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Conference Report Weblaw Forum LegalTech 2017

On 29 June 2017, the Weblaw Forum LegalTech 2017 took place in the World Trade Center (WTC) in Zurich, dealing with the topic «LegalTech – Digitization of the Legal Market». The event gave an overview on the current situation in the LegalTech landscape and enlarged upon numerous aspects such as the digital law firm, online marketing, document automation as well as knowledge management. The paper constitutes a report on the event and, in particular, summarizes the presentations of the (inter)national experts. (ah)

Inhaltsübersicht

1.   Introduction

1.1.   The Topic «LegalTech»

[Rz 1] In the past, some Weblaw Forums have taken place on different topics, but never with the title «LegalTech». Choosing this topic means keeping pace with the times. LegalTech has been the «buzzword» of the legal industry for several years in the USA, and, as of late, also in Europe. Over the last year, the number of media reports on the topic has also increased in Switzerland. The discussion of numerous aspects of digitization in the legal profession by means of a conference has therefor been very well received by Swiss lawyers.

1.2.   Conference Venue and Premises

[Rz 2] With the World Trade Center (WTC) in Zurich, which, by the way, is in direct proximity of the studio Zürich Leutschenbach of the Swiss Radio and Television (SRF), a conference venue had been chosen, that was easily and quickly accessible for many conference participants.

[Rz 3] Upon arrival in the building's foyer, Weblaw staff was ready to facilitate finding the premises. Having arrived in the conference room, every participant received a conference binder with the most important information on the conference as well as a conference badge. The premises had been equipped pleasantly and offered catering facilities for the breaks. Next to the seating,

there was a row of tables with sponsors and partners whom the participants could talk with in the breaks and, sometimes, even try out their products (see picture below).[1]

Figure 1 – Sponsors and partners of the Weblaw Forum LegalTech 2017.

2.   Welcome Address

2.1.   Simone Kaiser[2]

[Rz 4] The around 100 conference participants were greeted by Simone Kaiser. After introducing the speakers, the first of several appeals was made, to exchange information about the conference on Social Media, in particular on Twitter, by using the Hashtags #LegalTech and #WeblawForum. Simone Kaiser especially welcomed those participants streaming the event via Livestream, and thus partaking purely digital, not on-site.

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[1]   For an overview of sponsors and partners see the area «Sponsors & Partners» at
http://www.weblaw.ch/competence/academy/veranstaltung/legaltech.html (all online sources have been last accessed on 1 September 2017).

[2]   Lawyer, EMBA, publishing director of Editions Weblaw (Weblaw AG); for further information see
http://www.weblaw.ch/competence/people/k/kaiser_simone.html.

2.2.   Franz Kummer[3]

[Rz 5] Being the founder of an almost 20-year-old LegalTech business, Weblaw AG, Franz Kummer took over with an introduction into the topic «LegalTech – Digitization of the Legal Market». Thereby, he demonstrated the current trends in the LegalTech Community, two of which were paramount: for one thing, the continuous improvement of artificial intelligences and, on the other hand, the boom of so-called chat bots that, following the example of the British bot «Do Not Pay» (overturning of parking fines)[4], now also advance into other fields of law, i.e. law concerning foreigners[5].

[Rz 6] At the end of his introduction, Franz Kummer indicated Weblaw's new webinar series in the field of LegalTech.[6] These webinars are called Brown Bags and take place every second Wednesday afternoon (starting at 13.00). Participating is free of charge for everyone. At the time of writing this report, some Brown Bags have already been performed successfully.

3.   Presentations

[Rz 7] Below, the professional expert's presentations are being discussed in the chronological order they have been given. Questions from the audience (see picture below) were answered before each break.

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[3]   Lic. iur., founder and co-owner of Weblaw AG; for further information see http://www.weblaw.ch/competence/people/k/kummer_franz.html.

[4]   http://www.donotpay.co.uk.

[5]   https://visabot.co/.

[6]   http://www.weblaw.ch/competence/academy/brownbag/brownbaglegaltech.html; https://legaltech.weblaw.ch/events.html.

Figure 2 – Glance into the audience at the Weblaw Forum LegalTech 2017.

3.1.   «LegalTech – Evolution oder Revolution?» by Niko Härting[7]

[Rz 8] In his speech, Niko Härting tried to answer the question whether LegalTech is a disruptive process, a revolution or a continuous development. To discuss this question, he showed the last decades' technical development within the legal profession that he has experienced himself. Beginning with rudimental methods and typewriters, he eventually explained the current state of the art regarding IT in his law firm which has been heavily digitized, meaning it uses document automation and knowledge management systems extensively.

[Rz 9] Niko Härting lastly concluded that LegalTech, in fact, is more of an evolution than a revolution.

