be Your 'Companion.' We Need New Words for Things Like That*, BOS. GLOBE (May 21, 2025), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/05/21/opinion/manuj-shruti-dhariwal-mash-c0-ai-interactions/> [https://perma.cc/STWL-3TJG] (arguing AI cannot replace human companionship; citing Mark Zuckerberg's “AI companion” initiative); see also COMMON SENSE MEDIA, SOCIAL AI COMPANIONS 1 (2025), https://www.common SenseMedia.org/sites/default/files/pug/csm-ai-risk-assessment-social-ai-companions_final.pdf [https://perma.cc/CB87-8WTU] (identifying risks of excessive chatbot use among youth, including unhealthy attachments and psychological harm).

all build trust over time.²¹⁴ These qualities are inherently human.²¹⁵ They involve showing up, listening attentively, expressing vulnerability, and being reliable and accountable.²¹⁶ Take the above scenario and ask yourself: Is a GenAI model trustworthy?²¹⁷

AI-generated content, even when accurate, often lacks voice, sincerity, and emotional depth.²¹⁸ It cannot draw from personal conviction or admit uncertainty.²¹⁹ In fact, overuse of GenAI in leadership communication may breed suspicion, especially when messages appear polished but emotionally detached.²²⁰ Recipients may wonder: *Who really wrote this? Do they actually mean it or care?* Such questions jeopardize the leader's trust capital.²²¹

Moreover, leadership presence involves more than words, encompassing body language, tone, timing, and interpersonal context.²²² These are dimensions of human interaction that no LLM can replicate.²²³ A lawyer leader's credibility

214. See Debra Austin, *Peak Experiences Increase Thriving*, NEVER TOO LATE BY DEBRA AUSTIN JD, PhD (Mar. 20, 2025), <https://debrasustin.substack.com/p/peak-experiences-increase-thriving> [<https://perma.cc/5W-PP-GB2J>] (noting successful professionals build trust through emotional skills). As Austin notes, “[e]motional resonance is the capacity to connect with others on a deep emotional level.” *Id.*

215. See Rothman, *supra* note 16 (noting GenAI can use loving words and make decisions but cannot love or overthink); see also Vigdor & Ziegler, *supra* note 146 (noting students' apologies for violating GenAI policy also GenAI-drafted).

216. See Peter T. Coleman, *What Do We Mean by 'Dialogue'?*, TCHRS. COLL. COLUM. UNIV. (Nov. 12, 2025), <https://www.tc.columbia.edu/articles/2025/november/what-do-we-mean-by-dialogue/#~:text=Or%20consider%20the%20best%20classrooms,teach.> [<https://perma.cc/74XK-8WMX>] (advocating importance of dialogue, not just debate, to prepare people to lead and reward listening).

217. See Furlong, *supra* note 83 (warning merit of when AI trustworthy). Furlong posits that individuals may find GenAI to be trustworthy “if they also trust its corporate designer to prioritize that person's best interests, to keep their information confidential, and to demonstrate fidelity in all their dealings with them.” See *id.* (describing personal trustworthiness of AI models). Even if a GenAI response may sound better, it does not mean that it should be trusted.

218. See Christopher King, *UNG Students Petition Against AI Name Announcements at Graduation*, FOX 5 ATLANTA (Apr. 9, 2025), <https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/ung-students-petition-against-ai-name-announcements-graduation> [<https://perma.cc/96SW-9HJG>] (highlighting college students' petitioning against AI-recorded commencement name announcements, arguing practice degrades humanity of ceremony).

219. See Kaag, *supra* note 52 (reiterating GenAI answers informed by “passionless intelligence,” so humans should verify accordingly).

220. See Rothman, *supra* note 16 (recounting story of man who moved girlfriend to tears with secretly GenAI-drafted birthday poetry).

221. See Katie Palmer, *AI-Based Mammography Is Here, and It Has a Trust Problem*, STAT (May 29, 2025), <https://www.statnews.com/2025/05/29/ai-breast-cancer-detection-radiologists-slow-to-trust-new-mammogram-screening-tools/> [<https://perma.cc/G39S-YNQE>] (describing GenAI detecting breast cancer more often, yet human doctors doubting model's accuracy and usefulness); Ziad Obermeyer & Ezekiel J. Emanuel, *Predicting the Future — Big Data, Machine Learning, and Clinical Medicine*, 375 NEJM 1216, 1217 (2016) (describing how biased training data sets caused medical AI to incorrectly identify tumors).

222. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 87, 108, 125, 309, 312 (identifying essentials of emotional intelligence, character development, and innovation needed for effective leadership).

223. See Joe Regalia, *From Briefs to Bytes: How Generative AI Is Transforming Legal Writing and Practice*, 59 TULSA L. REV. 193, 220-21 (2024) (recognizing GenAI lacks judgment and nuanced understanding); see also *AI for Legal Professionals*, *supra* note 179 (displaying ethical risks of GenAI).

stems not from efficiency, but from relational integrity.²²⁴ In moments of crisis, change, or moral complexity, only a human can offer the kind of presence that reassures, motivates, and unites.²²⁵

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES TO DEVELOP THE “AI-ENHANCED” LAWYER LEADER

Recognizing the limitations of GenAI and the enduring importance of human-centered leadership, lawyer leaders must take proactive steps to integrate technology in ways that blend human strengths to maintain empathy, cultural intelligence, judgment, and trust.²²⁶ This section offers concrete recommendations to achieve this goal, focusing on three key areas. First, it discusses GenAI policies for lawyer leaders.²²⁷ Then, it advocates for professional development for human-centered leadership in the age of GenAI.²²⁸ Finally, it offers a checklist and signs to consider when blending tech fluency and human strengths.²²⁹

A. GenAI Use Policies for Lawyer Leaders

The first step toward responsible GenAI integration is developing institutional and individual policies that prioritize transparency, proportionality, and ethical responsibility. Law firms, law schools, and court systems should consider drafting GenAI usage guidelines that address not only technical compliance and data security, but also the emotional, relational, and reputational impacts. In doing so, institutions can set ethical standards that reflect both innovation and integrity. Below are some policy considerations.

1. Proportionality

Proportionality urges caution in utilizing GenAI in high-impact or emotionally sensitive leadership tasks.²³⁰ The more significant the stakes, such as personnel decisions, crisis communications, or client counseling, the more critical it becomes that the message reflects human judgment and relational care.²³¹

224. See Austin, *supra* note 214 (explaining professional trust fostered through emotional resonance); see also MODEL RULES OF PRO. CONDUCT r. 1.6(a) (A.B.A. 1983) (requiring lawyers exercise ethical judgment towards client confidential information, rather than offloading responsibilities onto technology).

225. Cf. TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 317, 336-37, 378-79 (discussing lawyer leaders' role in resolving interpersonal crises).

226. See *supra* Part III (noting pitfalls of substituting GenAI for human).

227. See *infra* Section IV.A (outlining GenAI use policies).

228. See *infra* Section IV.B (urging appropriate professional development goals).

229. See *infra* Section IV.C (providing checklist).

230. See Carolyn V. Williams, *Bracing for Impact: Revising Legal Writing Assessments Ahead of the Collision of Generative AI and the NextGen Bar Exam*, 28 J. LEGAL WRITING INST. 1, 34 (2024) (emphasizing value of lawyers' personalized client counseling that GenAI cannot replicate).

231. See *id.* (recognizing need to adopt legal education for future GenAI evolution).

2. *Transparency*

Lawyer leaders should consider whether it is appropriate to disclose the extent of their GenAI use in drafting key communications, client materials, and leadership decisions, especially in emotionally significant contexts.²³² This transparency builds trust and sets an example for ethical use within the broader organization.²³³ Faculty and administrators should consider whether they should be transparent about their own use of GenAI.²³⁴ Being forthcoming about AI use may avoid double standards, such as banning students from using GenAI while faculty and administrators themselves use them for institutional communication or course materials.²³⁵

3. *Responsibility*

Responsibility means leaders must take ownership of AI-generated outputs.²³⁶ Lawyer leaders cannot simply disclaim that “GenAI got it wrong.”²³⁷ They must review, edit, contextualize, and stand behind every GenAI communication and decision made in their name and from their office.²³⁸

B. *Professional Development*

Human-centered leadership for lawyers in the GenAI age may not be instinctive: It must be cultivated.²³⁹ Law firms, law schools, and continuing legal education programs should invest in professional development initiatives that

232. See THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION R. 18.3 (Columbia L. Rev. Ass’n et al., 22d ed. 2025) (delineating proper citation of AI-generated content and disclosure of AI assistance in legal writing). *But see* Ambrogio, *supra* note 158 (summarizing lawyers’ objection to GenAI inclusion in Bluebook formatting).

