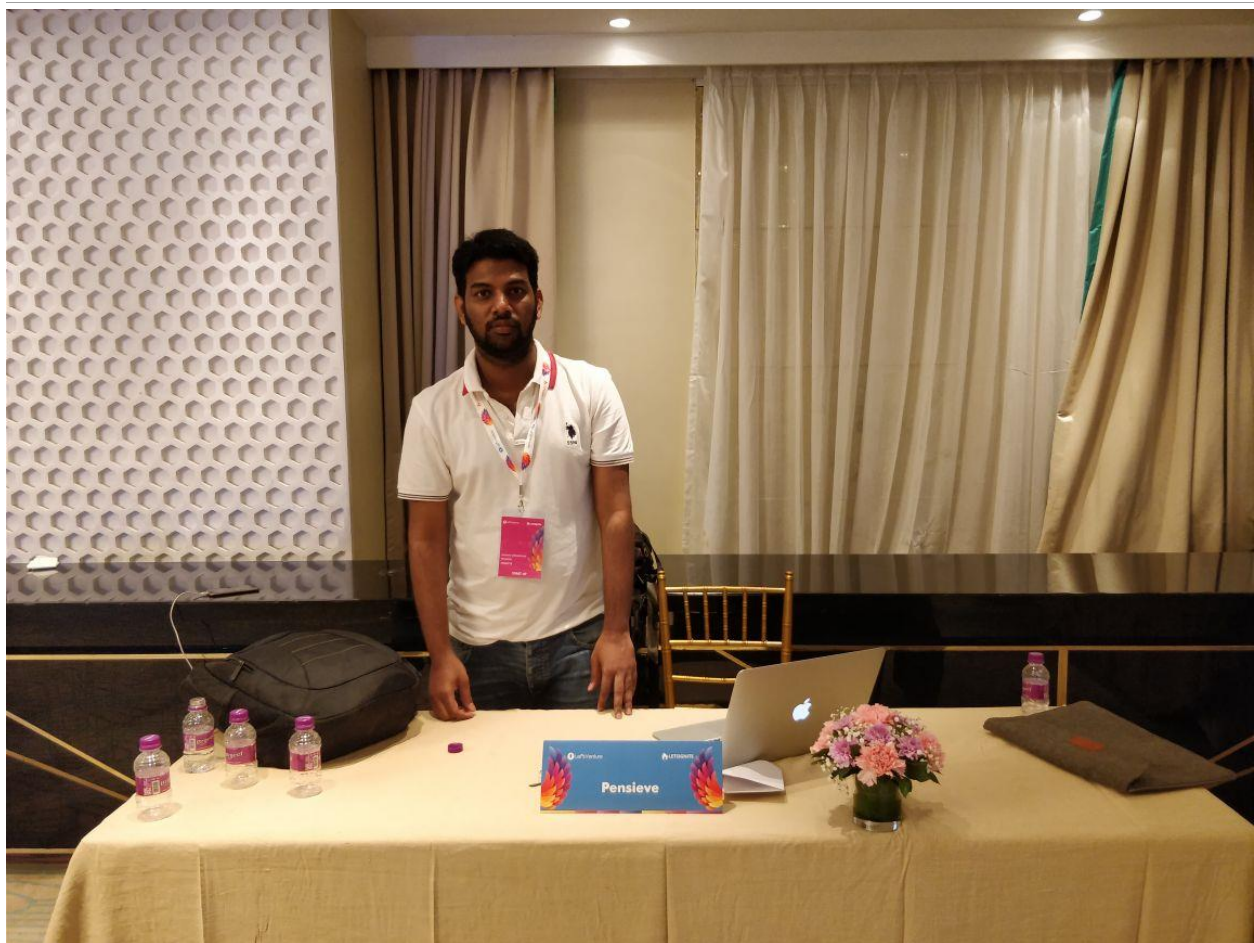# Mumbai startup's proprietary legal research platform is driving the next generation of legal tech

RICHA BHATIA – 21 March 2018

Pensieve co-founder Gaurav Shrivastava

AI charting its way through legal territory is not new – for the last few years Ross Intelligence has been changing the way big law firms perform legal research and its AI-powered solution comes strikingly close to the experience of working with a human lawyer. And it's not just Ross Intelligence that is disrupting the business of law – IBM Watson & Lex Machina has been providing legal analytics for companies and are ushering in an era of a data-driven lawyer.

