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Evan Banks (00:00)

Welcome to The FP 5: Five Things for Your 9-to-5. We help employers make sense of the fast-moving world of workplace law and compliance by breaking topics down into five parts. I'm Evan Banks from the Fisher Phillips Content team.

Normally, I'm behind the scenes producing and editing the show, but today I'm stepping behind the microphone. I'm recording this from Fisher Phillips AI Evolution 2026 conference in Washington, D.C., where I'm asking attendees a simple question: how are people really feeling about the pace of AI? Between the fear of missing out, the fear of becoming obsolete, and the challenge of keeping up with the constant change, AI is reshaping work in real time.

In this episode you'll hear candid conversations with professionals navigating that reality every day. Let's get into it.

Every day there are a ton of new advancements and developments in AI. Do you ever feel that you have a fear of missing out on what's new?

Guest (01:00)

Always. There's always some new AI tool that comes about that like someone's like, "Have you heard of this or are you using this?" and I'm like, "I have no idea what that is." And then you think the three new tools that you're already using are somehow like cutting edge and then you find out that there's like five more other things that you could be signing up for and utilizing. So yeah, I feel like there's always something, you know, that one feels like they could be missing out on because the pace is moving so rapidly.

Guest (01:26)

Yes. I have been wondering for the past couple of years how I was gonna use AI in my practice. It was obvious to me how I would use AI if I were still practicing law. It was very clear to me how that would work. It would be useful in going through discovery documents and drafting documents and summarizing documents and reviewing documents. But I struggled to understand how I could use AI in my practice as a mediator, which requires a lot of human touch, and not a lot of automating of repetitive tasks. But eventually what I figured out was that the magic of AI for me is coding software for my own use. And that's what I've done. I started out creating a group of tools, calculators and visualizers to use in negotiation, which I've put online at stevedunntools.com. And it's really been helpful to me. It's tools that I always wished existed but I could never find online. With AI, even though I have no background in coding or computer science or even hosting websites, I was able to use the AI to do all that stuff for me.

Guest (02:40)

So actually back at the start of March, I was in San Francisco for the first time in probably about a year. And you know, you're going in from the airport into the city, and all you see are these giant banners and billboards all about AI this, AI that. And for the first time I genuinely felt like I was out of the loop and falling behind. And yes, whilst Passle is very forward thinking and we're doing some amazing things with AI, you suddenly realize just what's happening. So I think that was the one moment I was like, wow, I really feel like I'm missing out. However, there was an interesting graphic that came out probably about three or four months ago, and I don't know if you've seen

it, but essentially it segmented the entire world into tiny little cubes, and it actually showed the percentage of people who use AI in a day to day basis or actually who are heavy users of it, and you suddenly realize actually,

how few people really do. So when you start to think about it, like actually I'm not, I'm using it in some form on a day-to-day basis, so actually I am one of the more advanced people. So to answer the question, I don't feel like I'm missing out too much. It's more probably having a better and richer knowledge, if I'm being honest.

Evan Banks (03:58)

Second question, has AI been changing your work at a pace that feels exciting, exhausting, or both?

Guest (04:02)

Say maybe a little bit of both. It's been exciting in that it's allowed me, myself, specifically to be more productive in terms of using it as a productivity tool, maybe to check the quality of my work. And it kind of helps me sometimes lay a foundation or groundwork for getting started on large products, projects, excuse me. But then I do find that oftentimes, given in the compliance space, that you always have to double, triple-check something. So it does create some back-end work that might not always be worth the time saving on the front end.

Evan Banks (04:37)

Would you say the pace of change has been exciting or exhausting or a little of both?

Guest (04:44)

I would say that's a little bit of both. It is difficult at times for education to keep up with the change of technology as it is moving in in such a fast-paced way, but it's really important that education sector stay ahead of the curve so that we can really prepare our students for this unknown world that they are about to embark in.

Evan Banks (05:07)

Exciting, exhausting, or a little bit of both?