233. See Lawrence S. Krieger & Kennon M. Sheldon, *What Makes Lawyers Happy?: A Data-Driven Prescription to Redefine Professional Success*, 83 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 554, 564-85 (2015) (finding internal drivers, like authenticity, instead of external markers, like income, predict lawyers’ professional well-being).

234. The author of this Article used GenAI tools to assist with initial brainstorming and portions of drafting; however, the author has revised and expanded upon the initial GenAI output. See Andrew M. Perlman, *Generative AI and the Future of Legal Scholarship* 1-2, 29-30 (Oct. 30, 2025) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with the Suffolk University Law Review) (discussing transparency of GenAI use in legal scholarship through author’s disclosure in footnotes).

235. See Natasha Singer, *At This School, Computer Science Class Now Includes Critiquing Chatbots*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 6, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/06/technology/chatgpt-schools-teachers-ai-ethics.html> [<https://perma.cc/USM9-PJP6>] (describing inconsistent standards for students’ versus educators’ use of GenAI tools).

236. See MODEL RULES OF PRO. CONDUCT rs. 5.1, 5.3 (A.B.A. 1983) (addressing lawyers’ obligation to supervise both human and non-human legal assistants, including GenAI tools).

237. See *id.* r. 1.1 cmt. 8 (A.B.A. 1983) (requiring lawyers to cultivate competence as legal practice evolves, “including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology”).

238. See *id.* (discussing various forms of competency).

239. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (advocating lawyers learn and develop human skills rather than tailor instruction exclusively to legal practice); PATTERSON ET AL., *supra* note 194, at 9, 211-216 (explaining ability to learn dialogue skills, key to effective leadership to navigate crucial conversations).

strengthen human leadership skills to complement GenAI.²⁴⁰ The legal academy can play a critical role in shaping this generation of GenAI-enhanced lawyer leaders.²⁴¹ Legal education must expand its scope beyond doctrinal analysis and traditional skill building to include instruction about legal GenAI tools and developing lawyer leadership competencies.²⁴² While this added instruction takes time and is not required by the traditional Langdellian core curriculum, the future of legal practice in the age of GenAI nonetheless demands it.²⁴³ Below are a few examples of ways to develop the human skills of lawyer leaders with intentionality.²⁴⁴

Leadership courses, workshops, and continuing legal education programs can help emerging lawyer leaders reflect on their strengths and blind spots, including exploring their values and personality preferences, as well as their communication, conflict, and leadership styles.²⁴⁵ Modules on emotional intelligence—including empathy, ethical GenAI use, and cultural intelligence—could incorporate scenario-based learning, case studies, and simulations that would offer a

240. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (opining, irrespective of GenAI's significant disruption to legal profession, lawyers must restore humanity to profession).

241. See TOM CHATFIELD, AI AND THE FUTURE OF PEDAGOGY 5-6 (2025), https://www.sagepub.com/docs/default-source/corp-comms/ai-and-the-future-of-pedagogy.pdf?sfvrsn=bcd50f3_5 [<https://perma.cc/RB-8W-XSEV>] (emphasizing need for metacognitive skill-building and human-guided feedback in GenAI-supported learning); see also HOTSHOT, <https://www.hotshotlegal.com/> [<https://perma.cc/G3FQ-T8AF>] (last visited Jan. 25, 2026) (providing interactive courses on legal practice skills and essential professional competencies for attorneys); SKILLBURST, <https://www.skillburst.com/> [<https://perma.cc/WKG4-ZAQB>] (last visited Jan. 25, 2026) (offering on-demand modules developing leadership, communication, and client-service capabilities for lawyers); UPGRAD, <https://www.upgrad.com/legal-studies-courses/soft-skills-courses/> [<https://perma.cc/KNH2-F2-4V>] (last visited Jan. 25, 2026) (delivering skills-based courses on negotiation, professional communication, and workplace effectiveness). Together, these platforms highlight approaches for cultivating professional capacities that legal educators can integrate with emerging GenAI literacy.

242. See *Section on Leadership*, THE ASS'N OF AM. L. SCHS. (Nov. 9, 2017), <https://www.aals.org/sections/list/leadership/> [<https://perma.cc/FU3C-DUQY>] (presenting leadership course syllabi); see also Furlong, *supra* note 5 (expressing need to restructure lawyer learning and develop “human skills”).

