

Surf's Up, Legal: How to Ride the AI Wave Without Wiping Out

Stop treading water. Start building the skills, strategies, and confidence to ride—and thrive—in a constantly changing environment.

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Imagine standing at the edge of the ocean. Some waves are small and manageable. Others are sudden and massive. If you stay still, waiting for calm, you'll be swept off balance. The same goes for today's wave of technology. We've entered a new era where the pace of change is no longer predictably incremental. The rise of generative AI, automation, and intelligent systems has disrupted the old rhythm. Progress is no longer unfolding in rhythmic, two-year cycles. Instead, it is accelerating continuously like a tide that keeps rising.

This isn't chaos. It's just a new environment, one where standing still is no longer a strategy. Waiting for technology to "settle down" is like waiting for the ocean to stop moving. It will not, and more importantly, it doesn't need to. Because there is a better way forward.

Rather than resist the waves, we can learn to surf them.

Surfing, unlike standing still, requires movement. It is about learning balance, adapting quickly, and building confidence with every ride. The goal is not to have all the answers or master every tool, but to stay engaged, learn by doing, and build resilience over time.

This article is your invitation to see change in a new light. You don't need to fear the pace of innovation. You can embrace it as an opportunity. Together, we will explore how to build the skills that allow teams to ride these waves with confidence, why organizations need to rethink how they introduce technology, and what it takes to build a culture that is ready for what comes next.

Welcome to the Exponential Era

For many years, Moore's Law provided a reliable forecast for technological progress. Named after Intel co-founder Gordon Moore, the principle suggests that the number of transistors on a microchip will double approximately every two years. This increase in computing power, paired with decreasing cost, created a dependable rhythm for innovation. Businesses and professionals could adapt with confidence, taking on new systems in manageable cycles.

Over time, Moore's Law became more than a prediction. It became a comfort zone. It allowed companies to adopt tools in a steady cadence, updating hardware here or learning new software there, always knowing that the next big shift would come in a few years, not weeks.

But things have changed. The emergence of generative artificial intelligence has taken us far beyond that steady pace. Today, progress is unfolding in a matter of months, and sometimes even weeks. New tools and breakthroughs are arriving faster than most organizations can track. This is no longer a continuation of Moore's Law. It is something far more dynamic.

We have entered the exponential era.

In this new environment, progress does not unfold in a straight line. It builds on itself, gaining speed with each cycle like a snowball rolling downhill. Or, perhaps more accurately, like a wave gaining height and force as it nears the shore. This is what some have called a "tech tsunami." It is vast, powerful, and constant.

The good news is that you don't need to outrun this wave. You simply need to move with it and learn to ride. Success in the exponential era does not require a flawless strategy or perfect predictions. What it requires is agility, the willingness to learn, and the confidence to adapt quickly.

Generative AI is not here to replace professionals. It is here to change the way they work. Those who choose to engage with these tools, even in simple ways, will uncover entirely new ways to think, create, and solve problems. That is the promise of exponential change. It opens doors we didn't know were there.

Treading Water Is Not an Option

During times of rapid change, many people are tempted to wait things out. Perhaps the new tech will fizzle. Maybe another team will test it first. Maybe next quarter will be the perfect time to act. This mindset, although common, is akin to treading water. You're not making progress, you're just scanning the horizon and hoping the waves will calm.

But here's the reality: That calm is not coming. Not because the future is unsafe, but because innovation no longer pauses. The wave of change is already here, and it is not slowing down.

Treading water might feel like a safe strategy, but it is one of the riskiest. It leads to fatigue, uncertainty, and a gradual drifting away from the very opportunities that could elevate your work. Inaction is not a neutral position. It is a choice. And in this case, it is a choice to be left behind.

That is why the message is simple. You must learn to surf.

Surfing does not require perfection. You do not need to catch every wave or ride them flawlessly from the start. What it does require is a change in mindset. You shift from hesitation to participation. You recognize that movement is essential and that learning, experimenting, and even making mistakes are all part of moving forward.

In a professional context, learning to surf means staying curious, seeking out information, and experimenting with tools like generative AI in practical ways. It also means giving your team permission to grow and encouraging them to engage with the evolving landscape rather than be overwhelmed by it. The goal isn't just to stay afloat, it's to move forward with purpose.