Guest (05:10)

I find it exciting. I've always been interested in technology and an early experimenter with new stuff. I've always been the type of person who would get it the new gadget and play with it. And so I've found it to be exciting. But it is a little daunting at times to contemplate, once you realize how powerful the technology is, it is a little unsettling to imagine the scope of change that's naturally gonna occur within the economy and I'm sure it will be disruptive and not everybody's gonna come out ahead. And so I worry about that a little bit.

Evan Banks (05:50)

Third question, you said when we started this conversation that mediation is a negotiation between two people and is that something that you think an AI will never truly be able to fully replace?

Guest (06:10)

I struggle with that because there's a part of me that wants to believe that I that I cannot be replaced by AI, but on the other hand, I can also see how swiftly the technology is improving. I've seen it just in the time that I've been working on this website, which is only a few months, they've come out with new models of AI during those few months, and the change is stark and dramatic in its improvement. My current thinking on that is that there's two main things that happen in a settlement negotiation. One is you gotta you gotta figure out what the price is. You

gotta determine what the number is, where we're settling the case. And then the other is you gotta make a decision to take advantage of that opportunity. So you have to you have to know what the price is, and then you have to make the decision to pay the price and to make the deal. And I'm much more optimistic that AI will be able to figure out what the price is in the same way that like Zillow has kind of figured out what a house is worth these days. You know, like I'm actually pretty optimistic that AI is gonna be useful in figuring out what a reasonable range is for settling a case, even a complicated case. But I do think there's still, at least for as long as I'm gonna be around, I think there will still be a human factor in weighing all the considerations that go into you know, just because you know a reasonable settlement is \$275,000, there's still a lot you gotta figure out in deciding like are we gonna actually do that or not? Is that right for us in this moment and in our situation?

Evan Banks (07:49)

Is there anything that you think an AI would not be able to do, maybe with respect to the students learning?

Guest (07:56)

Yes. I mean we know that AI, it has limitations with judgment. So it's really important for schools to really teach students discernment, how to use critical thinking skills, that making decision piece, that is not something that we feel that a robot, like, or ChatGPT, or any sort of LLM could do. So really taking those really high-level thinking skills and really focusing on those types of things in education.

Evan Banks (08:32)

Is there any part of the professional value in your field that you feel like AI could never really replace?

Guest (08:39)

Human judgment and oversight. I think you're probably gonna hear that twenty thousand times from anybody that talks about AI, but in our line of work, especially when you're talking about human resources, you're dealing with people and to deal with people it also takes real people to make sure, you know, that you have like empathy, ethics, you know, that we're just checking things and making sure that our quality is, you know, correct and up to date. So I don't think it's gonna be able to replace some of those human elements, even though it feels like sometimes I have to say when I'm using AI, it feels very human but I have to remember it's not a human.

Evan Banks (09:14)

What part of your professional value do you think AI can never truly replace?

Guest (09:19)

It's interesting. So I'm in a commercial role at Passle. To put it bluntly, I do sales and whilst obviously there's a lot of things that AI can assist me with and also probably fine-tune, it's a people business. It's a relationship business and people do business with people. So I think the reality is it was never going to be able to wipe that side of things out, particularly in the business that we're in. I think something maybe more transactional, sure. But you know, just like being here at the Fisher Phillips conference for AI, like it's a people business. Lawyers are still dealing with people on a day-to-day basis. So I think whilst AI is only gonna advance more and more, it's just gonna essentially assist us and make us better at what we do. I don't think it's gonna wipe out anything at least that I do or nor the lawyers do either.

Evan Banks (10:12)

Has AI surprised you in the past year? It surprised me, and I think it surprised everyone. Can you give a specific example of like it doing something that you didn't think it could do two years ago?

