Podcast: People in Legal | Beyond the Features – David Langdon

Date: 22nd July 2025

Audio: Listen to the audio on Spotify

Video: Watch the video on YouTube

Introduction

I recently joined Roni Millard on her People in Legal podcast for a wide-ranging conversation about legal technology, accessibility, and the evolving role of AI in professional services. It was a great opportunity to reflect on how far the industry has come–and how much further we can go when we look beyond software features and focus on people, culture, and practical outcomes.

In the discussion, Roni and I explored the real-world shifts shaping legal tech today: from how firms approach technology selection and data strategy, to why accessibility and inclusion need to be built into design, not added as an afterthought. We also talked about my book Beyond the Features, the lessons I've learned from working across different regions, and how AI is changing the way we work and think.

What follows is the full conversation–a candid and forward-looking discussion about making technology work better for everyone.

The Conversation

Roni:

Welcome to *People in Legal*, the podcast where we explore the human side of law–spotlighting the people transforming the profession from the inside out and having authentic conversations with the trailblazers reimagining what is possible. I'm Roni Millard, founder of Tribe Marketing Consultancy and The Wellbeing Edge, a performance and wellness consultancy, and a very passionate connector of people and ideas in the legal world. Today I'm delighted to be joined by

David Langdon, founder of Blind Spot Solutions. With decades of experience in legal and professional services, David brings sharp insight into the blind spots that hold organisations back from achieving true operational and cultural performance. His work focuses on uncovering unconscious patterns and unspoken challenges within legal teams, offering strategic solutions that transform both leadership and workplace wellbeing. David, it's a pleasure to have you with us. How are you today?

David:

I'm well, thank you, Roni, and thanks for having me on the podcast. That was quite the introduction–I haven't been called a trailblazer before, but we'll go with it.

Roni:

Let's dive straight in. You've had a diverse journey in legal tech–from CRM implementations across Europe and North America to strategic consulting in APAC. What shifts have you seen in how law firms approach technology over the last twenty years?

David:

So many. Technology is moving at a rapid pace; it feels like it changes every day. One of the biggest shifts since I moved to Australia twenty years ago is that procurement has become far more strategic. It's no longer IT picking a system because someone asked for it and then installing it. Firms now consider how technology fits into other parts of the business.

User experience and workflow design have changed dramatically. Workflows now actually flow, whereas twenty years ago a "workflow" often meant a developer built something you had to live with. Back then, on Windows-based desktops, what you got was what you were stuck with. Vendors shipped software and there was little you could do if you didn't like their choices.

Another huge change is data. In the late 1990s when I worked in a London law firm, data was “a thing”–names and addresses so you could send brochures, and someone fixed the mailing list if the post office bounced items. Now data is an asset. Firms use it in many ways–think data lakes and advanced analytics. Marketing does not just want contact details; they want to know client spend by practice area and how to act on it. In short, firms are actually using their information.

Roni:

We’ve spoken before about the RFP process. What has changed there?

David:

The beloved RFP. Many vendors don’t love them, but they can be a means to an end. The big shift is away from picking solutions solely on feature checklists. I’ve filled in those spreadsheets with hundreds of tick boxes. They rarely allow a consultative, strategic conversation about outcomes.

Some still run feature-first RFPs, but there is pushback. A US CEO of a legal tech startup told me they simply don’t do RFPs anymore. If it is a feature competition, a product with one hundred features looks better on paper than a focused product with ten features that actually matter. Often, when you check a couple of years later, those ten features were the only ones the firm used anyway.

And please, if you’re buying a CRM, do not ask on the spreadsheet, “Can you store contacts?” If it can’t, it is not a CRM. This feature-ticking mindset made more sense in the on-premise era when vendors competed on long lists of functionality. Modern software and integrations have changed the game.

Roni:

That's a neat segue into your book, *Beyond the Features*, which helps firms navigate tech selection. What is the biggest mistake firms make when evaluating legal tech?

David:

Picking one is hard, but the headline mistake is not seeing beyond the features. People get distracted by what's shiny and new without thinking about how it all fits together. Step back and ask: what are we trying to achieve, and what will it take to get there? Choosing software is just one piece of a wider transformation. It is the smallest part, yet it can be the most consequential if you get it wrong.

I wrote the book to provide a strategic pathway–building vendor relationships, understanding integration across the tech stack, and ensuring solutions can grow with the firm. Don't buy a CRM only as a marketing tool; buy something that integrates across systems and avoids siloing marketing, finance, or property teams. The book is practical and dip-in-able: whether you're starting, mid-journey, or fixing something that went wrong, there is a chapter for you. Writing it also helped me unravel thirty years of experience.

