

Tech specialists to be trained for legal sector

Cheryl Tee

A new breed of professionals known as "legal technologists" is being groomed as part of efforts to modernise the delivery of legal services in Singapore.

They will be trained with the latest IT tools and armed with know-how in cyber security and computer systems integration before being deployed across law firms here.

Their mission will be to identify issues in the firms' business processes, coax them into adopting technology and make recommendations on what the firms should do.

Chipping in on this effort are Singapore Management University (SMU) law students, who will be identifying the problem areas faced by the legal industry.

These are changes expected in

the legal sector as part of tie-ups inked yesterday by the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) with SMU and the Info-communications Media Development Authority (IMDA).

The two pacts were made as part of the SAL's launch of the Future Law Innovation Programme (Flip), a two-year pilot announced last July by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

Its aim is to achieve what Chief Justice Menon described as the "Uberisation" of the legal practice, which is a reference to ride-hailing service Uber and its impact on efficiently matching supply and demand.

High Court judge Lee Seiu Kin said it has attracted 31 participants from 23 entities, including lawyers from firms like Rajah & Tann, in-house counsel from corporations like BNP Paribas, and representa-

tives from legal tech start-ups like LexQuantis.

Justice Lee, who heads the SAL's Legal Technology Cluster, said the response exceeded Flip's first-year target, given its aim of 40 participants over two years.

Noting that there is much to look forward to in the "future business of law", Justice Lee said: "You have taken a bold step towards that by being part of Flip."

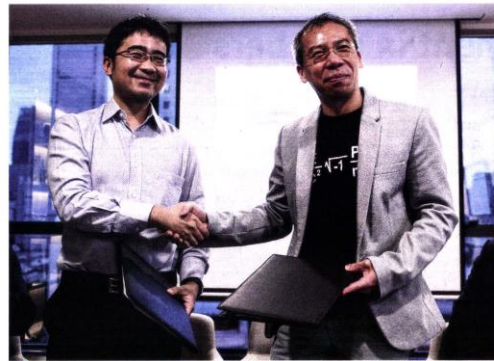
Under Flip, the SAL also launched the Legal Innovation Lab @ Collision 8, a co-working space located at High Street Centre for law firms and in-house counsel to explore ways to improve their processes with input from legal tech start-ups.

An online collaboration platform known as LawNet Community was also launched and will offer all SAL members free accounts.

Lawyers and academics will enjoy free basic services such as professional and business profiles.

A third plank of Flip - a legal tech accelerator and touted as a first in South-east Asia - will be launched in April.

A panel of experts, including Senior Counsel Philip Jeyaretnam and



SMU law school dean Goh Yi-han (far left) and SAL chief operating officer and chief financial officer Paul Neo at the signing of the memorandum of understanding yesterday. ST PHOTO: ALVIN HO

SMU law school dean Goh Yi-han, stressed the importance of law firms and in-house counsel embracing technology, during a panel discussion yesterday morning.

Lawyers need to take the threat of digital disruption more seriously, said Mr Paul Neo, chief operating officer and chief financial officer of the SAL. "There is a healthy amount

of scepticism about the need to innovate... To them, it's maybe a fad," he said.

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