

FLIP Info Session & Cocktail –

Welcome by Justice Lee Seiu Kin on 25 July 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. A very good afternoon to you. It gives me great pleasure to be here at the first “Future Law Innovation Programme” or “FLIP” event, hosted in the innovative environment of Collision 8.

2. Two weeks ago, on 11 July, at his address at the SAL Appreciation Dinner, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon announced the FLIP initiative. He reiterated that technological advancements would significantly disrupt existing legal practice models, and that our lawyers must respond strategically and effectively.

3. Technology is a major disruptor; however, it is only part of the change the legal sector is going through. Changing client behaviour is also influencing the way legal services are provided; clients are better informed and are requesting more transparent fee structures. New business models like virtual law firms and online consultations have sprung-up in response to customer demands for greater value and faster turn-around. To support these new business models, new legal job roles are emerging – last week I discovered that there was such a thing as a Legal Engineer. These “Lawyer-Engineers” help deliver efficiencies for law firms, by looking at their processes and workflows, and how technology can enable them to provide services more efficiently.

(See: <https://www.solicitorsjournal.com/news/201707/legal-engineering-will-help-deliver-efficiencies-law-firms>)

4. FLIP was created with the aim of helping to develop “the model for the delivery of legal services in the future economy.” It is important for the legal sector to reinvent itself because disruption is coming and it is fuelled not only by the possibilities brought about by technology but also by the increasing demands and expectations of users of legal services in the digital age. In a 2016 global survey by legal industry research firm Altman Weil entitled “Law Firms in Transition”, 40% of GCs surveyed worldwide reported cutting the amount spent with law firms. This continued a trend that Altman Weil had seen in the past 7 years and is driven by persistent cost pressures and frustration with the lack of innovation in service delivery by law firms.

(For your information: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/general-counsel-losing-patience-law-firms-james-bliwas>)

5. But behind every problem lies opportunity. In the same survey, more than half of all law departments report that they outsource some work to non-firm vendors – a trend that has increased year-on-year. Thus, there is enormous opportunity for those law firms

that can adjust their business model and cost structure to find new ways of delivering value to clients. There is also opportunity for the legal technologists to work with lawyers to develop tech solutions for law firms or in-house legal departments, and opportunity for lawyers and legal technopreneurs to leverage their knowledge of law and technology to create solutions for other sectors like smart contracts for Fintech.

6. FLIP aims not only to help our law firms ride the wave of digital disruption, it also aims to put Singapore on the map for “Future Law” by catalysing a Legal Tech ecosystem involving entrepreneurs, innovators, lawyers, engineers and investors to create legal products and services for the future economy with global commercial potential. It is our hope that the solutions emerging from FLIP in areas like Compliance Tech, Regulatory Tech and Smart Contracts, will be of value not only to the legal sector but also to related sectors like FinTech and the insurance industry.

7. The three components of FLIP are designed to put into practice these aims. They are as follows:

- (1) *First, a co-working space.* Today’s event is held right here at Collision 8, as this will serve as FLIP’s Legal Innovation Lab where participating law firms can build capacity for innovation by experimenting with ways to boost productivity through lightening their back-end operations and freeing-up resources that can be channelled into business innovation. It will also host legal tech startups and related enterprises seeking to develop solutions for the legal industry, thus providing the required inter-disciplinary ecosystem that will foster innovation.
- (2) *Second, a Virtual Community Platform* – this is a virtual extension of the physical FLIP community environment. This free online platform will serve as the nexus for legal professionals to collaborate, try legal technology tools, access training and mentorship services, and engage external stakeholders (such as public and non-legal entities) on legal work, and of course, to market their services.
- (3) *Third, an accelerator.* Addressing the need for a legal sector-specific accelerator, this will be the first of its kind in South-East Asia. Startups and “Future Law” enterprises admitted to the accelerator will be offered pre-seed funding and undergo an intensive 100-day programme to fast-track their business plans and get early traction with customers and investors. FLIP will look to link promising legal tech start-ups with law firms, the general counsel community, technology leaders and curated investors.

8. These components come together in a 3-phase Innovation Roadmap, which I shall now describe briefly.

Phase 1, the “Lighten-Up!” phase, is productivity-centric and focusses on helping law firms build a lean back-end by leveraging on technology. Law firms will be provided with consulting support to not just adopt legal tech solutions, but guided in how to integrate these with their existing business processes and to get the most out of their investment. The objective is to help law firms build capacity by freeing-up resources from streamlined operations that they can channel into innovation.

Phase 2, the “Ideate!” phase, is about helping law firms to grow the pie by creating new revenue streams or by monetizing internal capabilities. Both law firms and legal enterprises will be taught how to develop new business ideas through structured innovation and to develop business strategy and plans that they can execute in the next stage – which is...

Phase 3, the “Accelerate!” phase. This centres on the legal sector-specific accelerator I mentioned earlier, with a bespoke 100-day acceleration programme that helps legal tech startups and new legal services enterprises get their businesses off the ground and scale up as quickly as possible.

9. I hope by now, you have a sense of the exciting opportunities afforded by FLIP. I will now touch briefly on its key value propositions:

For small law firms who want to position themselves for growth in the future economy, FLIP’s Innovation Roadmap is your chance to build a lean and efficient back-end, ideate new business models for growth and get those plans off the ground quickly.

For larger firms and legal departments who have already embarked on innovation, FLIP will give you the opportunity to synergize and focus your efforts in a supportive and dynamic environment. It will also give participants a chance to demonstrate leadership in the legal innovation space through mentoring legal tech start-ups and being at the forefront of the legal tech industry.

For legal tech startups and enterprises, you will benefit from bespoke acceleration and support to scale internationally. FLIP will give you access to curated investors, future-minded law practices and thought leadership from leading corporate counsel and academia on practice transformation imperatives. You will be mentored by experienced entrepreneurs and supported by special programming activities like hackathons, demo days and legal tech awards.

For students, FLIP is an amazing opportunity and resource for any student interested in the future of legal services. Through FLIP's academic partnership with SMU, there will be opportunity for both law and non-law students from business and information systems studies to actively participate in FLIP and become a part of the future business of law as it is shaped!

For investors, FLIP is a one-of-a-kind legal tech ecosystem, backed by the legal community. It will allow investors interested in the development of future legal services to participate in the growth of promising legal tech and "Future Law" enterprises accelerated by FLIP. Investors who desire a more hands-on role can choose to mentor the startups and influence legal tech development as it happens.

10. But, the ultimate beneficiary of FLIP is the client – whether corporate or the individual man-on-the-street, who will be able to benefit in two key aspects:

First, he will enjoy a better level of service by his lawyer, who is equipped with the right set of legal tech tools, and who is able to work more efficiently and effectively. We can't promise lower costs, but definitely better value for the client.

Second, the co-location of lawyers, technologists and entrepreneurs catalyses opportunities for the creation of legal tech tools that will bring legal services to a much broader reach. This can promote access to justice by making available legal information services and tools to end-consumers who can choose to make use of such services on their own until they decide to seek professional legal help. This is analogous to self-medication in which, at some point, you will need to seek out a medical professional.

11. Looking at the different backgrounds that are gathered here today and the attention FLIP has received since its announcement, I must say that we are off to a good start. And I hope that after listening to the discussion between our panellists this evening, who are all extremely passionate about the need for innovation in legal services, you will join us to "Switch-on your future, today".

Thank you.