

CASE STUDY

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TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE:
HOW **BROWNSTEIN HYATT
FARBER SCHRECK** MADE
GENERATIVE AI PROFICIENCY
A FIRMWIDE SKILL

Brownstein



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck recognized early that generative AI would reshape how legal services are delivered. Rather than treat the technology as an optional tool or wait for client demand to force adoption, the firm took a proactive approach. Firm leadership made the strategic decision to treat AI proficiency as a necessary skill for modern legal practice and invested in building it across all roles.

Brownstein partnered with AltaClaro to deliver experiential, data-driven training that built practical skills and established a shared understanding of the technology's potential and limitations. The firm focused first on basic AI literacy, including the non-deterministic nature of large language models and the role of prompt design in shaping output, and then addressed critical legal concerns such as confidentiality, accuracy, and client consent.

More than 90 percent of partners, associates, and legal support staff completed the AltaClaro program, resulting in a culture shift powered by firmwide AI proficiency. Senior leaders participated early and visibly, reinforcing that AI proficiency was part of being "all in," a defining value of the firm's entrepreneurial culture. As attorneys gained confidence, generative AI moved from an abstract concept to a tool used intentionally, appropriately, and with professional judgment.

By turning AI fluency into a firmwide skill, Brownstein has positioned itself for a future in which legal expertise and technological competence are inseparable.

EARLY AI ADOPTION: AI CURIOSITY WITHOUT PROFICIENCY



Firms across the legal industry are investing aggressively in AI-driven capabilities, and the gap between firms experimenting with AI and those building real proficiency was widening. Falling on the wrong side of that divide would eventually affect competitiveness, efficiency, and client expectations.

Brownstein's attorneys were aware of generative AI and had begun to interact with general-use platforms like ChatGPT, CoPilot, and Gemini, as well as specialized tools like Harvey. Engagement, however, was fragmented and largely exploratory. Although Brownstein attorneys felt eager to embrace AI tools, they lacked a shared understanding of how the tools worked, how to shape their outputs, and how to apply appropriate safeguards. Without that foundation, experimentation remained conceptual rather than operational.

At the same time, public discourse was dominated by cautionary tales. Headlines focused on hallucinated case law, sanctions, and untrustworthy outputs. For lawyers trained to manage risk carefully, these examples reinforced the importance of proceeding thoughtfully. In response, Brownstein introduced a firmwide policy to address the risks associated with generative AI that established clear guardrails and protected the firm from the most immediate downsides of emerging technology.

However, focusing exclusively on what could go wrong risked obscuring the meaningful upside that generative AI could offer when used skillfully. That recognition motivated the firm to seek a more robust, balanced skills development program.

Furthermore, without intentional, structured education, attorneys would continue to avoid the technology, not because it lacked potential, but because they did not yet know how to use it well. That avoidance posed a long-term strategic risk. To close this gap, Brownstein recognized the need for a comprehensive educational experience that demystified generative AI and demonstrated how the technology could support real legal work.

The Talent and Professional Development team, led by Margaux Trammell, the Chief Talent Officer at Brownstein, was central to this effort. Brownstein had been working with AltaClaro on substantive practice area programs since 2021, so there was already a foundation of collaboration and trust. The team was also familiar with AltaClaro's reputation for scaling hands-on training for legal professionals and with the company's track record of success across top-tier law firms. When the firm decided to invest in generative AI and prompt engineering training, the Talent team drew on that existing relationship, bringing AltaClaro into the conversation with firm leadership and then partnering on the internal rollout of the program. By that point, they had also seen the strong market response to AltaClaro's GenAI training launch, which reinforced their confidence that the approach would resonate with Brownstein's attorneys.

Internal messaging could raise awareness, but it was not designed to provide the kind of applied, practice-based learning attorneys needed or to reach every practice group and level of seniority in a consistent way. By working with AltaClaro, the Talent team could offer training that was aligned with Brownstein's priorities while also being scalable and structured.

Through this partnership, AltaClaro delivered a **practice-based environment** where attorneys could learn how generative AI works, how to influence its outputs, and how to address the risks that matter in a law firm setting. AltaClaro's experiential model aligned with the firm's sober, risk-aware approach to AI and, combined with the Talent team's leadership, created a role-specific learning experience that helped move the firm from awareness to proficiency.

"Technology can be intimidating and combined with the sensational headlines, a lot of people were gravitating away from the opportunity. Being a believer in the transformative potential of the technology, it became my mission to draw people back, addressing the risks fairly and soberly, and making the tools more approachable."

