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CALIFORNIA

TRAILBLAZERS

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MARK LYON

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PIONEER SPIRIT Mark Lyon's experience as a telecommunications engineer at the defense contractor Lockheed Missiles and Space made him a natural to spearhead his firm's new artificial intelligence and automated systems practice group. He understands how these transformative new technologies work, as well as the legal implications of their use. Artificial intelligence is "the new electricity, the new oil," but with unique policy issues: "What should AI be able to do — and not do?"

TRAILS BLAZED Lyon, who has represented tech companies in intellectual property matters, first saw the need for a practice devoted to artificial intelligence when his son took a high school class on neural networks, computer systems designed to work like the human brain. "That's what brought it home that this was real, that it really was as prevalent as the hype was saying." Now he advises big and small companies as they develop new uses for AI. Clients include startups designing medical devices that use machine learning to monitor health conditions and a major consumer electronics manufacturer developing natural language technology to understand and interpret human speech.

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS As artificial intelligence becomes more prevalent, Lyon expects regulators to take harder looks at how the technologies work and the privacy concerns surrounding them while also trying to avoid stifling innovation. "It's been fairly open and unregulated in the past. I think that's going to change." In addition, he sees more litigation testing the limits of what these new systems should be able to do and measure. "The laws are not quite caught up to the technology here. There's going to be a period of trying to figure out what fits and what needs to be added."