3.2.   «LegalTech – Geht mich das als Feld-Wald-Wiesen-Anwalt etwas an?» by Gian Sandro Genna[8]

[Rz 10] Gian Sandro Genna called upon the small law firms and individual lawyers to deal with the topic LegalTech likewise. He also reported about his digitized everyday life as a lawyer, similar to what Niko Härting referred to before. Gian Sandro Genna then changed the subject to making some forecasts for the future. He considers that a stronger establishment of networks as well

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[7]   Lawyer, honorary professor at the Berlin School for Economics and Law (HWR), Founder of HÄRTING Rechtsanwälte; for further information see https://www.haerting.de/team/niko-harting.

[8]   Dr. iur., owner of JusOnline AG; for further information see https://www.jusonline.ch/de/Team/Details?eid=400.

as larger entities of legal actors will be observed in future, while at the same time, nationwide players («brands») will establish themselves.

[Rz 11] If lawyers cannot offer highly specialised services, they will only be able to face the legal industry's digitization with innovative business models. Gian Sandro Genna demonstrated a few examples, mostly from foreign legal service providers. In particular, the offering of fixed bundles and the purely digital approach for legal advice in bulk processes, e.g. in aviation passengers rights (reimbursements for delays and cancellations of flights)[9] were highlighted.

3.3. «LegalTech bei grösseren Kanzleien und bei Unternehmen» by Raffael Büchi[10] and Salvatore Iacangelo[11]

[Rz 12] The co-speakers could, with regard to their presentations, report from personal experience respectively. Salvatore Iacangelo regarding companies and Raffael Büchi concerning major law firms.

[Rz 13] The presentation with regard to LegalTech in companies was started by Salvatore Iacangelo with an illumination of the challenges for General Counsels. The cost and regulation pressure as well as growing interdisciplinary nature are paramount. While companies have sourced all legal services externally in the past, they now operate with insourcing and multi-sourcing. In the future, the Legal Operations of a company will only control quality and output by means of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Key Risk Indicators (KRI).

[Rz 14] Raffael Büchi, in his part of the presentation regarding LegalTech in major law firms, first talked about the drivers for the legal market's digitization and showed the IT priorities in big law firms. Then he presented an overview of specific LegalTech solutions (e.g. Riverview Law[12]), that are already in use or could be in use in major law firms.

3.4. «Die Organisation des Wissens – Vorteile und Grenzen der Digitalisierung» by Philipp Roth[13]

[Rz 15] In his speech, Philipp Roth explained the basics of knowledge first by showing the differences between implicit knowledge (practical knowledge, being subjective and analogue), and explicit knowledge (intellectual knowledge, being objective and digital).

[Rz 16] He then dealt with the tasks and challenges of Knowledge Managers. They work with the interaction of man and technology to make sure that the compiled knowledge stays within a company and can be passed on. The explicit knowledge should hereby be edited with automatized knowledge processes (intelligent search engines and intelligent document management), while the digitization in regard to the implicit knowledge can be supportive for thinking and development processes (see graphic below). When dealing with implicit practical knowledge, the individual gets put into the spotlight by being an essential carrier of knowledge and experience.

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[9]   Instead of many: https://www.flightright.com/.

[11]   Lic. iur., lawyer, MBA INSEAD, Director, Digital Solutions & Delivery, Credit Suisse, Zürich.

[12]   http://www.riverviewlaw.com/.

