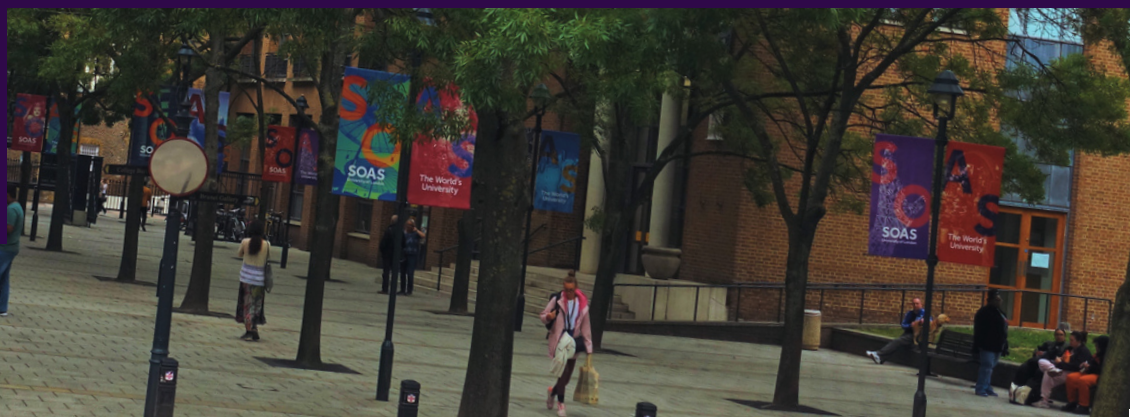




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COMMERCIAL AWARENESS SEGMENT

BY ANGUS MCGUINNESS | 1ST YEAR LLB LAW

AI INDUSTRY TENSION: MUSK V OPENAI

In recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI), Elon Musk, founder of ChatGPT competitor xAI, has filed a lawsuit against OpenAI alleging a breach of contract. Musk holds that OpenAI has strayed from its original mission of developing AI for the betterment of humanity. He asserts the firm, spearheading consumer AI, has taken a for-profit stance towards its ventures, highlighting the release of their large language model, GPT-4, through integration with Microsoft products in 2023.

Whilst the legal basis for the claim is contested, the lawsuit underscores a growing tension within the industry, as companies vie for market dominance. Musk's lawsuit is as much a reflection of the growing competitiveness in the space, as it is a legal challenge. Promising AI firms are receiving an abundance of funding as a result of heightened investor interest, sparked by ChatGPT's explosive success. Due to the development of well-funded competitors and employee exits to start their own businesses, industry leaders like Google DeepMind are struggling to retain their best researchers.



Moreover, international AI firms, like Anthropic and Cohere, have recently established operations in Europe, exemplifying the strain on the labor market in both the sector and region. Subsequently, salaries in the industry have increased due to the competition, and AI firms alike are offering lucrative incentives to retain key personnel.

The legal dispute serves as a backdrop for the bigger picture of the industry's quick development and rising competitiveness. Despite the rapid improvements in technology and investor fervor, ethical considerations and adherence to fundamental principles will continue to play a critical role in determining the course of AI development in the future. Ultimately, the legal battle between Musk and OpenAI underscores the dynamic landscape of the AI sector, where legal considerations collide with broader innovation.



BAR DIGEST

BY NAYAH KELLY | 3RD YEAR LLB LAW

1. Barrister's Social Life Regulated
2. The Younger The Better?

Barrister's Social Life Regulated

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) has released guidance emphasizing the importance of how barristers express their views on social media.

While the substance of their views may raise regulatory concerns, the focus is on the manner of expression. The guidance provides examples of conduct that could breach regulations, such as unjustified criticisms of judges or the justice system. Additionally, the BSB has clarified its stance on regulating non-professional conduct, stating that not all instances of interest will result in regulatory action. Director General Mark Neale highlighted the need for clarity in applying existing rules while balancing barristers' obligations and rights under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Do barristers have an obligation to censor their personal beliefs? Should the BSB welcome criticism of the judiciary from those who know the system best? These are all questions to keep in mind for budding barristers.

The Younger The Better?

The Bar Standards Board has raised concerns about the aging demographic of barristers, with 40% now over 50 years old. This trend, coupled with a decline in available pupillages, poses significant challenges for the future of the profession and access to justice. The impact is expected to be most profound in the publicly funded sector, potentially exacerbating diversity issues. As the average age of barristers continues to rise, it is imperative to attract new, diverse talent to ensure the profession reflects the society it serves.

Despite high interest from graduates, the oversubscribed nature of pupillages presents a daunting reality, with candidates facing slim chances of securing offers. The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded this issue, highlighting the need for innovative solutions to sustain a vibrant and inclusive legal profession.

INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL COMMERCIAL AWARENESS

BY ANGUS MCGUINNESS | 1ST YEAR LLB LAW



Last Monday, on the 4th of March, SOAS' Law Society welcomed the esteemed Denis Viskovich to deliver a presentation on the importance of commercial awareness in the legal sector. Mr Viskovich, a dual qualified English and Australian lawyer, has over twenty years of experience in commercial law. He is currently leading a legal team at an investment bank and operates as managing director at a Mayfair based advisory company.

Mr Viskovich explained the importance of commercial awareness throughout the legal application process, highlighting a lower demand for labor in the sector as the UK enters a recession. He noted that as demand falls, applications become more competitive, with 2024 being the first year in many to see the demand for lawyers taper off.

Consequently, he asserted that as graduate recruitment teams seek better and better candidates, commercial awareness makes that much more of a difference. Mr Viskovich, sitting on a number of recruitment boards, highlighted that good commercial awareness makes candidates stand out and typically provides the most room for improvement.

As competition is heightened and recruitment teams hire fewer and fewer candidates, commercial awareness becomes increasingly important. Attendees learnt that commercial awareness begins simply with reading the news; gaining professional experience, making applications and researching the commercial world all provide more effective routes to increasing your commercial awareness.

One route Mr Viskovich highlighted as particularly effective, is partaking in the British & Irish University Commercial Awareness Competition (BIUCAC). Competitors take part in a number of multiple choice and online challenges, before presenting to partners and judges at the final in-person event in London. Last year, podium finishers received vacation schemes at leading law firms; this year the competition is set to open in October and receives similar endorsement.

“As graduate recruitment teams seek better and better candidates, commercial awareness makes that much more of a difference.”

ASK THE CAREERS DIRECTOR

A SPECIAL FEATURE WITH SOAS LAW SOCIETY'S VERY OWN
EYMAAN ZUBAIR | 2ND YEAR LLB LAW

OUR QUESTION THIS WEEK:

What kind of questions can I ask lawyers at a networking event?

EYMAAN'S ANSWER:

Here's a quick snapshot of the kind of questions you can ask, and develop based on your specific interests:

QUESTIONS FOR GRAD RECRUITMENT

How soon, and in what way would you recommend preparing for online tests and assessment centres?

What makes an application stand out – particularly when there are similar achievements and qualifications?

What are the common mistakes you see in applications?

QUESTIONS FOR LAWYERS

Could you give me a run-down of a typical day at your firm?

What has been the most rewarding/challenging project you have done so far here?

How is the firm structure in terms of teamwork, or is it more individual task based?

A pro-tip: use this as a matrix to ask questions as per the specific firm in their area of practice for the most effective learning. As always, keep an eye out for deadlines with @soaslawsociety and tune in next week for more great advice like this!