Andrew Johnson, Chief Information Officer, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP



MASTERING AI THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Generative AI is not a tool attorneys can learn by osmosis. Awareness, briefings, or passive exposure do not create proficiency, particularly when the technology behaves in ways that feel counterintuitive to the legal mindset. The non-deterministic nature of generative AI, where identical prompts can produce different outputs, runs against the expectation of predictable answers. Without practice, this variability can appear unreliable, or even unprofessional.

Brownstein recognized that attorneys needed the opportunity to engage directly with the technology by testing prompts, evaluating outcomes, and understanding how small adjustments could influence tone, assertiveness, or analytical depth. This type of learning mirrors how lawyers develop legal reasoning: not through memorization, but through repeated application, critique, and refinement.

AltaClaro's "Learn. Do. Review." approach aligned with this reality. AltaClaro's courses required attorneys to work with real prompts, real tools, and real scenarios. The training explained how generative AI produces divergent responses, then demonstrated how to guide the system toward reliable, context-appropriate outputs.

Equally important, AltaClaro addressed the risks that matter in a law firm setting – hallucination, bias, confidentiality, and client consent – without resorting to fear-based narratives. Attorneys were taught how to identify these risks and what to do about them, which shifted the behavior from curious experimentation to confident, responsible use.

"Our goal in partnering with AltaClaro was simple: build basic AI literacy – primarily, understanding its non-deterministic nature and how to tweak prompts to get better results – and addressing head-on the real risks associated with the technology – hallucination, bias, confidentiality, and client consent – as well as how to address them."

Andrew Johnson, Chief Information Officer, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP



SPECIALIZED TRAINING TAILORED TO SPECIFIC ROLES

To transform generative AI from an abstract concept into a firmwide skill, Brownstein needed training that reflected the realities of legal practice and the different responsibilities attorneys hold at various stages of their careers. AltaClaro delivered this through specific courses designed around how lawyers work, supervise, and serve clients.

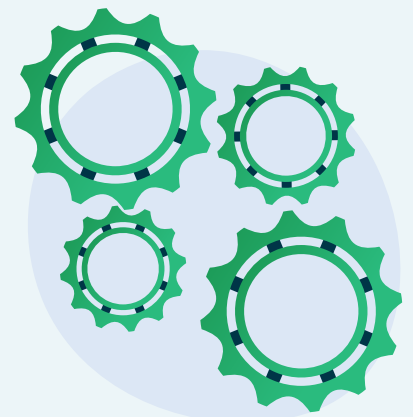
LIVE REVIEW SESSIONS

Designed for attorneys at all levels, this course focuses on the foundational mechanics of communicating with generative AI systems in the context of attorney tasks and assignments. Through a platform-neutral approach, participants learn how to structure prompts, refine outputs, and guide the technology toward responses appropriate for legal research, drafting, and analysis. This course emphasizes understanding how to shape AI behavior through intentional input turning trial-and-error curiosity into repeatable skill.



PROMPT ENGINEERING FOR ALLIED LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

As attorneys build generative AI proficiency, it is equally important for allied professionals to understand how the technology supports their day-to-day responsibilities. This course focuses on practical applications such as summarizing documents, organizing information, preparing draft materials, and improving workflow efficiency, so support staff can use generative AI to enhance both the speed and quality of the work that moves through a matter. By giving allied professionals a clear, structured way to apply prompt-engineering techniques, the course strengthens the entire legal team's ability to use generative AI responsibly and effectively.



GUIDING EFFECTIVE USE OF GENAI: A SUPERVISORY COURSE FOR LAW FIRM PARTNERS

Senior attorneys and partners engage with GenAI differently through oversight and risk management. This course addresses confidentiality, client consent, hallucination, bias mitigation, and quality assurance. Rather than training senior leaders to perform prompt engineering themselves, the curriculum equips them to evaluate AI-assisted work, supervise its use responsibly, and integrate the technology into broader workflows without compromising professional standards.



By partnering with AltaClaro, Brownstein was able to scale role-specific training across every level and practice group. Thus, Brownstein was able to move past general awareness and into something far more durable: a system in which every attorney, regardless of seniority, understood how AI should be used, when it added value, and what safeguards were required. The engagement has gained enough momentum that many participants who complete one course then choose to take the other, demonstrating a firmwide interest in deepening their proficiency.

We look at AltaClaro as a partner and a supplement, kind of a complement to our internal messaging, communication, and resources here. But we ultimately cannot scale and speak to all the different niche audiences that are out there. We just do not have the resources for that, and that is where AltaClaro can be so helpful.

