



Abstaining from AI: Is Resistance Futile?

Law firms and businesses sometimes resist change and the adoption of new technologies because of fear or uncertainty, whether justified or not. Here are things to consider when deciding whether to avoid using artificial intelligence.

BY JAMES PEARSON

One prominent gripe I hear currently is that with the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) agents, plugins, search assistants, and chatbots, AI is being “shoved down our throats.” In March, I shared the idea for this article with the State Bar of Wisconsin’s Practice411 e-list group. Despite the regular concerns about technology – it’s moving too fast, it’s difficult to keep up with, it poses security issues, and general fears of using the cloud – the group expressed cautious optimism about AI: Instead of being an evil overlord, AI is merely another useful technological tool to learn and adapt to, like computers, email, and the internet.

At the ABA Techshow in Chicago, judges emphasized that adopting AI is essential for lawyers to stay competitive and effective in their practice. Judge Scott Schlegel has said, “In five years, you will be the one out of the practice because you’ve been left behind because you’re not using those tools,” echoing the recommendation that attorneys adopt AI rapidly to avoid being left behind.¹

AI Usage Trends in the Legal Industry

Before considering the option of abstaining from AI completely and given that my list mates all had great examples of how they had been implementing it in their practices, I investigated how law practices are currently using AI. Fortunately, despite the newness of AI, there are some statistics available.

According to a report by the Federal Bar Association, 31% of legal professionals now use generative AI at work, an increase from 27% the previous year. Among those using AI, 65% reported saving 1-5 hours weekly, while 12% saved 6-10 hours and 7% saved 11 or more hours per week. The report also indicated efficiency improvements, with 61% of respondents noting

moderate increases and 21% noting significant enhancements. AI is predominantly applied in drafting correspondence (54%), brainstorming ideas (47%), and conducting general research (46%). These statistics highlight the transformative potential of AI in streamlining legal tasks and improving overall workflows.²

The statistics are higher than I anticipated. But my own AI adoption reflects similar usage and time savings. One of my favorite tools, Dictanote, allows me to dictate on the go and quickly format those thoughts into a usable first draft. This alone can save me hours of typing and editing.³

A Human in the Loop Is a Necessity

As the legal industry navigates this AI revolution, the necessity for human oversight becomes increasingly crucial, particularly when addressing issues of accuracy and ethical use.

In March, a federal appeals court ruled that art generated *solely* by AI cannot be copyrighted.⁴ Everyone has heard stories about attorneys who



James Pearson owns the Computer Center, Janesville. He is a Microsoft Certified Professional and a frequent author and speaker on cybersecurity and safety topics. Access the digital article at www.wisbar.org/wl.

james.pearson@computercenter.com
www.thelawyersgeek.com



didn't verify the output of ChatGPT and submitted false information to courts.⁵

These legal and ethical parameters do not negate AI's usefulness in the creation and production of visual, audio, and other forms of content. Nor do they suggest that we refrain from using AI tools for research. They are, however, a reminder of the absolute necessity for human oversight, especially considering the implications of AI hallucinations, when fabricated citations and inaccuracies can occur. These hallucinations are even possible in closed systems – those in which the AI is limited to accessing a certain library of data and cannot access outside resources.⁶

I hope that the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which recently launched several AI initiatives, will also help us to better use these tools ethically and responsibly, while also being able to detect their usage. In March, NIST announced its GenAI Image

Challenge, designed to research AI models and detect AI-generated images, much the way plagiarism detectors do now. Further, NIST also is working to set guidelines for securing AI systems against attacks.⁷

I think, and hope, that we continue to see not only some guidelines but also tools for identifying hallucinations and verifying sources.⁸

Copilot: Microsoft's Ubiquitous AI

While ChatGPT is the AI buzzword, it's a tool people can choose to use or not use. But it's hard to avoid AI in Microsoft products. Because most computer users use Windows and Microsoft 365, they will encounter AI that is integrated automatically into operating systems and software.

Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, announced Copilot in 2023, discussing a vision of how people would work and interact with computers in the future. Microsoft continues to push that plan by rolling out its Copilot AI tools across its platform. Now, Microsoft has officially rebranded Microsoft 365 (which was Microsoft Office 365 until 2020) to Microsoft 365 Copilot.⁹

Understanding what Microsoft categorizes as Copilot can be confusing because Microsoft is rapidly implementing changes regarding billing, features, and even the product's name. However, there are a few important distinctions between the different Copilot offerings and the available features.

- Copilot Voice enables verbal interactions and is accessible via an application within Edge and Windows, as well as available for download separately.
- For users with work or school accounts, Copilot Chat is accessible at no extra cost for anyone holding a Microsoft 365 license.
- For users with personal accounts, Copilot Chat will soon be available for subscribers of Microsoft 365 Personal and Family plans. These plans integrate Copilot into applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote,

and the newly branded Microsoft 365 Copilot app.

Pricing. The prices for Microsoft 365 Personal and Family subscriptions in the U.S. will increase by \$3 per month at the next renewal for existing subscribers. Subscribers will also receive a monthly allotment of AI credits for using Copilot and Designer features. Subscribers can unlock advanced AI features with a Copilot Pro license, which costs \$20 per user for priority access. For even tighter integration, such as leveraging Copilot in enterprise-grade applications, Copilot for Business costs \$30 per user on top of any qualifying Microsoft 365 subscription.

A work team must determine the level of AI integration it is comfortable with. The deeper and more robust the integration, the more likely an individual or group will need to add one of the Copilot subscriptions on top of what Microsoft currently includes in its base products.¹⁰

Minimizing AI Use

Software companies are racing to integrate AI into their products to avoid being left behind. Given the ubiquity of AI in everything from operating systems like Windows to search engines, mobile phones, and software applications, maintaining control and privacy while adopting AI tools at your own pace, although challenging, is not entirely impossible.

But I must report that in today's world, it is nearly impossible to completely stay away from AI. While it is likely that we cannot entirely avoid AI in the tools we use, and its presence will increase over the next few years, there are some ways to maintain control over where and when we use AI.

Microsoft 365 users can choose not to engage with AI features like Copilot Chat or can opt for alternative browsers or search engines that do not incorporate AI. For privacy, check out browsers such as DuckDuckGo.¹¹

If abstaining from AI is not an option, one can minimize and limit its use while understanding its applications. In my workflow, I utilize applications





such as Dictanote, which features an AI transcriber called AudioScribe. This tool enhances my dictation, transforming my stream of consciousness into a coherent document. Additionally, AI tools such as Grammarly expedite grammar and spelling checks, processing paragraphs rather than individual issues, which is a significant improvement over traditional spell checkers.¹²

Options for Disabling AI Features

Even limited use of AI is too much for some people, so they might want to turn off AI features whenever possible. The following articles provide specific steps to turn off AI features and limit access to private information in various applications.

Microsoft 365 Copilot: *How to Turn Off Copilot in Microsoft 365 Family and Personal Subscriptions*, <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/how-to-turn-off-copilot-in-microsoft-365-family-and-personal-subscriptions-bc7e530b-152d-4123-8e78-ed-c06f8b85f1>.

Windows 11 Copilot: *How to Disable Copilot in Windows 11*, <https://www.tomsguide.com/computing/software/how-disable-copilot-in-windows-11>.

Google AI overviews: *Google Is Killing the Web with AI Overviews – I Made an*

Extension to Block Them, <https://www.tomshardware.com/software/google-chrome/bye-bye-ai-how-to-block-googles-annoying-ai-overviews-and-just-get-search-results>.

QuickBooks AI Assistant: *How Do I Permanently Opt Out of the AI Assistant Idiocy?*, <https://quickbooks.intuit.com/learn-support/en-us/employees-and-payroll/how-do-i-permanently-opt-out-of-the-ai-assistant-idiocy/00/1470292?msockid=0d3826b1024863d12226320803636230> (opting out not available).

Meta AI features: *You Can't Turn Off Meta AI on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, and WhatsApp*, <https://life-hacker.com/tech/how-to-turn-off-meta-ai-on-facebook-instagram-messenger-whatsapp>.

Instagram and Facebook AI usage: *How to Opt Out of Instagram and Facebook Using Your Posts for AI*, <https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/how-to-opt-out-of-instagram-and-facebook-using-your-posts-for-ai/>.