243. See Beth Hirschfelder Wilensky, *Dethroning Langdell*, 107 MINN. L. REV. 2701, 2703-04 (2023) (critiquing traditional Langdellian case method and urging more experiential and skills-based legal education); see also Kathleen Elliott Vinson, *Lead the Way: How Leadership Courses in Law Schools Can Satisfy ABA Standard 303*, SUFFOLK UNIV. BOS. LEGAL WRITING MATTERS (Sep. 7, 2022), <https://sites.suffolk.edu/legalwritingmatters/2022/09/07/lead-the-way-how-leadership-courses-in-law-schools-can-satisfy-aba-standard-303/> [<https://perma.cc/LS34-ALHP>] (asserting leadership and “human skills” courses satisfy ABA requirements for professional identity formation).

244. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (recommending development of human creativity and relationship-building remain “foundation of lawyer purpose and identity”).

245. See Kathleen Elliott Vinson, *Global Leadership for Law Students: Fostering Culturally Competent Lawyers*, TRAINING LAWS. AS LEADERS (Sep. 20, 2023), <https://traininglawyersasleaders.org/global-leadership-for-law-students-fostering-culturally-competent-lawyers/> [<https://perma.cc/7ZNJ-RVFQ>] (conveying law students should cultivate leadership through reflection, self-assessments, peer assessments, and role-playing); see also Alexandra Cannon, *Navigating the Impact of AI in Leadership: A Social Process Continues*, CTR. FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP (Jan. 30, 2025), <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/navigating-the-impact-of-ai-in-leadership-a-social-process-continues/> [<https://perma.cc/R3TY-7WBQ>] (emphasizing GenAI tools may deepen, but should not replace, purposeful reflection on leadership experiences).

low-risk environment for testing how to integrate GenAI tools with human judgment.²⁴⁶

Incorporating GenAI and leadership development throughout the curriculum can make that development more accessible and less siloed.²⁴⁷ For example, professional responsibility courses should be updated to incorporate GenAI-related scenarios that force students to wrestle with questions of empathy, judgment, trust, cultural intelligence, bias, and emotional resonance.²⁴⁸ Clinical settings can also serve as proving grounds for lawyer leader practice, allowing students to explore how technology can assist legal service delivery while still being human-centered and focused on client dignity and emotional context.²⁴⁹

Leadership coaching could provide more in-depth professional development on an individual basis, homing in on an individual's leadership philosophy and leadership goals.²⁵⁰

Lawyer leaders who engage in this kind of intentional professional development will be better positioned to lead with empathy, cultural intelligence, judgment, and trust.²⁵¹ They will also serve as role models and visionaries, demonstrating that while GenAI may transform how legal work is done, it need not diminish the humanity of those who do it.²⁵²

C. Blending Tech Fluency and Human Strengths

The future of legal leadership will belong to those who can operate in a blended model, a framework that pairs technological fluency with distinctly human capabilities.²⁵³ In this model, GenAI is seen not as a competitor but as a collaborator.²⁵⁴ Lawyers have a duty of technological competence, which includes understanding the benefits and risks of legal technology.²⁵⁵ Lawyer

246. See Eric Fournier, *Employing AI to Enhance In-Class Role Playing Scenarios 2* (Apr. 3, 2024) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with the Suffolk University Law Review) (engaging college students in using GenAI to create personas practicing conflict-resolution and feedback-exchange skills); see also GOLEMAN, *supra* note 137, at 37-38 (defining EI and arguing primacy in professional and personal success).

247. See generally DURR & ZIMMERMAN, *supra* note 135 (emphasizing role of both human literacy and technological literacy for legal professionals).

248. Cf. Furlong, *supra* note 83 (arguing lawyers must "level-up" to provide meaningful services to clients).

249. Cf. *id.* (considering skills lawyers must develop).

250. Cf. *id.* (highlighting enhanced professional development skills needed to lead).

251. Cf. *id.* (discussing core attributes for future lawyer leaders).

252. See Furlong, *supra* note 5 (urging need to restore humanity in lawyering).

253. See TEAGUE & FRALEY, *supra* note 5, at 27-41 (emphasizing four leadership literacies of self, relational, cultural, and technical competence); Coleman, *supra* note 216 (discussing importance of dialogue, not debate, humanizing relationships, and avoiding graduating students illiterate in listening).

254. See Joseph Regalia, *Brains, Bots, and Briefs: Rethinking Legal Practice in the Age of AI 9-10* (Aug. 29, 2025) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with the Suffolk University Law Review) (equating GenAI use to thought partners for attorney).