[13]   MLaw, owner taxlawfactory GmbH; for further information see https://www.taxlawblog.ch/blogger/philipp-roth/.
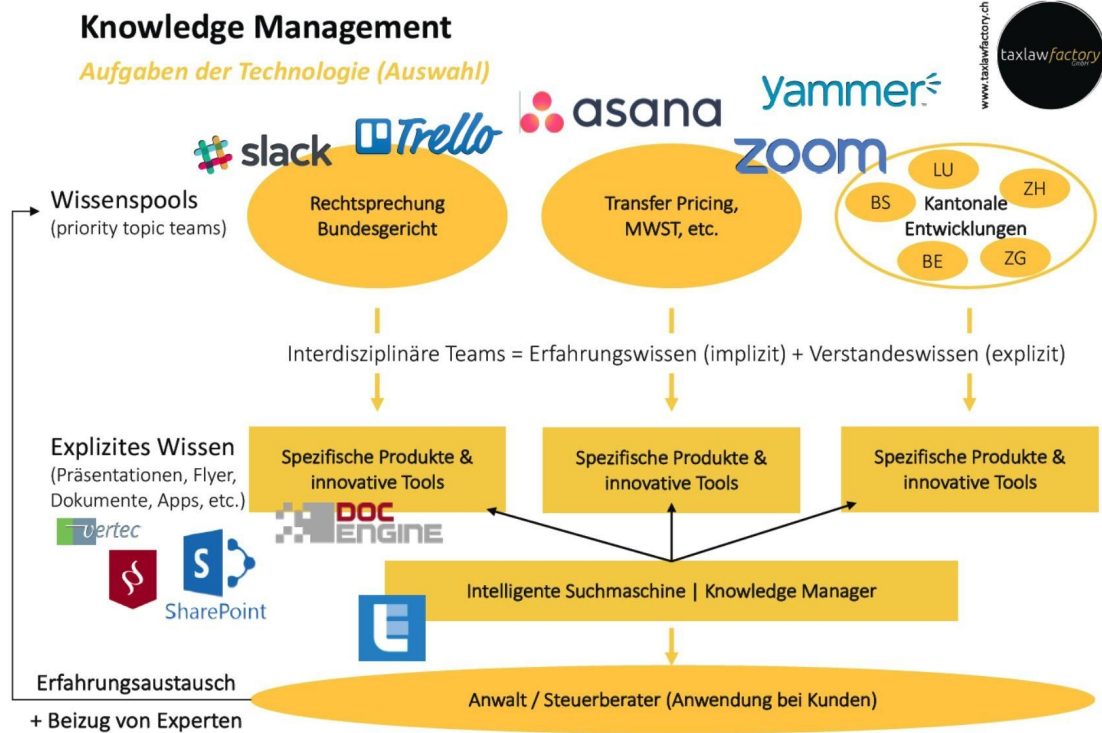
Figure 3 – Slide 15, PowerPoint Presentation, «Die Organisation des Wissens – Vorteile und Grenzen der Digitalisierung» by Philipp Roth, Weblaw Forum LegalTech 2017.

3.5. «Digitalisierung anwaltlicher Dienstleistungen – wie Sie mit innovativen Business Modellen neue Klienten gewinnen» by Petra Arends-Paltzer[14]

[Rz 17] After the lunch break, Petra Arends-Paltzer dealt with new business models in the legal industry presenting themselves in consequence of digitization. Starting with an overview of the rapid rise of LegalTech businesses, she then demonstrated how the impact of so-called Alternative Legal Service Providers (ALSP) will increase in future and affect the market of traditional law firms. Further on, Petra Arends-Paltzer invited lawyers to deal with innovative business models. Amongst other things, she highlighted «productizing», the offering of product packages (at fixed prices) as well as digital marketing. The latter will gain more and more importance in our digital world and the spreading of social media, accompanied by the offering of some free of charge products and services.

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14   Dr. iur., founder of lawyer-marketing.net and co-founder of swisslegal.tech; for further information see
      http://www.weblaw.ch/fr/competence/people/a/Arends-Paltzer-Petra.html.

4.   Workshops and Panel

[Rz 18] Following the presentations, two different workshops were held. Wolfgang Hugentobler addressed document automation, whilst Philipp Roth showed how lawyers can optimize their web and social media presences. The workshops took place simultaneously.

[Rz 19] Afterwards, there was a panel discussion focussing on «LegalTech from an in-house counsel point of view».

4.1.   «LegalTech aus Sicht der Dokumente» by Wolfgang Hugentobler[15]

