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Why Training Partners To Supervise AI Is Now A Priority

By **Steven Lerner**

Law360 (May 27, 2025, 9:40 AM EDT) -- As law firms integrate generative artificial intelligence into their operations and teach attorneys to use it, some are getting their partners up to speed by training them specifically in how to supervise the use of these tools.

That's what K&L Gates LLP did in late 2024 when it piloted a training program to prepare its partners with the skills and knowledge to ensure compliance with new ethical obligations.

In 2024, the American Bar Association ethics committee **published** its first formal opinion on attorney use of generative AI, outlining competency requirements and supervisors' obligations to uphold ethical standards.

After training associates and staff members in prompt engineering, which is the practice of guiding generative AI models, leaders at K&L Gates realized that they needed to teach senior partners, too.

"We're trying to empower our lawyers and allied professionals to understand and be able to use these tools in a way that is going to support our clients and that will support the work of the firm," Alicia Hawley, of counsel at K&L Gates and a member of the firm's AI solutions group, told Law360 Pulse. "The more people that are feeling confident in it and feeling like they have an understanding of it, the better."

In partnership with the lawyer training company AltaClaro, K&L Gates co-developed a supervisory course for law firms to help them understand AI and supervise attorneys using AI tools. Unlike other generative AI courses, which focus more on helping users develop prompting skills, this new course gives partners a basic understanding of generative AI best practices to help them fulfill new professional and ethical duties.

After completing a pilot of the new supervisory training course for about 10 partners in October, K&L Gates rolled it out across the firm in March. The firm originally planned for 75 spots in the new course for partners. In less than 48 hours after opening the course for sign-ups, those 75 spots were filled and the firm launched a wait list for partners interested in taking the course. That wait list has almost 100 partners signed up.

"We were surprised by how quickly those 75 spots filled up and then were equally surprised by how many people jumped on the wait list," Hawley said.

The supervisory course focused on higher-level leadership and management training. It included a combination of foundational AI knowledge and simulation-based learning that helps partners spot AI errors and train their teams.

Abdi Shayesteh, founder and CEO of AltaClaro, told Law360 Pulse the course is interactive and helps partners develop a personalized checklist to ensure staff members use AI safely and ethically. The checklist includes action items for considering or implementing AI, as well as potential challenges and risks.

Some of the K&L Gates partners who completed the supervisory course are now more interested in using AI and want to take the hands-on AI course given to associates and support staff, according to Hawley.

K&L Gates is not the only BigLaw firm prioritizing senior partner training.

In the first quarter of 2025, Husch Blackwell LLP completed a pilot of AltaClaro's AI supervisory course to ensure that partners overseeing younger attorneys understood the nuances of AI and met the new ethical obligations, according to Blake Rooney, the firm's chief information officer.

Thirteen partners with the firm signed up as participants in the course and up to 75% were engaged in it, according to Justin Helms, a senior AI solutions strategist with Husch Blackwell. Data indicates that partners who completed the course reported greater confidence in supervising the use of AI.

Helms told Law360 Pulse the supervisory course included a healthy balance of education and practical application of the technology.

Rooney told Law360 Pulse that Husch Blackwell is now focused on training younger attorneys and associates in AI, with potential plans to roll out the supervisory training program later. He emphasized the importance of partners understanding the fundamentals of the technology and the ethical responsibilities it entails.

Another reason partners need to be trained on AI is to ensure that communication with clients about AI is encouraging.

"We do a very large degree of effort to instill confidence in the clients that our firm wields the technology wisely, responsibly and securely," Helms said.

Forty-three percent of the lawyers at Husch Blackwell use AI at least once a week. The most popular AI tool in the firm is Microsoft Copilot.

Most of the traditional AI work at the firm is done by junior lawyers and associates, though Helms said it's often the partners who rely on AI for summarizing and drafting communications.

Ian Nelson, co-founder of Hotshot, the video-based learning platform for lawyers, echoed that younger associates tend to have more experience with AI than their more senior counterparts.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we see a flip — where juniors help train partners," Nelson told Law360 Pulse.

While Hotshot has content that firms can use to train partners on AI, it doesn't specifically have a course on supervising the use of AI, although Nelson said it will probably create one in the future.

Rooney said younger lawyers and partners must be on the same page when it comes to the use of AI tools in the firm.

"We're working really hard to make sure that both sides of the equation understand what's needed," Rooney said.

While firms may appear to be on the cutting edge by adopting AI tools, some may struggle to get their attorneys to use them. Shayesteh said that the catalyst to increasing adoption is training.

"I firmly believe that education is most often the catalyst for change," Hawley said. "If you really give people knowledge, they will feel empowered to become users and to become explorers."

Hawley added that some lawyers, including partners, might exhibit fear when it comes to using new technology.

"These types of educational programs really take the fear out of it, or at least chip away at it a little bit," Hawley said.

--Additional reporting by Sarah Martinson. Editing by Robert Rudinger.