255. See MODEL RULES OF PRO. CONDUCT r. 1.1 cmt. 8 (A.B.A. 1983) (requiring lawyers to cultivate competence during legal practice evolution); see also A.B.A. Comm. on Ethics & Pro. Resp., Formal Op. 512, 3-4 (2024) (explaining lawyers' ethical obligations to independently verify certain outputs of GenAI tools used).

leaders who understand what GenAI can and cannot do are better equipped to delegate efficiently, spot errors, mitigate risks, and maintain strategic focus.²⁵⁶

Tech fluency in this context includes more than the ability to *use* GenAI tools. It requires a baseline understanding of the capabilities, limitations, and ethical and legal implications of GenAI tools.²⁵⁷ Tech fluency includes understanding effective prompt engineering,²⁵⁸ as well as bias, data privacy, transparency, and ethics.²⁵⁹ It also includes the ability to critically assess and verify outputs and integrate them into human-centered decision-making and judgments.²⁶⁰

Yet, tech fluency alone is insufficient.²⁶¹ The *human* side of the blended model is what distinguishes lawyer leaders from mere technicians or systems managers.²⁶² Human literacy includes empathy (a component of EI), cultural intelligence, ethical judgment, and the capacity to build trust through lived experiences and relationships with people.²⁶³ It enables leaders to guide teams

256. See Bob Ambrogi, *AI Hallucinations Strike Again: Two More Cases Where Lawyers Face Judicial Wrath for Fake Citations*, LAWSITES (May 14, 2025), <https://www.lawnext.com/2025/05/ai-hallucinations-strike-again-two-more-cases-where-lawyers-face-judicial-wrath-for-fake-citations> [<https://perma.cc/5PUQ-PX48>] (reporting judicial sanctions against lawyers who failed to verify briefs with AI-hallucinated citations).

257. See Furlong, *supra* note 120 (discussing collaboration of lawyers and GenAI); see also A.B.A. Comm. on Ethics & Pro. Resp., Formal Op. 512 (2024) (identifying ethical implications of GenAI tools).

258. See Mollick, *supra* note 199 (emphasizing effective leaders must participate actively in GenAI-assisted tasks, rather than passively accept their outputs).

259. See Christine Kininmonth, *Becoming an AI-Driven Leader: The Strategic Framework*, GROWTH FAC. (Apr. 10, 2025), <https://thegrowthfaculty.com/articles/becoming-an-ai-driven-leader-the-strategic-framework> [<https://perma.cc/7RY5-PAGU>] (outlining Geoff Woods's CRIT framework). Technical and human literacies support lawyer leaders using the CRIT Framework, an emerging model for ethical and effective GenAI engagement for leaders to get more strategic value from AI tools. See *id.* (suggesting positive means of using GenAI). C stands for context: Provide AI with detailed background information to help it understand the situation, such as the emotional, cultural, and legal landscape in which communication or decisions occur, as well as challenges you face. See *id.* (defining tenet of framework). Be sure to be specific about your goal. See *id.* (emphasizing importance of specificity). R stands for role: Assign AI a specific role, such as an advocate, expert, or advisor, and what that role requires from a human standpoint. See *id.* (describing second step in framework). I stands for interview: Ask AI questions and ask AI to interview you to achieve deeper context. See *id.* (noting third tenet). Ask tough questions, challenge any assumptions and holes in your thinking, and suggest alternatives. See *id.* (suggesting actions to take). Finally, T stands for task: Define the specific objective you want AI to do; choose which elements of the work may be delegated to GenAI and which require distinctly human insight. See *id.* (providing last step in framework).

260. See Moppett, *supra* note 203 (highlighting GenAI useful to automate routine legal tasks but cannot replicate humans' higher-order capacities).

261. See Donna Campbell, *AI Enters the Classroom as Law Schools Prep Students for a Tech-Driven Practice*, THE NAT'L JURIST (July 9, 2025), <https://nationaljurist.com/ai-enters-the-classroom-as-law-schools-prep-students-for-a-tech-driven-practice> [<https://perma.cc/ER9T-MCQR>] (arguing tech fluency without critical thinking, legal reasoning, and ethical judgment insufficient preparation for practice).

262. See generally WOODS, *supra* note 26 (describing the qualities of an AI-assisted leader). Human oversight of GenAI does not guarantee an improved empathetic and culturally humble output, as not all lawyers are effective leaders; thus, enhancing the professional development of leadership skills for lawyers is important. See Furlong, *supra* note 120 (arguing for shifting legal education's focus from technical skills to emotional intelligence).