Windows and browsers: *How to Disable AI in Windows and Your Browser*, <https://www.techadvisory.org/2025/01/how-to-disable-ai-in-windows-and-your-browser/>.

Although imperfect, these measures offer some control over privacy settings and AI.

Conclusion

AI is increasingly integrated into daily tools, making complete abstinence nearly impossible. Despite resistance to AI based on concerns about rapid development, security, and usability, adopting AI and using it responsibly is a necessity for staying competitive. AI tools and applications such as Copilot, Grammarly, and Dictanote improve productivity and workflow. In the legal sector, generative AI has demonstrated time and efficiency benefits, with usage trends showing significant adoption. Ethical AI use and human oversight are crucial to mitigate risks, such as inaccuracies and fabricated data. Although it is challenging to avoid AI entirely, options exist for limiting or disabling AI features across various platforms.

I leave you then with the words of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. “Today marks the next major step in the evolution of how we interact with computing, which will fundamentally change the way we work and unlock a new wave of productivity growth.”¹³

The Computer Center has prepared additional free resources on AI available in our resource center at: <https://info.computer-center.com/automationai>. **WL**

ENDNOTES

¹Debra Cassens Weiss, *Art Generated Solely by AI Can't Be Copyrighted, Federal Appeals Court Says*, ABA J. (March 19, 2025), <https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/art-generated-solely-by-ai-cant-be-copyrighted-federal-appeals-court-says>. All websites were last visited on May 30, 2025.

²Nicole Black, *The Legal Industry Report 2025*, Fed. Bar Ass'n (April 22, 2025), <https://www.fedbar.org/blog/the-legal-industry-report-2025>.

³Dictanote, Dictation-Powered Note Taking, <https://dictanote.co/>.

⁴Weiss, *supra* note 1.

⁵Sara Merken, *New York Lawyers Sanctioned for Using Fake ChatGPT Cases*, Reuters (June 22, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/new-york-lawyers-sanctioned-using-fake-chatgpt-cases-legal-brief-2023-06-22>.

⁶Jonathan Ciotton, *A Lawyer's Guide to Understanding AI Hallucinations in a Closed System*, AI Law Answers (June 25, 2024), <https://www.aillawanswers.com/2024/06/a-lawyers-guide-to-understanding-ai-hallucinations-in-a-closed-system>.

⁷Nat'l Inst. of Standards & Tech., *NIST GenAI Image Challenge*, <https://ai-challenges.nist.gov/t2i>.

⁸Nooree Lee et al., *March 2025 AI Developments Under the Trump Administration*, Inside Government Contracts (April 16, 2025), <https://www.insidegovernmentcontracts.com/2025/04/march-2025-ai-developments-under-the-trump-administration/>.

⁹Jonathan Lamont, *Microsoft Announces Windows Copilot, Bing in ChatGPT at Build 2023*, MobileSyrup (May 23, 2023), <https://mobilesyrup.com/2023/05/23/microsoft-build-2023-windows-copilot-bing-ai-search/>.

¹⁰Microsoft Copilot Pro, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/store/b/copilotpro?form=MA13S3>; *Microsoft 365 Copilot Pricing*, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/copilot/business#Pricing>; *Find the Best Microsoft 365 Plan for Your Business*, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/business/compare-all-microsoft-365-business-products-with-microsoft-365-copilot>; *Hi, I'm Copilot in Edge!*, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/edge/copilot?form=MA13S3&cs=3815048149>; *Download Copilot for Desktop*, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-copilot/for-individuals/copilot-app?form=MA13M1-CNV-CT-603530&OCID=MA13M1-CNV-CT-603530>.

¹¹*Switch to DuckDuckGo. It's Private and Free!*, <https://duckduckgo.com/>.

¹²Grammarly, *Clear Writing to Lighten Your Workload*, <https://www.grammarly.com/>; AudioScribe, *Turn Your Voice into Publish-Ready Text with AudioScribe*, <https://dictanote.co/audioscribe/>.

¹³Microsoft, *AI: A Whole New Way of Working*, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/ai-a-whole-new-way-of-working>. **WL**