Andrew Johnson, Chief Information Officer, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP





AI PROFICIENCY AS A CULTURAL NORM

Brownstein did not merely make generative AI training available; it made participation inevitable.

The shift began at the top. Some of the firm's earliest enrollees included the Managing Partner, the General Counsel, and several department chairs. This early participation mattered. It demonstrated that the initiative was serious, that the skills being taught were relevant, and that AI literacy was aligned with how the firm saw itself.

Attorneys did not have to guess whether the technology would affect their work; they saw influential figures investing time to understand it, discuss it, and apply it. The message was clear: the firm was all in with developing AI proficiency.

As the program progressed, Brownstein introduced a thoughtful sequence of incentives. Access to some of the firm's most compelling AI tools was gated behind course completion, ensuring that usage was responsible, not experimental. The firm also made a point of publicly recognizing those who invested in the training, reinforcing upskilling as a marker of professional initiative.

Attorneys responded accordingly. No one wanted to be left behind, and no one wanted to be the exception to a standard that now felt shared rather than imposed.

The results speak to the strength of this cultural alignment. More than 90 percent of the firm – across partners, associates, and legal support staff – completed the AltaClaro courses. This outcome reflects a change in cultural identity. Participation was the expression of a firmwide commitment to remaining competitive, relevant, and capable in an evolving legal marketplace.

AltaClaro's experiential model accelerated that transformation. Because the training provided immediate, hands-on skills rather than abstract concepts, attorneys left the courses able to use the technology in their work. Fear was replaced by comprehension. Momentum was built not because people were told to use AI, but because they now knew how.

"We were delighted that some of the early enrollees described the experience as time well spent. If you've worked in a legal setting for some time, you know there is hardly a better compliment."

Andrew Johnson, Chief Information Officer, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP



THE ROI OF AI PROFICIENCY



Brownstein’s investment in generative AI proficiency produced changes that extended far beyond course completion metrics. Training altered behavior. Attorneys who once viewed AI as unpredictable or peripheral began using it with intention, confidence, and measurable impact. The technology moved from the margins of curiosity into the center of daily legal work.

One of the clearest indicators of this shift was the correlation between course participation and responsible tool usage. Attorneys who completed AltaClaro’s training returned to the firm’s AI platforms more often, applied them more effectively, and engaged with them in ways that demonstrated understanding rather than experimentation.

Attorneys began applying generative AI to accelerate aspects of legal work that had previously been time-consuming, frustrating, or avoided altogether because they were not efficient uses of attorney time. With a foundational grasp of prompt engineering and a grounded understanding of how to evaluate and refine outputs, attorneys could now use AI to support research, drafting, and analysis without compromising judgment or professional responsibility.

Importantly, this adoption did not diminish attorney discretion; it enhanced it. Attorneys remained firmly in control of the work, deciding when AI added value and when it did not. The training enabled discernment. Not every task requires generative AI, but those that do can now be executed faster, more thoughtfully, and with greater precision.

The cumulative effect is a firm that operates differently. AI proficiency now complements traditional legal expertise, allowing attorneys to produce quality work more efficiently and to deliver value that clients can see and measure. In a profession where time, accuracy, and strategic thinking are paramount, the firms that benefit most from generative AI will be those that know how to use it well – and Brownstein is now one of them.

“People took the course, became more confident and less fearful, and went to use our technology more often and more effectively.”

Andrew Johnson, Chief Information Officer, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP



AI PROFICIENCY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Brownstein's commitment to generative AI proficiency was a strategic calculation. The firm recognized that AI would not eliminate the importance of relationships, judgment, or legal expertise, but it would reshape the market's definition of value. Clients may continue to choose counsel they trust, but they will increasingly expect those attorneys to deliver insight faster, with greater precision, and at a cost that reflects modern efficiencies.

In that environment, proficiency with generative AI becomes essential to professional expectations. Firms that can evaluate, supervise, and strategically deploy AI-assisted work will be able to handle matters more efficiently and respond to client needs without sacrificing quality. Firms that cannot proficiently use AI tools will appear slower, less adaptive, and increasingly out of step with industry expectations.

Because attorneys at Brownstein understand how generative AI works, when it adds value, and how to mitigate its risks, the technology enhances their practice instead of interrupting it. The result is a workforce that can incorporate GenAI thoughtfully, using it to accelerate early-stage tasks, test ideas, and refine drafts before applying legal judgment.

This capability does not replace the skills that define great lawyers. It strengthens them. Brownstein's attorneys can ask better questions, iterate more quickly, and devote their time to higher-value work.

