



hethertons
SOLICITORS

USING AI IN THE WORKPLACE:

CAN WE REALLY TAKE THE “HUMAN” OUT OF HUMAN RESOURCES?

By Andrew Macaulay

The concept of man versus machine has been a regular staple of science fiction and philosophical debate and the exponential growth of artificial intelligence (AI) in recent years has only furthered this. Whilst androids may not dream of electric sheep, AI can now automate repetitive tasks in the workplace including scheduling shifts and data entry work. This can improve employee productivity by reducing workload and freeing up staff time for other tasks. The most recent example of this is the UK Government's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology estimation that 62% of routine tasks undertaken by junior civil servants could be undertaken by AI, whilst a further Government study into AI activity in the UK shows one in six UK organisations already use at least one form of AI technology.

AI usage is not limited to routine tasks, and there are now tools that can monitor employee productivity and performance (such as keystroke monitoring), screen CVs, draft contracts and even select candidates for promotions.

Whilst the idea of streamlining business efficiency with AI may sound promising, a disadvantage to relying on AI is that it removes the personal nature of working relationships.

Software lacks common sense and is unable to make nuanced decisions that human managers can. Whilst technology advances, there is still a lack of transparency in how AI works, and a risk that relying on software alone to make decisions about people management could give rise to biases hidden in the software leading to discriminatory outcomes.

For example, AI used for recruitment relies on algorithms to prioritise applicants who are a “good fit” for the company. The algorithm's data source will likely be previous candidate data. If a company has a lack of diversity then the algorithm for identifying “good fit candidates” will only replicate that. This was seen in 2018 when a recruitment algorithm for Amazon had to be abandoned after it routinely favoured male candidates over female candidates due to the human biases utilised by the algorithm.

In short, AI tools are only as good as the information provided to them and if you would like to use AI to assist your business you should be aware of the risks as well as the benefits that come with its usage.

An ideal starting point is determining what tasks your business could use AI for. If you do intend to use generative AI (GenAI) for business purposes, a suitable policy should be in force to cover workplace usage of GenAI applications like ChatGPT as well as guidelines for use, and the employer's right to monitor.



For further information, please contact
Andrew Macaulay on 01904 528395
or at ama@hethertons.co.uk
hethertons.co.uk