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## Legal futures round-up

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Time for a round-up of notable trends and developments that highlight innovation in the legal industry.

Let's start with the major news, last month, that legal services provider UnitedLex will partner exclusively with GE to help the conglomerate optimize its legal functions. According to *The American Lawyer*, "The UnitedLex partnership will save GE between \$40 and \$50 million and allow it to repurpose as many as 75 lawyers, with some of those transitioning to UnitedLex, according to one person familiar with the deal." The deal is significant, writes Steve Kovalan, because it shows how in-house legal departments will adapt to the businesses they serve – something presumably outside providers will have to get used to.

Meanwhile, a new survey produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit shows that frustration with high legal fees and demand for local regulatory

knowledge has larger clients thinking of shifting their business from larger firms to cost-effective boutique law firms.

Fasken has announced that it has adopted Kira Systems' software to incorporate it in its contract review service.

Overseas, the Ministry of Justice for England and Wales started testing a beta version of its proposed *online court* for small claims – mostly dealing with consumer disputes. The initiative follows a 2016 report that called for claims worth up to £25,000 to be solved in an online court.

Also leading the way in online mediation resolution is the Cyberjustice Laboratory at the Université de Montréal, which is piloting a project that offers to consumers and retailers a free online service to resolve small legal disputes.

Linda Hovanec writes that artificial intelligence is beginning to change the processes and the politics surrounding legal bill reviews. "Using AI, legal and claims departments see that compliance with their billing guidelines—an issue many companies struggle with—can be improved significantly across outside counsel relationships.

Legal analyst Jordan Furlong has a post up questioning the conventional wisdom that law firms are powerless to confront rainmakers acting in their own interests and not that of the firm.

And Mark Cohen takes on the persistent gender wage gap in law firms and calls upon them to make commit to" a common set of core values." He writes: "The legal industry must take a hard look at its culture and understand that technology, process, new delivery models, and other indices of innovation are footnotes to core values. If the legal industry does not commit to end the scourge of its internal discrimination, how can it have standing to do so for others?"

Also worth reading is Noel Semple's proposal on how to quantify and compare the value propositions offered by providers of legal services.