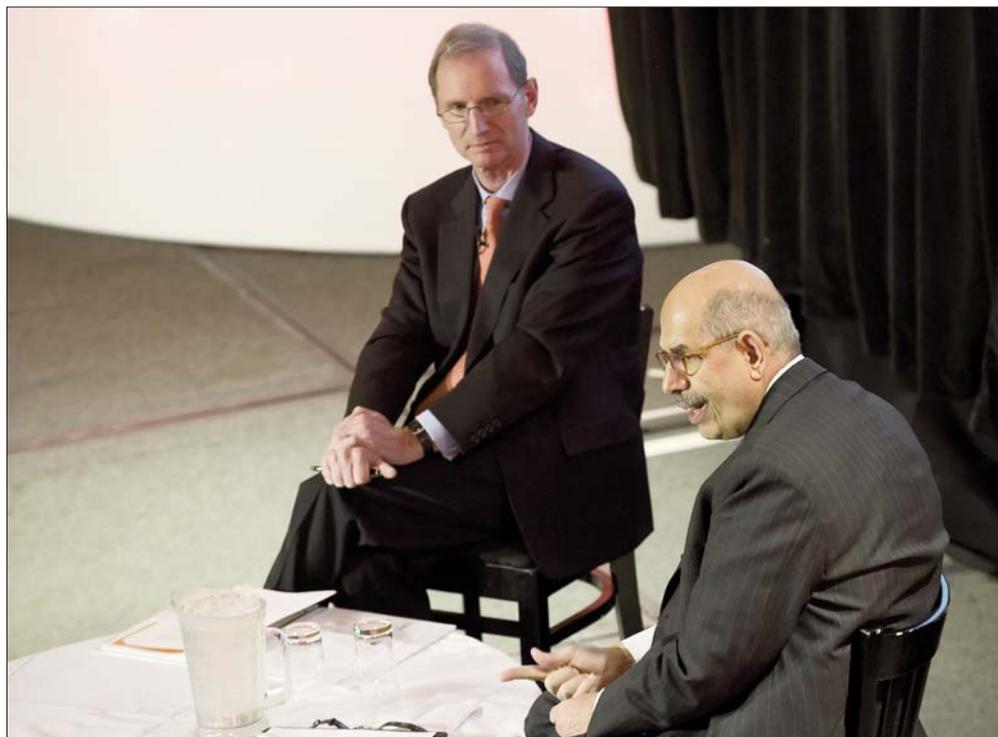


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Peter Warwick, CEO of Thomson Reuters, Legal, and Mohamad ElBaradei, former director general of the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency, during "The Rule of Law and the Role of Information in Verifying Compliance in Developing Nations," a session held Monday during LegalTech in New York City. Warwick said of the company's "goal in organizing the forum "was to spark ideas and discuss opportunities for combining digital technology and the human spirit in promoting justice and the rule of law in an increasingly complex global environment in which many of the legal services organizations ... now operate."

Intelligence, intuition on display at LegalTech

Lawyers tackling troubles of the digital age

BY NICOLE BLACK

NEW YORK CITY — Thousands attended LegalTech New York this week in Manhattan, hoping to catch up on the latest legal technologies and innovations.

The annual LegalTech conference is sponsored by ALM with the goal of helping lawyers and law firms learn about the latest advances in legal-related technology.

LegalTech tends to draw attendees from large law firms, ranging from attorneys to IT staff, although firms of all sizes are represented. Multiple educational tracks focused on a variety of legal technology issues, from ediscovery to knowledge management, cloud computing and social media.

The main exhibit floor included hundreds of booths featuring legal technology products, most of which focused on enterprise level solutions and ediscovery technologies. In keeping with the general trend of increased interest in cloud computing, this year's event featured much greater focus on cloud computing products alternatives than last year's.

A major conference draw of the conference was Wednesday morning's keynote presentation — "I³: The New Convergence of Intelligence, Intuition and Information" — which featured a panel including Malcolm Gladwell, the New York Times best

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selling author of “Blink” and “Outliers”; Thomson Reuters Chief Strategy Officer David Craig and Dr. Lisa Sanders, New York Times Magazine Diagnosis Columnist and technical advisor to the television program “House, M.D.”

Their discussion centered on the proposition that the world increasingly suffers from information overload, with the potential to overwhelm users if it's not properly managed.

Craig served as the moderator, kicking things off with a discussion of Moore's Law, which states that every two years, the number of transistors that can be placed on an integrated circuit will double. Moore's Law predicts, in other words, that the processing power of computers doubles every two years.

Craig said that prediction already has proven true, and that people are creating and storing more information than ever before, resulting in an information overload he described as a “tsunami of information.”

He cited statistics regarding Westlaw use, noting that in the last year alone, more than 2 billion searches were performed using Westlaw. Craig questioned the value of the increasing accessibility of information and the speed at which it is available, and said it resulted in a surface review of information rather than an in-depth analysis. Craig posed two questions: Does access to more information allow us to make better decisions, and are underlying information gathering systems making users more effective or end up bogging them down?

Gladwell said a chief issue is how best to assist decision makers in making sense of the morass of information provided to them. He discussed a study of the decision making processes of emergency room physicians who were failing to accurately diag-

nose heart attacks. That study determined the physicians simply were overloaded with data, ultimately preventing them from making accurate assessments of patients' symptoms. Physicians who were provided with a decision aid that forced them to consider only four factors when assessing patients ultimately made far more accurate diagnoses, he said.

Gladwell said the underlying issue that led to the inaccuracies occurred because the doctors' intuition was failing them. Failures appeared to occur for three reasons: Intuition is a mysterious process deeply rooted in the subconscious; unaided expert decision-making is fragile and easily infected by biases and intuition is frugal, working best when an expert is presented with less information rather than more.

Gladwell said providing people with less, more pertinent information prevents them from becoming sidetracked by distractions.

Sanders agreed intuition can be important in making decisions, and said the ability to ignore irrelevant information can make all the difference when making an accurate diagnosis, for instance. She stressed that more information is not necessary, but better information.

Craig concluded the session by noting that although technology permits users to access and store more information than ever before, the phenomenon is not necessarily a good thing. Information overload can result in faulty decision making as well as an inability to even reach a decision due to the sheer volume of information and the inability to process it.

Increased access to information is good, Craig noted, but the ability to locate and quickly process useful information is key.

Nicole Black is a Rochester-based attorney and freelance writer.

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