Why Shielding Teams from Change Backfires

Some organizations, hoping to protect employees from the uncertainty of rapid change, choose to centralize control. They restrict access to emerging technologies, impose strict protocols, and try to absorb the complexity at the leadership level. It is a well-intentioned strategy, much like steering a cruise ship through choppy waters with passengers safely inside.

But this approach has a major flaw. Cruise ships are large and slow. They cannot pivot quickly. They rely on stability that no longer exists in today's technology environment.

This is the corporate cruise ship fallacy. It is the belief that shielding people from change will make them more secure. In practice, it often has the opposite effect.

When teams are cut off from direct engagement with technology:

- They become overly dependent on leadership for direction and decision-making
- They miss the opportunity to build confidence and skill through hands-on experience
- They are less prepared to act quickly when circumstances shift

Organizations that insulate employees may keep them dry, but they also keep them disconnected. They are not learning how to respond to change. They are not developing the reflexes they will need when the pace picks up even more.

The better path is to involve your people. Let them test the waters. Create space for experimentation, questions, and shared learning. This does not mean giving up structure. It means building a culture where curiosity is encouraged and capability is distributed.

Teaching Teams to Swim

When technology moves fast, the instinct of many professionals is to pause and wait for things to stabilize. But with innovation continuing at a steady pace, waiting only increases the gap between readiness and relevance. The key is not to dive in all at once. It is to teach your teams how to swim before you ever ask them to surf.

Swimming means building confidence in the fundamentals. Teams should understand what AI is, how it fits into their work, and how to interact with it safely and effectively. This foundational training focuses on literacy, not expertise. The goal is to turn hesitation into understanding.

Begin with:

- Clear, relatable explanations of how AI works and what it can do
- Every day examples that show immediate value, such as summarizing a meeting or drafting a memo
- Hands-on opportunities to try tools in a low-pressure environment

Once your team is comfortable and capable, you can begin teaching them to surf. Surfing is about agility. It is about learning to adapt to more advanced tools, integrate them into workflows, and collaborate around technology. It marks the shift from passive users to active contributors in your digital strategy.

That next step includes:

- Writing better prompts to get high-quality AI results
- Automating routine tasks so teams can focus on strategic work
- Encouraging a culture of experimentation and knowledge-sharing

This swim-then-surf approach builds capability step by step. It prepares people for a future where change is constant, and resilience is a core strength.

Developing a Surf-Ready Strategy

When your team understands the basics, it's time to shift focus toward your overall tech strategy. This is where you move from swimming to surfing. Surfing, in this context, refers to having a strategy that is designed for continuous adaptation. It does not require you to chase every wave (trend). Instead, it means investing in tools and systems that provide flexibility, customization, and long-term usefulness.

A surf-ready strategy emphasizes:

- Platforms that can evolve gradually, without frequent overhauls
- Tools that can adapt to your workflows, rather than forcing you to adapt to them
- Simple, intuitive interfaces that support wide adoption with minimal disruption

This approach enables your team to stay agile and responsive. You avoid the chaos of constant tool-switching and instead build a reliable toolkit that grows with your organization. The goal is not to find a perfect tool that never changes. It is to build a strategy that keeps your operations nimble and ready to pivot when needed. A surfable tech stack gives you resilience, not just capability. The wave of innovation is not slowing down. However, if you build wisely, you won't need it to. You will already be moving with it.

The New Professional Survival Skill

In today's workplace, the ability to adapt has become one of the most essential traits for success. It is not about being the most technical person in the room or having deep specialization in a single area. What matters most is how well you respond to change. This will determine whether you move with it or fall behind. Adaptability now defines professional resilience. Organizations no longer need every team member to be a technologist, nor do they need to chase every trend.

What they do need is a culture that encourages curiosity, embraces learning, and supports prompt and thoughtful responses to an ever-evolving landscape. In this new era, adaptability often matters more than



mastery, flexibility can outweigh consistency, and a willingness to learn will carry you further than clinging to old routines. Whether you're leading a legal team, managing operations, or shaping digital strategy, the call to action is the same: don't wait for stability that may never come. Equip your people with the confidence to engage, the tools to grow, and the structure to stay in motion.

The waves will keep coming. They're not a threat; they're an opportunity to move forward.

Learn more about the **AI Advantage** from **UpLevel Ops** at UpLevelOps.com.