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How Stradley Ronon Is Training Firm Attys On Generative AI

By **Emily Johnson**

Law360 (August 7, 2025, 4:58 PM EDT) -- As the legal industry continues to grapple with the use of artificial intelligence, Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young LLP has launched a 12-week program to train its lawyers and business professionals on integrating a law-focused generative AI assistant into their work in an ethical and effective manner.

Stradley Ronon announced Wednesday that it has teamed with global legal intelligence provider vLex LLC to create Stradley Labs Legal Gen AI Drivers Certification, a training that includes hands-on practice, "hackathons" and gamification, and focuses on attorney ethical obligations and ethics and practical uses for generative tools such as OpenAI Inc.'s ChatGPT and vLex's Vincent AI.

During the hackathon, trainees including attorneys and business professionals are challenged to think through how generative tools can help in various scenarios.

For example, participants confront problems such as ensuring clients understand important legal information involving loan agreements, privacy policies and partnership agreements, according to the firm. They are tasked with examining a common legal document and then asking tools to analyze their document for improved clarity and engagement.

Trainee teams present their findings and are scored on metrics such as being able to pitch an interesting use case for generative text that will add value for the client, Stradley Ronon said.

Gina Leahey, a Philadelphia-based associate who was in the first 30-member cohort to take the training, told Law360 Pulse that she and her team created a slide deck and a client pitch on how to use the tools on a client matter.

"That was an amazing role-play experience, to actually go through

Stradley Ronon Training
The law firm is using "hackathons" and other activities as part of its training program on generative tools. In these examples of problems, attorneys and business professionals were tasked with using the tools to address the problem in "a secure, ethical and client-ready way."

Excerpt from the hackathon instructions:
The "Too Long, Didn't Read" Problem: Redesign how legal content is delivered to clients using Gen AI. Choose a common legal document (e.g., a loan agreement), break it down into parts (risk provisions, boilerplate, key commercial terms, etc.), and use Gen AI to reimagine one or more of those parts for better client clarity and engagement.
The "Consent Crunch" Problem: Design a Gen AI–augmented review process that respects client consent boundaries, leverages private tools like Vincent and shows a clear return on investment. Choose a specific contract type (e.g., vendor NDA, loan doc, MSA) and redesign how it could be reviewed, summarized or analyzed using Gen AI without crossing ethical lines.
The "Invisible Work" Problem: Use Gen AI to make the invisible work of lawyering visible, efficient and value-generating. Pick a task like preparing a first draft of a loan agreement section, analyzing a clause library or reworking a client playbook — and show how Gen AI can surface insights, accelerate work and better communicate your process to clients.

Source: Stradley Labs

the full pitch, to get questions from our client and to really be able to speak confidently in a safe environment," Leahey said.

Leahey said she and her team felt empowered after the training.

"We felt so happy with how we performed, because we felt like, 'Oh, my gosh, we can really talk about these issues,'" Leahey said. "'We can talk about informed consent. We can talk about data privacy. We can talk about the boundaries between what is an AI going to do and what is a human going to do [and] how is the AI going to be supervised. We can hit on all of these important points for our clients."

Leahey, who focuses on transactional real estate and finance, said she also found the training valuable because she walked away with "tangible things we could bring with us to a client pitch or to our other colleagues in the business department to talk to people about these tools and how we can use them."

She said that before this training, she didn't use ChatGPT or other generative tools in her practice. She had heard "the horror stories" of attorneys filing documents riddled with false or made-up citations, in addition to not knowing how the tools fit into her ethical obligations and firm policies.

"We started by reviewing our ethical obligations and making sure we all understood where the boundaries are, when we need to get client consent," Leahey said. "And it made it so that from that moment forward, we knew we could exist in a space that we feel safe in, and we could start to play around with this new tool, vLex."

The program qualifies participants for 13 continuing legal education credits, and associates can also qualify for billable-hour credit for learning projects, the firm said.

Sarah Hirebet, the firm's director of knowledge management, said the program began over a year ago amid a push at the firm to talk to its lawyers and vendors about possible generative tools to adopt. The firm paired up with Anusia Gillespie, enterprise lead at vLex, to design the training program, Hirebet said.

