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Headline: Your company's next paralegal could very well be an algorithm

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Digital disruption has upended the way businesses operate in many industries. Yet, the long arm of technology still comes up short in the legal sector. “Currently, technology is used to help with the typing and manual labour, but not with the thinking,” says Alexis Chun, the 31-year-old CEO and co-founder of Singapore-based legal tech start-up Legalese.

But change is underway. In January this year, the Singapore Management University launched a \$15 million computational law research programme aimed at developing a working domain-specific language (DSL). When fully realised, this foundational technology will codify elements of the law, ranging from statutes to rules and agreements, paving the way for computer scientists to develop smart contracts at scale and automated reasoning procedures for compliance checks, among other applications. But this doesn't mean businesses will no longer have to seek the counsel of their lawyers.

Chun, formerly a commercial, IT and intellectual property litigator with Rajah & Tann Singapore, believes technology will play a complementary role in lawyering: “Lawyers are part of the work because they have to be involved in codifying the technology so that it gives them exactly what they expect.” According to Chun, automating some aspects of legal work will give lawyers more time to “do the things humans are excellent at” such as negotiating and thinking about the positions of the different parties involved – so as to facilitate the delivery of more efficient legal services.

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