Guest (10:24)

When it has surprised me. You know when it has surprised me? So I don't remember it was like six or seven months ago, an AI attacked a developer, a maintainer of a library called Matplotlib. And what it did was it tried to get a repo, which it was trying to fix a piece of code that was simple. And the maintainer, he said, "No, you're a bot. I'm gonna you know, thank you, but we're not gonna do that." And the bot went rogue and started spamming blog posts about how the maintainer was not allowing an AI, so this was very surprising because that was the first time that a human was not in the loop. And at first the person who coded it did not come forward and say, listen, yeah, that's my bot, but then later apologized because there was nobody monitoring the activity of this bot. So I think that's surprising. That kind of made me think about humanity and where are we going? Like if you're gonna let a bot go rogue and not maintain it like a child, you know, you can't let a child go off. You have to, you know, right or wrong and correct it. And so that was probably one of the most surprising things that happened.

Evan Banks (11:37)

Yeah. They must have just given it very general instructions and then it interpreted those ...

Guest (11:43)

It did. It was learning. So that whole environment is a learning environment for AI models. And so you kinda deploy it and let it go.

Evan Banks (11:52)

Has there been any moments in the past year where it did something unexpected or was more useful than you thought it would be?

Guest (12:01)

Hmm. I'd have to say yes in that I've been able to use it to kind of overall sometimes look at like big pieces of legislation where normally I like literally have to sit here and read maybe fifty pages of something and I may ask it to distill this information to me up front and then I can go back and kind of source check what it gave me. So that's been really helpful in my line of work. It kinda saves me an hour of reading something and then I'm able to kind of maybe spend a half an hour on that thing instead of the hour, so yeah.

Evan Banks (12:36)

Has there been any moments in the past year that it was able to do something that you didn't expect it to be able to do?

Guest (12:42)

I have been completely blown away by the ability of the AI tools to code software. My personal experience is that I have no knowledge of coding whatsoever, and I created a fully functional set of software tools that I use on a daily basis. And that part, I think the world generally is starting to catch on to the fact that everybody can do that now. But I don't think a lot of people have actually started doing it yet. But with each day, more and more people are waking up and realizing, you know, this product that I always wished existed, it can now exist within a matter of a couple of days if you just start working with AI tools.

Evan Banks (13:29)

Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit more about some of the tools that you've created?

Guest (13:33)

Yeah, it started with, when I'm in a mediation and one side moves ten thousand dollars and the other side moves seventeen thousand five hundred dollars and you get in you get into a little pattern where you do that a few times. I always found myself wondering like, okay, I don't know if this pattern is sustainable or not, because I don't know where those lines would intersect. And so I looked and looked and looked online for a tool where I could just plug in a couple of numbers and plot a couple of simple lines and see where they would intersect. And I could never find one. And so I wound up just doing this math in my head. And so time after time, that's how it began. I created this tiny little software program that, all it does is plot lines on a on a on a plane. But it's done in such a way that it shows rounds of negotiation and it shows a dollar figure. So it's like specific to my business and my work. So I did that, and then that turned into, "Well, you know, you could plot the whole negotiation. You could put all the offers and counteroffers in, and then you could have it sort of extrapolate where those lines might intersect using more complicated math, and you could use you could put in brackets and you can put in midpoints" and then from there it I just started thinking of everything I could think of. So for example, in employment cases when we settle, a lot of times we write three checks. We write a check for attorney's fees and costs, and then we write two checks to the plaintiff, one that's for wages and then the other is for non-wage damages. And so I created a calculator for doing that math. And there's maybe a dozen more. And they're all just little things like that; the kinds of math that I wish people would do when they're either getting ready for mediation or during the mediation itself.

Evan Banks (15:30)

Okay, last question. What's the biggest piece of advice about AI you would have given yourself three years ago?

Guest (15:38)

Oh man. Prepare yourself. I wish I had learned more CS. I feel like I'm not only trying to catch up and learn AI, but trying to understand like how we got there. I didn't, you know, I didn't know about everything that happened in the 2000s and 1986 and, I didn't know enough. So I wish I could go back in time and learn the old AI and kinda work up to that process where we're at now.

