COMPETITIVE LEGAL PROFESSIONALS' USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN LEGAL PRACTICE AND LEGAL RESEARCH

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Summary

Advances in the information and communication technologies have led to the availability of a range of primary and secondary legal research publications online via the Internet, rather than on other storing devices such as compact discs or publications in the print media. Not only has information and communication technology (ICT) impacted on the availability of legal information resources, but its effects are also noticed in various law-related areas such as legal practice management, legal education, corporate governance and the law *per se*. The question addressed by this article is whether the application of ICTs has an effect on the practice of law, and specifically whether information and knowledge management affects the processes of legal research in modern legal practice. Various issues are considered in this regard, including what the concept of knowledge management (KM) entails in a law firm and what the current KM trends in South African law firms are. The article investigates global trends in the application of ICTs for legal research purposes, what the specific applications of KM in support of legal research may be, how information technology applications and KM systems and strategies can support the legal research process, and what the benefits of KM are to legal research. It finally discusses the impact technology has had on the skills required of competitive legal professionals.

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