263. See Rothman, *supra* note 16 (opining trust and decision-making most important human creations, preserving cross-cultural connection in digitalized age).

through uncertainty, communicate with authenticity, and navigate complex social and legal dilemmas.

1. *Humanizing AI-Generated Communication*

GenAI should not replace lawyer leaders; instead, lawyer leaders should make intentional, transparent, and principled decisions about when and how to integrate GenAI with an eye toward preserving the uniquely human skills of a lawyer leader.²⁶⁴ To preserve trust and avoid abdicating human-centered lawyering to GenAI, lawyer leaders should adopt a communication protocol that ensures AI-assisted messages maintain emotional authenticity.²⁶⁵ GenAI is a tool to achieve goals, not the goal itself.²⁶⁶ A leader's voice, not GenAI, should set the tone.²⁶⁷ Below is a checklist for a lawyer leader to consider, as well as some tell-tale signs that a leader largely used GenAI without human insight and relational judgment.²⁶⁸

a. *Checklist*

Lawyer leaders can use the simple checklist below as a touchstone before finalizing GenAI-assisted emails, announcements, client updates, and internal memos, especially in moments of uncertainty, emotion, or transition.²⁶⁹ When in doubt, the best practice is to use GenAI for structure or support, but to let the final voice be your own.

- Is this a situation where human presence is more important than efficiency? If so, consider whether a written message is the proper mode of communication, or whether a meeting or phone call would be more appropriate.
- If writing is the best medium for the message, is the tone right, and does it reflect my actual voice or leadership style?²⁷⁰ Be sure to show vulnerability and imperfection, using natural, conversational language.

264. See JOEL GLADD, *How to Prompt AI Chatbots*, in *WRITE WHAT MATTERS* 167-68 (Liza Long, Amy Minervini & Joel Gladd eds., 2020) (ebook) (advising human-centered use of AI tools to augment, rather than substitute, professional judgment).

265. See *infra* Section IV.C.1.a (providing communication checklist).

266. See WOODS, *supra* note 26, at 228 (emphasizing AI useful tool, not goal).

267. See *The Sandbox Approach*, L. PROFS' AI SANDBOX, <https://sites.google.com/view/lwai/ai-101/the-sandbox-approach#h.6tpsyltrwbii> [<https://perma.cc/48VK-MKH3>] (last visited Feb. 1, 2026) (recommending legal educators instruct students to specify audience, genre, and purpose when GenAI prompting).

268. See *infra* Sections IV.C.1.a-b (providing communication checklist and signs of GenAI content).

269. A lawyer leader could use this checklist to revise content generated by GenAI or use it when drafting prompts or programing a custom GPT.

270. See *generally* BROWN, *supra* note 174 (discussing benefits of people embracing vulnerabilities and imperfection).

Share uncertainty, admit mistakes, or express emotions honestly. Skip formal, over-polished phrases that scream “corporate memo.”

- Did I add personal details, names, or context that only a human would know?²⁷¹ Adding personal touches and specific details can be beneficial in these situations, such as including names, dates, places, or moments that only a human in your role would know. Alternatively, consider mentioning a shared experience: “I remember when we worked late on the *Miller* case”
- Have I considered how the audience is likely to feel receiving this message? Be sure to review and revise with your audience in mind. After AI gives you a draft, ask: *Would I say this in person to this group or this person?* Replace canned AI language with phrasing your audience knows you use, and read the message aloud. If it sounds robotic, revise it.
- Did I ask thoughtful questions?²⁷² Work to invite feedback, dialogue, or reflection. Use genuine curiosity, not rhetorical or filler questions. Examples of thoughtful questions include: *What do you need from me right now?* *Does this plan feel doable to you?* *What have I missed that we should be considering?*
- Have I clearly disclosed GenAI assistance if appropriate?²⁷³ Being transparent, but thoughtful, about GenAI use is important. If you do use GenAI to support your communication, consider whether it is appropriate to be fully transparent and describe the use clearly: “I used a tool to help me organize my thoughts, but these words are mine.”

271. See *id.* (discussing benefits of connections, relationships, and people feeling seen, heard, and valued).

272. See Kirsten K. Davis, *Prompt Engineering for ChatGPT Can Improve Your Legal Writing — Even if You Never Use ChatGPT*, APP. ADVOC. BLOG (Apr. 6, 2023), <https://www.appellateadvocacyblog.com/2023/04/prompt-engineering-for-chatgpt-can-improve-your-legal-writing-even-if-you-never-use-chatgpt.html> [https://perma.cc/HCH6-V5SD] (explaining how carefully crafted prompts can improve clarity, organization, and persuasiveness in legal drafting); see also Jess Hohenstein et al., *Artificial Intelligence in Communication Impacts Language and Social Relationships*, SCI. REPS., Apr. 4, 2023, at 1, 5 (emphasizing design principles that prioritize human authorial intent and accountability while drafting high-stakes AI-supported communications).