In a competitive legal marketplace, where differentiation is often difficult to articulate, Brownstein can point to something tangible: generative AI proficiency as a firmwide skill.

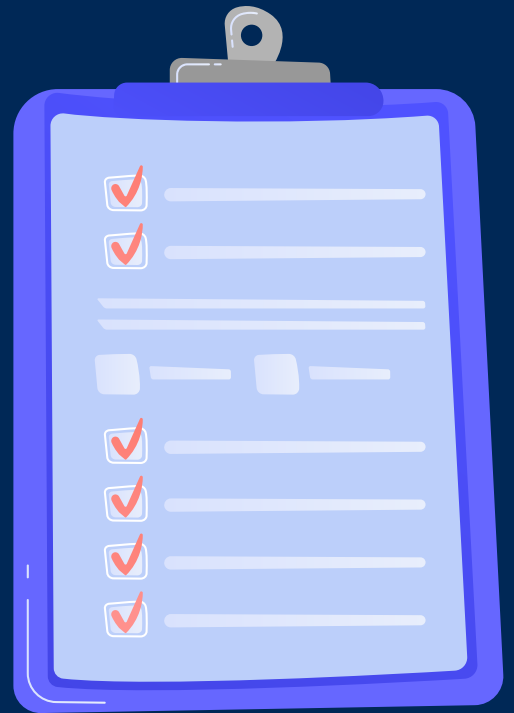
"Clients will seek increasing value through efficiency, and being proficient with AI will be essential. You need to do it all – understand your client, ask the right questions, and use the technology effectively. Lawyers who master all these skills will create more value and capture more business because of it."

Andrew Johnson, Chief Information Officer, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP



LESSONS LEARNED

Brownstein's experience shows that firmwide AI proficiency grows out of capability, not access. The firm succeeded because it treated generative AI as a professional skill worth developing, not a tool to distribute. Other organizations can do the same if they are intentional about how they introduce, support, and normalize the learning process.



SEVERAL THEMES FROM BROWNSTEIN'S JOURNEY STAND OUT:

FOCUS ON SKILLS RATHER THAN TOOLS

Providing attorneys with AI platforms is ineffective without instruction that shows how those tools enhance legal work. Once attorneys understood how to influence outputs and manage risks, usage followed naturally.



TAILOR TRAINING TO SPECIFIC ROLES

Partners and junior attorneys do not need the same curriculum. Role-specific training ensured that every participant saw how generative AI applied to work they actually perform.



PRESENT A CREDIBLE AND BALANCED MESSAGE

Firms should acknowledge both the opportunities and the risks associated with generative AI. Overemphasizing the potential for mistakes discourages engagement, and presenting AI as effortless or inevitable undermines trust. A balanced narrative creates the conditions for thoughtful adoption.



SEQUENCE INCENTIVES TO MATCH READINESS

Participation accelerated once access to advanced tools required completion of training and once upskilling was publicly recognized. Incentives worked because they arrived after early leadership participation had already established legitimacy.



These lessons reflect a larger truth: firms that build structured pathways for attorneys to learn, practice, and apply GenAI skills will adapt more quickly and effectively than those that rely on awareness alone.

A NEW BASELINE FOR LEGAL PRACTICE

Brownstein's journey reflects a broader shift in the legal profession. Generative AI is becoming part of how modern legal work is done. By treating AI proficiency as a firmwide skill, Brownstein created an environment where attorneys understand the technology, apply it thoughtfully, and incorporate it into their practice with professional judgment.

That foundation has enabled the firm's use of AI to evolve. Early engagement focused on low-stakes, general-use tools that allowed attorneys to explore the technology's capabilities and limitations. As proficiency deepened, attorneys became better equipped to evaluate more advanced, legal-specific tools designed to support substantive work. What began as exploration matured into informed adoption, with attorneys able to distinguish where AI adds value, how it should be supervised, and what safeguards are required.

Brownstein's experience shows that firms do not gain a competitive edge by having access to AI. Instead, they gain it by knowing how to use AI well. That distinction is becoming the line that separates firms prepared for the future from those responding to it.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT ALTACLARO

Brownstein created firmwide AI proficiency by giving attorneys the skills to use generative AI responsibly and effectively. If your firm is ready to move beyond discussion and build real capability, AltaClaro's courses provide a proven path.

Schedule a demo to see how AltaClaro works and what it could look like at your firm.

SCHEDULE A DEMO

For more information, please contact info@altaclaro.com