Evan Banks (16:04)

Anything else you want to tell me?

Guest (16:06)

No, but the best thing is to just keep learning. So that's all I can suggest.

Evan Banks (16:11)

Thank you.

Guest (16:12)

Thank you.

Evan Banks (16:14)

Fifth and final question, what's the biggest piece of advice you would have given yourself about AI two or three years ago?

Guest (16:22)

The biggest advice I would give to anyone two or three years ago thinking about AI is not to shut it down. It is here to stay. It is moving fast, and we need to embrace it and keep learning alongside of it, and really maximize it's potential.

Evan Banks (16:35)

Anything else you want to tell our listeners?

Guest (16:43)

Conferences like the Fisher Phillips AI conference are just really impactful for schools and for other corporations because of all the different vendors that they have here in this vendor hall that really help us make great decisions, responsible decisions of what type of softwares to adopt and bring into our organizations.

Evan Banks (17:06)

Yeah, our listeners can't see it right now, but I'm actually looking at not one but two different robots on the floor next to me. One is kind of lying down as a dog and the other one's rolling around and has a very cute sort of expression on its face. It is a interesting world and it's really exciting to be here.

Fifth and finally, what's the biggest piece of advice about AI you would have given yourself two, three years ago?

Guest (17:32)

I would say just dive in and play with it. I think that people are doing themselves a disservice if they think that it's gonna just go away. And I think there's a lot of people who think it's just gonna go away. Like they, what I'm hearing from my colleagues and friends who are skeptical of AI has shifted. It started out as a pessimism that it was ever really going to be useful, and a kind of a condescending laughter at the things that AI couldn't do. And that then turned into sort of paranoia and fear about the economic disruption that it's gonna cause and like this idea that we need to fight against it for that reason. And I think a lot of folks have just taken a position that they don't wanna be a part of it. And what I would suggest is whether you like it or not, or whether you find it useful or not, you should know what you're talking about. And the best way to know what you're talking about is to play with it. Just get in there, start asking questions, start asking it to do stuff and see what it can do. And then that way however you end up feeling about it is on an informed basis.

Evan Banks (18:39)

Alright, sage advice.

Last question for you, what's the biggest piece of advice about AI that you would have given yourself two or three years ago?

Guest (18:48)

Talk to other people about it, right? I think that when AI first came out, there was a lot of AI shame around using it. And am I using it for my emails? And is the em-dash giving me away? And so I think the more you talk to other people who are engaging in it, the more you learn about it, and you learn about the right tools for the right job, right? And so three years ago, I was in a different role, and I used it minimally, didn't see the value of it. And then my job changed a little bit. My circle changed. And all of a sudden the people I were talking to were talking about

how AI could affect workflow, how it could affect our marketing strategies, how it could affect automations in our business and finance office. And that was transformative for me. But if I had not opened my circle, if I had not talked to other people, I would still be in that same place with AI and I might still be a little cautious about using it, as opposed to today where I engage with AI probably on a daily basis, but with the tools that our team gives us.

Evan Banks (19:49)

What's the biggest piece of advice about AI you would have given yourself two or three years ago?

Guest (19:56)

That's a really good question, because even probably at the start of this year I was in some ways foolishly slightly slow on the uptake of AI and, I wouldn't say resistant but I don't necessarily see how it's gonna benefit me. I now use it on a day-to-day basis. So I think the advice I would have given to myself three years ago is just go head first in. It's what's gonna change the world, the more that you can know about it, the better. To my answer earlier, yes, you and I are probably still in like the minority really when you think about globally or the amount of people using it, but three years ago it said just get involved, learn more and it's only gonna benefit you.

Evan Banks (20:35)

That's a good note to end on. Thank you for listening to The FP5. For the latest insights on how AI is transforming the workplace, visit us at fisherphillips.com. We'll see you next week.

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