Roni:

You've spoken openly about your vision impairment. Could you share what you're living with and how it has shaped your perspective on inclusion and accessibility in legal workplaces and tech design?

David:

I have Stargardt disease, a central vision loss. People often recognise macular degeneration as a parallel, though that's usually age-related. Over time my central vision deteriorates, so

recognising faces, reading text or signs, and even reading lift buttons in client buildings is challenging. In meetings, working out who is speaking can be hard.

Day to day, you don't always notice the progression. I just know I'm zooming in a little more than before. Early in my career I wanted as normal a career as possible and avoided being labelled. I could hide it because I needed little assistive tech then. Over time I embraced it. It's part of me now, reflected in my company name.

Technology has been pivotal. What once required expensive, clunky assistive devices is now built into mainstream tools. I used to pay hundreds for screen magnification; now it is built into my Mac. At university I needed awkward CCTV setups or head-mounted cameras to see at a distance. Today, with my MacBook and iPhone, I can point the phone at a screen in a lecture or conference, mirror it to the Mac, change contrast, zoom, and take pictures. What cost thousands is now standard.

That experience makes me more descriptive when I train–saying where things are on screen, not just "click OK." That helps everyone, not only people with disability. Accessibility should not be pigeonholed as "wheelchair access" or "braille on lift buttons." It is for everyone. Inclusion is everyone.

Roni:

Let's talk AI. How do you see it transforming legal practice, not just in features but in how lawyers and staff work daily?

David:

It is transformative, and we can't escape it. Personally, ChatGPT became a daily tool after I finally tried it–initially helping my daughter research Cleopatra on the free version. The quality of the response showed me what it could do. Now it's like a thirty-dollar-a-month personal assistant, helping with research, synthesising information, reading things aloud with a natural

voice, and checking consistency. It even helped me structure and edit the book, spotting duplication and inconsistencies across chapters so I could fix them quickly.

In legal practice, e-discovery is the obvious shift: what took a month now takes minutes. You can scan vast volumes, ask targeted questions, and get answers fast, freeing lawyers to focus on analysis and client value rather than manual admin.

Roni:

You've worked across Europe, North America and APAC. What cultural differences have you noticed in legal tech adoption?

David:

Many. In the US, teams are gung-ho and like comprehensive slide decks and multi-day deep dives. Budgets can be more flexible, and roles are specialised–different experts cover different parts of a solution.

In the UK and Europe, the process is structured and considered, with less appetite for fluff and more for substance.

In Australia and New Zealand, people want to cut to the chase: what can it do, will it do what we need, what does it cost, and how do we get moving? Decisions can still take time, but the conversations feel open and practical.

In the UAE, firms often expect vendors to do everything end-to-end. I once arrived to deliver CRM training in Dubai and, that morning, the IT manager took me to buy the training room computers. You go with it.

The lesson: you cannot present or implement legal tech the same way everywhere. Norms, expectations and attention spans differ, so you adapt.

Roni:

What drew you from the UK to Australia?

David:

A 2004 trip to surprise my grandmother near Brisbane for her 90th birthday. Christmas by the pool was novel for a northerner. I came back thinking I could live here. I emailed the APAC lead at Elite to ask if anything was happening. Within twenty-four hours she said there was a spot and to keep my bags packed. Three months later I moved.

Personally, it was life-changing. I met my now wife within weeks, and our daughter is about to turn eighteen. Professionally, Australia suits me. It is a tight-knit market; everyone knows everyone, and conferences feel like catching up with old mates. Geography breeds self-reliance; you become a jack-of-all-trades and get a broad view of the legal-tech ecosystem.

Roni:

To close, what advice would you give someone starting out in legal tech or law who wants to future-proof their career?

David:

Strap in and enjoy the journey. Things are moving fast, especially with AI. Be curious. Stay across both general tech and legal tech. Learn the business of law–it is different to corporate environments, and contracting can be slow and exacting. Build relationships; in Australia especially, the network is invaluable. Expect new roles we cannot yet imagine as AI matures.

For me, a happy truth is that technology is accelerating faster than my eyesight is deteriorating. There is always something coming that helps.

Roni:

Where can listeners find you if they want to continue the conversation?

David:

I'm active on LinkedIn, sharing insights and promoting the book. My website is blindspot.solutions, where I post articles and offer a free thirty-minute consultation. My goal is to help firms make better decisions–acting as the glue between the firm and vendors so teams can focus on their day jobs.

Roni:

Wonderful. David, thank you for being so candid and open. I'm sure listeners will take away plenty of practical insights and conversation starters.

David:

Thank you–it's been a pleasure.