273. Cf. A.B.A. Comm. on Ethics & Pro. Resp., Formal Op. 512 (2024) (clarifying lawyers must assess when AI use significant enough to require disclosure to clients); O'Donnell, *supra* note 111 (expressing patient's disappointment and alarm about therapist's *nondisclosure* of GenAI use).

b. Signs of GenAI-Generated Communication and the Abdication of Human Leadership

While GenAI-generated text continues to improve rapidly and methods exist to work around GenAI's generic tendencies, there are still common signs, both subtle and obvious, that suggest when communication was produced largely by GenAI without human oversight.²⁷⁴ No single sign conclusively proves ineffective or unreviewed GenAI use, but the more that appear, especially in emotionally or ethically charged contexts, the more likely you are to read something created solely by a machine without human revision, revealing an abdication of human leadership.²⁷⁵ Even as GenAI becomes increasingly able to mimic individual styles and human voices, lawyer leaders should not completely delegate the human-centered dimensions of communication to GenAI.²⁷⁶

Below are some key signs to watch for:

- Overly Polished but Emotionally Flat²⁷⁷
 - The writing sounds grammatically correct but lacks the emotional nuance expected in communications addressing loss, conflict, or responsibility.
 - It “says the right thing,” but does not *feel* right (like a sympathy note that is technically appropriate but oddly impersonal and hollow).
 - Expressions of empathy are vague and general (“we understand this may be a challenging time”), rather than rooted in specific details or context grounded in a particular situation or people involved.

274. See Cody Mello-Klein, *How Can You Tell if Text Is AI-Generated? Researchers Have figured Out a New Method*, NE. GLOB. NEWS (Oct. 30, 2024), <https://news.northeastern.edu/2024/10/30/how-to-tell-if-text-is-ai-generated/> [<https://perma.cc/T4VM-C5H3>] (analyzing common syntactic patterns that may distinguish GenAI outputs from human writing); see also Wendy Laura Belcher, *10 Ways AI Is Ruining Your Students' Writing*, THE CHRON. OF HIGHER EDUC. (Sep. 16, 2025), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/10-ways-ai-is-ruining-your-students-writing> [<https://perma.cc/Q6DJ-Q7XX>] (detailing analysis of sentence structure and stylistic cues revealing GenAI-drafted essays).

275. See Belcher, *supra* note 274 (speaking to weaknesses in GenAI text); Mello-Klein, *supra* note 274 (explaining increased likelihood that multiple AI indicators in sentimentally charged text signal machine authorship). Tools like Turnitin, GPTZero, or Originality.ai may flag GenAI authorship when educators or professionals check submissions. See Shahid Rafiq, Qurat-ul-Ain & Ayesha Afzal, *The Role of AI Detection Tools in Upholding Academic Integrity: An Evaluation of Their Effectiveness*, 3 CONTEMP. J. SOC. SCI. REV. 901, 913 (2025) (finding GenAI detection tools vary in accuracy and advocating for human-led academic integrity analyses).

276. See Belcher, *supra* note 274 (arguing writers must resist urge to offload creativity with GenAI's advances); see also Jordan Furlong, *In the Post-AI Legal World, What Will Lawyers Do?*, JORDAN FURLONG (May 3, 2023), <https://jordanfurlong.substack.com/p/in-the-post-ai-legal-world-what-will> [<https://perma.cc/ZX6X-XCSQ>] (warning problems will occur should society devolve to prefer machines meeting their needs over humans).

277. See Belcher, *supra* note 274 (noting GenAI strength with grammar rules but weakness in other areas).

- Repetitive or Formulaic Phrasing²⁷⁸
 - Overuse of generic transitions recurring in a mechanical fashion (“in conclusion,” “furthermore,” “it is important to note,” etc.).
 - Phrases often appear in predictable patterns (e.g., “while X is true, it is also important to recognize Y”).
 - Repetition of the same idea or structure across sentences or paragraphs, reappearing in slightly different wording, as if trying to “fill space” rather than develop an idea.

