

Lights, camera, algorithm

How AI video can help you now

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Not long ago, creating a professional-quality video meant hiring a production team, booking studio time, and crossing your fingers that the final cut wouldn't require a second mortgage. As lawyers and judges, most of us relegated video content to marketing departments or trial consultants with generous budgets and long timelines.

But now, with just a few typed AI prompts and clicks, even a solo practitioner can create a compelling training video, explainer animation, or courtroom visual—often in minutes and without ever picking up a camera. The playing field has shifted, and the implications are enormous.

Let's explore what AI-generated video really is, how it works, where it can serve lawyers well—and where it can't. And, of course, why ethics must stay in the director's chair.

The first time I tested AI video creation, I was skeptical. I used DeepReel AI's free version through the Canva platform. I typed out a basic script titled *"What to Expect at a Mediation,"* chose a professional-looking avatar, selected a calm American voiceover, and clicked "Generate."

About seven minutes later, I had a clean, subtitle-ready video featuring a virtual mediator calmly explaining the basics of dispute resolution. It wasn't Hollywood, but it was surprisingly good—good enough to include in a PowerPoint presentation I was giving as part of a CLE.

And good enough to make me wonder what the paid version might offer.

The ideas started flowing: explainers for self-represented litigants, visuals for judicial outreach, bite-sized CLE intros, training videos for new associates. All without a film crew, a camera, or—here's the kicker—any technical skill.

How it works (and why that matters)

At its core, AI video creation combines natural language processing with image synthesis to generate video from text. Think of it as typing your way to a video. Here's how a typical workflow looks:

1. The prompt: Start with a script or even a single sentence. Something like "Explain the parenting time modification process," or "Summarize the legal test for summary judgment." For me, the prompt usually contains a reference to mediation.

2. Style selection: Choose how the video should look: animated explainer, photorealistic avatar, or cinematic visuals. Some programs even allow you to create an avatar that resembles you by uploading your own image.

3. Voiceover and sound: Tools like ElevenLabs (elevenlabs.io) can generate natural-sounding speech in dozens of languages, accents, and tones. You can also upload your own voice to many of the different video platforms.

4. Video generation: Platforms like Synthesia (www.synthesia.io/home), Runway ML (easywithai.com/ai-video-tools/runwayml/), or Pictory (pictory.ai) convert your script into a full-motion video, syncing speech with facial expressions and visuals.

5. Final touches: Adjust the pacing, add subtitles, insert your branding, and export the finished product.

What once took a team of five now takes one person and an afternoon.

Practical legal applications

This isn't just about firm marketing or TikTok lawyers. Here's how professionals across the legal system are putting AI video to work:

- Client education:** Family lawyers are creating short videos in multiple languages that explain parenting time, court processes, or ADR options.

- Judicial communication:** Judges are using AI videos for public education campaigns on subjects like how to access remote court hearings or seek an expungement.

- CLE and internal training:** Bar associations and firms are repackaging seminar content into on-demand microlearning videos—improving accessibility and retention.

- Courtroom visuals:** Litigators are building animated timelines or treatment summaries to explain complex evidence to juries and judges.

- Community outreach:** Legal aid clinics and nonprofits are using video to connect with underserved populations, translating legal jargon into digestible visual content.

The legal profession isn't alone in recognizing AI's potential. Courts themselves are embracing AI-generated video as a tool for access and engagement. In Arizona, court officials have introduced AI-powered digital avatars to assist self-represented litigants. These lifelike video avatars—complete with facial expressions and synthesized voices—guide users through legal forms, explain court procedures, and provide multilingual support. Available 24/7, these tools are already reducing demand on staff and helping users navigate the system with dignity and clarity.

Last spring, the family of a deceased man named Christopher Pelkey used an AI-generated avatar of him to deliver a victim impact statement in court at a sentencing hearing. The video was described as a startling, emotional, and controversial moment—underscoring both the power and the ethical complexity of AI in sensitive legal spaces. The avatar, made by his sister, was designed to look and sound like Pelkey and marked the first time a court has accepted an AI-generated video statement.

These aren't just tech experiments—they're infrastructure shifts. And they signal a larger transformation in how courts communicate with the public.

So how might you use this?

If courts are using AI avatars to explain due process, and families are using them to speak from beyond the grave, what does that mean for the everyday legal professional?

It means opportunity. Marketing, training, client support, and case communication are all areas in which AI video can make your work easier, faster, and more effective. For you it might start with learning how to make a basic, clear, client-facing video. Or with turning a frequently asked question into a short narrated visual. Or repurposing your CLE outline into a 90-second explainer.

And from there, you build. With each project, you gain comfort, clarity, and control.

Not magic: The limits of AI video

Of course, no new technology comes without a few quirks. AI-generated videos can produce odd visual hiccups—think hands with six fingers or people who never blink. Complex human motion often comes off as stiff or robotic. And AI still struggles with nuance, emotion, and timing—the intangible elements that turn a good presentation into a persuasive one.

Customization also has its limits. If your script calls for charm, comedic timing, or anything that feels distinctly human, you may still want a real person on screen. And while AI makes video creation more accessible, high-quality rendering can still take time and processing power—sometimes hours, depending on the output.

Then there's the cost. Many platforms offer free versions, but those often come with restrictions: short runtimes, limited avatars, visible watermarks, or fewer customization options. To access the more polished, professional-grade features, you'll likely need to pay a monthly or annual fee. It's still far more affordable than a traditional production crew—but it's not entirely free.

Ethical plot twists: Deepfakes and dilemmas

Here's where things get serious. The same tools that help you explain parenting consulting can also be used to fabricate a video of someone saying something they never said. These deepfakes aren't theoretical—they're already being used in political disinformation, financial fraud, and identity manipulation.

As legal professionals, we understand what's at stake. If video evidence becomes unreliable, the justice system itself is at risk.

Some ethical guardrails to keep in mind:

- **Consent:** Always obtain written permission before using someone's likeness or voice, even for internal training or education.
- **Disclosure:** Be transparent when a video is AI-generated, especially in CLEs, court communications, or public education.
- **Responsibility:** Know your audience and use discretion. What works for a client explainer may not fly in a courtroom.

AI unlocks new freedoms—but it also introduces new responsibilities. We must treat it with the same care we give our briefs, orders, and judicial opinions.

Embracing the future (with both eyes open)

AI video creation is one of those rare innovations that actually delivers on its promise. It lowers the barriers that once made professional video the exclusive territory of marketing departments and well-funded firms. Now a solo practitioner can produce a compelling explainer on mediation, a judge can narrate procedural updates for self-represented litigants, and a law professor can bring dry statutory language to life—in under five minutes. Legal communication is becoming more accessible, more visual, and more effective.

The legal world isn't always quick to embrace new technology. But this is one shift we can't afford to ignore. AI video isn't just a shiny new toy—it's a serious tool. One that has the potential to make legal education more dynamic, client communication more meaningful, and courtroom advocacy more persuasive.

Try the tools. Write a script. Create a short video for your next training, outreach effort, or CLE. But also read the fine print. Ask the hard questions. Think like a judge. Because in the end, it's not just about what AI can do—it's about what we choose to do with it. ▲

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