

# LEGAL FORUM



## AI AND VIETNAMESE LEGAL PRACTICE: A PRACTITIONER'S PERSPECTIVE

**E**very lawyer has probably tried it by now. Summarizing a long document. Generating a first draft. Turning around a quick translation. Checking an issue before a client call. AI tools are fast,

always available, and their capabilities are improving quickly. But capability is not the same as reliability. In Vietnamese legal practice, the question of how much we can actually rely on AI deserves a closer look.



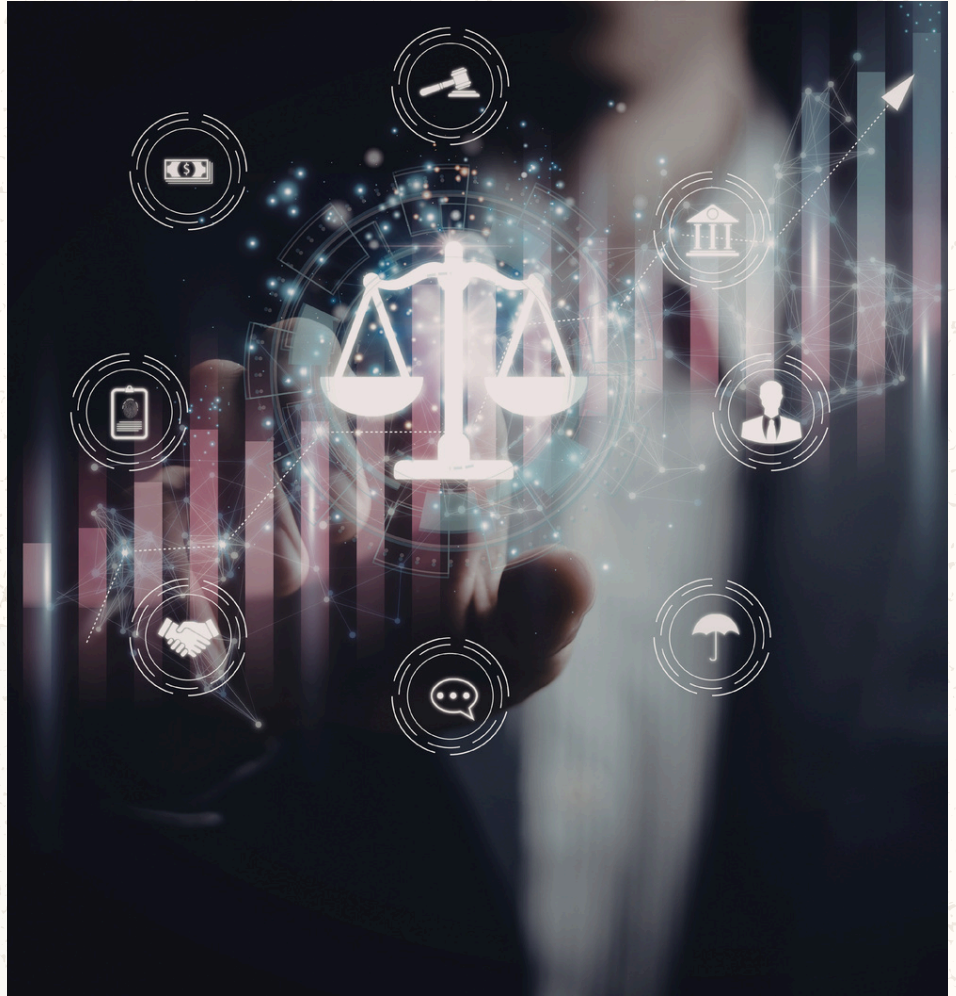
An honest observation is that AI works well in some areas and much less well in others. Knowing where the difference lies matters.

Translation between English and Vietnamese is one area where AI earns its place. For standard commercial documents and routine correspondence, the output can be a decent first draft. Vietnamese legal terms and concepts, however, do not always have clean English equivalents (or vice versa), and AI sometimes makes confident substitutions that turn out to be wrong. In a contract or legal opinion, that is not a minor inconvenience.



There is another benefit that does not get discussed enough, particularly for non-native English-speaking lawyers. AI can proofread and improve the clarity and polish of written English in emails, legal opinions, or advice. The important thing, however, is that AI should assist with wording only. The substance, analysis, and legal judgment must come from the lawyer.

The picture changes when the task requires actual Vietnamese legal knowledge. On research, Vietnamese legal databases are fragmented, frequently amended, and primarily in Vietnamese, and search results are often incomplete, outdated, or most dangerously, confidently wrong. The errors are not always obvious, and relying on the output without careful is a risk for any lawyer, regardless of experience. On legal advice, the challenge goes further still. Even when AI gets the law right, translating that into sound practical advice for a specific situation in Vietnam is where it tends to fall short.



Good advice here requires judgment built from experience on the ground, and that is something AI can assist with but not reliably replace. And that brings us to perhaps the hardest limitation of all.

Vietnam's regulatory environment often involves gaps between what the law says on paper and how authorities apply it in practice. Unwritten practices and administrative discretion also play a role, and these are things no text can fully capture. No AI tool has a feel for any of this. This is where experienced practitioners add real value.

One risk that deserves serious attention is client confidentiality. Uploading client documents to AI platforms may risk, if not outright violate, a lawyer's professional obligations.

Ultimately, AI is simply a tool. Its value depends on how well lawyers understand its strengths and limits. The lawyers who benefit most will be the ones who understand it best: what to trust it with, what to keep to themselves, and when to put it down entirely.

*by Ngo Phuong Thao | Senior Associate*