- Overuse of Buzzwords and Clichés²⁷⁹
 - Frequent use of words like “synergy,” “robust,” “transformative,” “innovative,” or “leveraging” in corporate or leadership writing as a way of sounding authoritative.
 - Tends to favor “safe” language that avoids specificity or showing vulnerability.

- Lack of Concreteness²⁸⁰
 - Messages often avoid mentioning specific names or contextual facts, making the writing feel detached.
 - Sentences are general enough to apply to almost anyone or any circumstance (e.g., “your contributions are valued during this dynamic period”).

- Strangely Balanced or Neutral Tone in Emotional Moments²⁸¹
 - Even when addressing tragedies, loss, conflict, or injustice, GenAI often maintains emotional neutrality or an oddly upbeat tone that clashes with the gravity of the moment.
 - May include contradictory emotional cues in trying to balance multiple stylistic patterns, like pairing “deep sorrow” with phrases like “we are excited for the path forward.”

278. See Mello-Klein, *supra* note 274 (noting GenAI’s preferred essay structures and numbers of illustrative examples).

279. See *id.* (addressing markers of overused buzzwords and safe corporate language).

280. See Belcher, *supra* note 274 (noting GenAI weaknesses).

281. See *id.* (noting “bloated emptiness” of GenAI writing).

- Excessive Softening or Passive Language²⁸²
 - Tends to hedge too much, favoring noncommittal phrasing (“we might consider potentially revisiting” or “there is some indication that we could explore”).
 - Uses passive voice excessively to avoid responsibility (“mistakes were made” instead of “I made a mistake”).
- Lack of Voice or Perspective²⁸³
 - Writing is bland and lacks a distinctive tone or point of view.
 - There is often no humor, no cultural references, no personality, nothing that feels truly “you.”
 - Does not ask questions or show curiosity; it presents information instead of engaging in dialogue and rarely acknowledges uncertainty.
- Overuse of Em Dash²⁸⁴
 - Em dashes (—) are sprinkled throughout the writing. While grammatically permissible, it feels unnatural and stylistically monotonous.
- Hallucinations²⁸⁵
 - Citations to nonexistent sources or incorrect citations.
- Direct Indicators²⁸⁶
 - Sometimes the giveaway is direct, such as a footnote or disclosure line like “generated with assistance from AI” or metadata embedded in a digital file.

282. See *id.* (describing flag of GenAI’s unnatural use of passive voice for non-human drafting in essays).

283. See *id.* (asserting common identifiers of GenAI content).

284. Brett Csutoras, *The Em Dash Dilemma: How a Punctuation Mark Became AI’s Stubborn Signature*, MEDIUM (Apr. 29, 2025), <https://medium.com/@bretcsutoras/the-em-dash-dilemma-how-a-punctuation-mark-became-ais-stubborn-signature-684fbcc9f559> [<https://perma.cc/997C-ZCBN>] (describing overuse of em dash by GenAI).

285. See Magesh et al., *supra* note 72 (discussing capabilities of GenAI and problems with hallucinations).

286. See *supra* note 275 and accompanying text (highlighting distinct signs of GenAI use and software used to detect).

V. CONCLUSION

The legal profession is undergoing a transformation unlike any before. GenAI is reshaping how lawyers research, draft, communicate, and strategize. The question is no longer *whether* AI belongs in the legal world, but *how* lawyer leaders will adapt to its presence and retain what makes their role uniquely human. The lawyer leader's answer is not resistance, but reorientation. To remain relevant and effective, lawyers must embrace a new model, one that blends technological fluency with timeless human strengths.

GenAI may enhance or mimic, but cannot yet replace, many of the essential human elements of lawyer leadership. GenAI may write well-structured memoranda and craft grammatically correct condolences, but it cannot reassure a grieving client, resolve a moral dilemma, or earn a team's trust in turbulent times. These are the very human acts that comprise the core competencies of an effective lawyer leader.

The GenAI era presents an opportunity not to outsource lawyer leadership, but to reclaim and foster human-centric leadership. The more lawyers rely on technology to streamline tasks, the more essential it becomes for present and future lawyer leaders to seamlessly integrate technological fluency with timeless human strengths. Institutions must provide professional development that prioritizes aspects of legal work that remain distinctly human, while also providing instruction on the responsible use of GenAI, putting humanity at the center of a lawyer leader's identity. Individual lawyer leaders must model what it looks like to lead not only with GenAI tools, but with human traits. In a profession increasingly shaped by machines, the lawyer leaders who remain human-centered, who connect, reflect, and care, will not be replaced. They will be indispensable.