[Rz 20] Wolfgang Hugentobler began his workshop by analysing the requirements for digital legal documents. Important keywords mentioned where transparency, collaboration and consistency. Wolfgang Hugentobler then stressed that all current document software works based on templates, and that there were no connections between those templates. This contrasts sharply with DocGenie for LegalTech, a LegalTech solution founded by Wolfgang Hugentobler's business iDPARC AG[16] (see graphic below). In a live demonstration, he then showed a beta version of the cloud software based on a modular system in which existing templates can be imported.
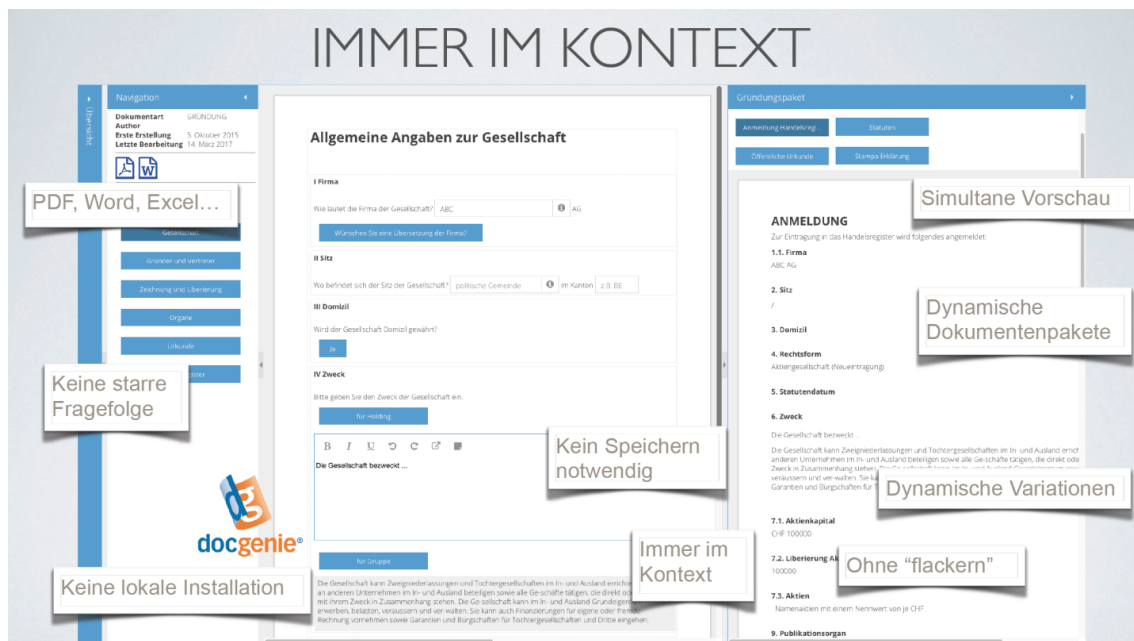

Figure 4 – Slide 13, PowerPoint Presentation, «LegalTech aus Sicht der Dokumente» by Wolfgang Hugentobler, Weblaw Forum LegalTech 2017.

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15   Ing. HTL/NDS, co-founder and CEO iDPARC AG.

16   https://www.idparc.ch.

4.2.   «Wie optimiere ich meine Web- und Social-Media-Präsenz» by Philipp Roth[17]

[Rz 21] Philipp Roth, in his workshop, showed the rather young audience how to build a web and social media presence, or rather, how to improve their existing presences with simple – partially free – resources and without technical background knowledge.

[Rz 22] He started his demonstration with building a website. This site was created live and in real time, by means of the online modular system Jimdo[18]. Subsequently, a blog was integrated into the website, the articles of which could be spread via a newsletter system (MailChimp[19] was used in his example) and via social media to reach clients and friends. The articles took over a (content) marketing function.

[Rz 23] In the last part of the workshop, Philipp Roth showed the participants how to distinguish themselves best in social media (a very useful checklist can be found in his PowerPoint presentation). He additionally discussed profile management with easy and practical tips like, amongst others, the recommendation to like posts twice a week. Further, he pointed to useful analysis tools that are fully developed and accessible for the users in most social media.

4.3.   Panel

[Rz 24] After the workshops and the afternoon coffee break, Nicole Platel[20], Ueli Studer[21], Christian Meisser[22] and Salvatore Iacangelo[23] discussed under the leadership of Raffael Büchi[24], how LegalTech will affect businesses and how appropriate solutions can be applied.

5.   End of the Event

[Rz 25] The event was formally closed by Simone Kaiser[25], but not before unveiling the new LegalTech website by Weblaw (legaltech.weblaw.ch). This website serves as a central platform for parties interested in LegalTech in Switzerland. It offers a blog, an overview of LegalTech events and LegalTech actors as well as the possibility to receive legal (open) data from Weblaw for LegalTech projects.

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[17]   See note 13.

[18]   https://jimdo.com.

[19]   https://mailchimp.com/.

[20]   Lic. iur., Digital Business Development Observator and responsible for the digital legal consultation platform Guider.

[21]   Lic. iur., Head Corporate Legal UBS Group.

[22]   Lawyer, lic. iur., MBA (HKU / CBS), LEXR AG / co-founder and Solera Holdings, Inc. / EMEA Legal Counsel, Zürich.

[23]   See note 11.

[24]   See note 10.

[25]   See note 2.

6.   Conclusion

[Rz 26] Altogether, the Weblaw Forum LegalTech 2017 «Digitization of the Legal Market» was an utmost educational and interesting conference that had its finger firmly on the pulse of time. The issues discussed in the presentations were diversified and matched the target audience. A real benefit was brought especially by the workshops, even though a little more interaction between the respective workshop instructors and the participants would have been preferable. I do, in any case, recommend visiting a future Weblaw Forum.

[Rz 27] Due to the grand success of this years' event and the persistent topicality of LegalTech, another Weblaw Forum with this topic will take place on Thursday, 3 May 2018.[26]

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[26]   As soon as durther information is available, you will find it at https://legaltech.weblaw.ch/events.html.