Hirebet said that the firm is planning a second cohort to begin the training in September and a new-associate cohort later in the fall. Hirebet said the firm is reviewing the first cohort's experience to see if any changes to the program should be made.

Michael O'Mara, the firm's managing partner, who was also part of the first cohort, said that having a dedicated one-hour meeting every week in addition to working independently helped him adopt the technology into his routine.

"The cadence I thought was really helpful just to keep it top of mind," O'Mara said.

O'Mara said he's been through other training sessions that weren't as effective because "if you wait too long to get back to it, you kind of forget."

O'Mara said that as the training went on, participants used the tools more and more.

"I'm sure throughout the course of the program usage went up across the board, because people are using it more, you're sticking with it," O'Mara said. "It just becomes top of mind so that when you're thinking through how am I servicing clients, what are the different ways I can use the technology, it's immediately top of mind because it's not a one-and-done type training. It's a dedicated period of time across a number of weeks and I thought the duration of it and the cadence of it worked out really well."

O'Mara said his goal is not to have one cohort. "Our goal is to have the firm top to bottom get there, and this is just the first step in that journey," O'Mara said.

Hirebet said that as the program held the hackathon near the end of the training, causing "the buzz to get out into the firm," "All of a sudden my phone is ringing off the hook and partners are going 'Wait, what's this?' and 'Tell me about this and how do I get gen AI integrated with my clients?'"

"If I had come to everyone going let's start a giant training program and it will take a lot of your time, I don't think it would have had the impact that the natural buzz [had] — because people were running into Mike in the hall and hearing about it and they were running into our associates in the hall," she said.

That buzz led to Hirebet being invited to a client pitch after the client had asked to talk to the firm about generative tools. At the pitch, she said the client finds out "their favorite associate is a Stradley Labs graduate." She said they were able to talk to the client through what he learned and how he could work with the client.

"The pitch was a total success," Hirebet said. "The client went from saying we're very nervous [and] we don't know how to do this to going 'Oh, you've got our guy in on it? This is fantastic. He's got this training. Looks impressive. We'll work with you. We want to partner with you. Let's pick a case and together we're going to figure out how to move gen AI into our matters."

Hirebet said when she first approached O'Mara about the idea, they discussed rolling out the training firmwide.

"I said this is ambitious," Hirebet said. "This is big. We want to take a moment to fine-tune and to work at a scale that lets us really connect as a group, and now we are sitting back, having finished it, and we're gathering all of the feedback, and we're meeting with the practice group leaders and we're working this continuous process improvement to say how can we tweak it so that cohort two is even better."

Anusia Gillespie, enterprise lead at vLex, told Law360 Pulse that she has seen law firms consider how to adopt generative tools firmwide, considering it "a transformation, not just a training."

"We've had a lot of people within the law firms skilled at technical training and professional development, but now a lot of collaboration is needed across departments, and with partners like vLex to create a more robust program as lawyers navigate this unprecedented change and start to change the way they work," Gillespie said. "It's not just 'here's a technical training.' It's 'here's how this tool works and here's how we're all going to evolve together,' and that's the different approach I saw here at Stradley, that we were uniquely positioned to partner on."

Gillespie said that the starting group of 30 was a good size to train and learn from the participants.

"This partnership allowed us to ground everything in the lived experience of practicing lawyers who are navigating this unprecedented change, and so because that was a manageable size we were then able to say, 'Oh, this is working really well over here [where] this lawyer experimented. Let's formalize that and bring it into the program so that everyone can learn from that piece too, that maybe we hadn't thought of but is really important."

VLex is not affiliated with LexisNexis, which owns Law360.

Legal tech giant Clio announced its $1 billion acquisition of vLex in June. Clio, a Vancouver-headquartered company, said that the transaction would expand its global footprint while also introducing new AI capabilities to its legal services offerings.

The $1 billion will be paid in a combination of cash and stock. Pending regulatory approvals, the transaction is expected to close later this year, according to the announcement.

–Additional reporting by Matt Perez. Editing by Amy French.