AI disrupting the business of law in India

Now that AI has wended its way outside IT functions and upended legal sector – India is playing catch up. According to a Deloitte study, in-house teams are looking for tech savvy, integrated service providers who offer more than traditional legal advice. One of India's leading full-service law firm, Mumbai-headquartered Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas has reportedly become Asia's first law firm to embrace AI earlier this year. Canada-based Kira Systems, machine learning software provider revealed in their blog that the move was spurred to improve the delivery model of legal services. Global legal and tax consulting firm Nishith Desai Associates leverages data management and bandwidth management systems for data-intensive tasks such as analytics, regulatory compliance and contract review.

AI has made way for Legal Process Outsourcing (LPO) – a growing trend, spurred by the availability of proprietary AI software developed by a bunch of startups that are shaping the legal tech sector in India.

Pensieve – Indian AI startup is disrupting the legal sector

Pensieve, founded by serial entrepreneur Gaurav Shrivastava, (co-founder of Zimmber bought by Quikr in 2017) and Prahlad K. Routh, a Materials Scientist and an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University has developed a proprietary AI-driven legal research platform called **Mitra** that is being used by 300+ customers already. Currently, the Mumbai-based startup is working with IIT-Madras to mature the product and its AI solution is being used by major law firms like Argus & K Law.

The startup founded in 2016 is using AI & NLP to improve efficiency of law firms and also made it into the Axilor Accelerator Program, one of India's largest accelerator program. Talking about making it into the sixth accelerator batch, Shrivastava said, "Axilor has helped has immensely in understanding the business priority. We can expand the product range from a domain specific to a domain agnostic catering to technology solutions for problems in areas such as Linguistic & Text Analytics".

Stressing on the need for AI in legal sector, Shrivastava added, "Legal research is one of the very crucial and time-consuming parts for any lawyer, corporate and law student. It also affects productivity as a whole. Our solution is aimed towards decreasing this productivity gap, which in turn gives them more time where it matters – with clients. Currently our solution is geared to benefit the legal fraternity with machine learning models polished for legal documents".

Mitra.ai – Legal Research Platform is a cut above the rest

Mitra.ai is the flagship product of Pensieve – and an advanced tech platform powered by artificial intelligence that searches, recommends and learns from user behaviour. The platform is equipped with machine learning models that runs on thousands of documents to give lawyers and case assistants the most relevant results than a bullion search handler. "It's one of a kind natural language query handler lets users ask queries in a language that's naturally in use. The intelligent search engine powered with AI and NLP goes beyond keyword search and it also understands the context to populate results by various machine learnt taggings that we have developed. The platform also understands results selected by users and their navigation to give personalised recommendations," he added.

How does it differ from the competition? Of late, India's startup boom has spawned vertical AI startups focused on solving a multitude of legal tasks such as Document Review, Case Predictions & even advisory services. On the USP front, Shrivastava asserts Mitra.ai platform acts as a one-stop-solution for legal research, is outfitted with a search engine, defence builder notepad and boasts of a feature rich user dashboard . "We have seen multiple players starting to compete in this market but in India most of them are in budding stage. Our vision is to build platform with user friendly UI yet complex algorithms running behind it , to address the productivity gap of legal fraternity," he added.

The other product – Smriti is an AI-powered contract life cycle management tool. Currently, the startup is integrating project and document management capabilities to empower the users with spectrum of features. Also, the founders are dabbling with the idea of a Virtual legal assistant such as chatbot to address conversational queries. However, Shrivastava also added he is yet to ascertain the full scope for it in the industry, that is just beginning to adopt AI software.

Challenges in deploying AI solutions in Legal

Given the data-intensive nature of AI, building a data corpus is the primary and still the most difficult thing to venture into any sector, pointed out Shrivastava. But besides the need for petabytes of data, there are also issues related to data confidentiality & the black box problem of AI.

According to Shrivastava, the founders have considerable expertise in building tech & business capabilities and would be introducing a number of products for legal sector first. "The idea is to exploit ML and AI algorithms to address the productivity gap because of data discovery and Intelligence. Legal domain has been deprived of technology solutions before, especially legal research. Mitra.ai is addressing this through its sophisticated yet user friendly platform," he said.

Team Size

Pensieve has a 10-member strong team with a mix of tech, business, product & domain experts to identify , build and deliver product efficiently. The tech team has four members onboard with machine learning experts and members to handle frontend. "Going forward we would seek folks in ML domain to even enrich our tech capabilities and folks would be needed for B2B sales and support also," he said.

Plans are also afoot to expand to the US market and the startup is in talks with law firms.