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## Law and Technology: No Longer Optional Partners

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Shaun Jamison

In this new and fast-paced service economy, consumers of all stripes expect more for less. They also demand better and more effective service, but at a predictable price. This includes legal consumers, from the individual private client to the largest global company. Clients expect to pay for the value of what they receive rather than how long it took the lawyers to do it. So how can law firms meet the demands of clients? Embracing technology is key. However, for a profession that is so steeped in tradition, this isn't always easy. This should change, especially given the following five major trends surrounding the law and technology:

**1. Knowledge Management:** Lawyers who succeed in the new economy will effectively manage the intellectual capital of their firms. Even assuming a client is not paying by the hour, they still expect the firm to be able to quickly and effectively address their legal concerns. An effective knowledge management system is key to not only avoid "reinventing the wheel" but also continue to build a better one that centers around and better serves the client. Further, it can help firms standardize documents used in transactions to avoid missing issues and other costly mistakes. Knowledge management can also create sharing and collaboration opportunities between complementary practice groups.

**2. Cloud Computing:** From the largest law firm to the solo practitioner, clients already demand convenience and control. Cloud computing and services can enable both. People will continue to become more comfortable working at a distance while the bottom line impacts of time and cost of travel will reduce in-person meetings. Being able to share documents online will be beneficial to save time and increase efficiency. Even if an in-person meeting is scheduled, the client and lawyer can be better prepared by reviewing each other's documents in advance. A properly secured online portal is also likely more secure than email. To compete for increasingly busy and geographically diverse clients, law firms will be required to embrace cloud computing.

**3. Automation and Artificial Intelligence:** Keeping with the theme of more for less, lawyers will find ways to deliver services more efficiently and effectively. A solo practitioner might create an automated form in Word or Hot Docs or they may purchase practice area specific programs such as bankruptcy or estate planning. Some online portals for virtual law firms already have interview-based forms generation. Larger firms can create more customized automation for their practice areas. Computer driven workflows for review procedures can greatly reduce reliance on email and more importantly, the risk that the work process gets stalled. While we are a long ways from artificial intelligence replacing lawyers, we have seen strides in medicine and, no doubt, successes in other areas will increase demand in the law. Less complex areas of the law are easier to create a responsive program and thus less costly. On the other hand, the more complex the area, the more likely a human is to make a mistake. A system populated with the knowledge of top practitioners could greatly support more junior lawyers to increase efficiency and avoid mistakes. For now, the end-user may be skeptical of current artificial intelligence as Siri, which suggested a course of action whereby one of the authors would exit his car on a busy freeway and



James Cooper



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have to jump a fence and wade through a swamp to his destination. However, the day will come when artificial intelligence will be an excellent adjunct to the practice of law.

**4. Security:** All of the above trends are vulnerable to security breaches. For a profession where the sharing of privileged and confidential information is stock and trade, security is not a luxury. It is both a necessity and requirement of doing business. While any enterprise is concerned about security, a law firm's losses would not be limited to negligence and damage to their reputation; lawyers could have their licenses at risk for failing to protect client confidential information. Networks and devices are constantly under attack and it requires both a technological defense as well as the education of front line end-users to protect the privacy and integrity of information used by the firm and its clients.

**5. Technology Savvy Legal Staff:** Lawyers and other legal professionals who embrace and understand technology will be the leaders in the new economy. To take advantage of the above four trends, law firms need people who can translate between the IT department and those involved in advising clients. The law firm needs technology users who understand how to leverage technology effec-

tively while protecting the integrity of systems. To help make this happen, the ABA House of Delegates recently approved a resolution encouraging unrestricted continuing legal education credits for law practice management topics, including technology. Concord Law School of Kaplan University has a Future of Law Practice course where students research and present on emerging issues in law practice which often involve technology. Law schools are deploying more courses online or with more technology. Careers for legally trained technologists are opening up.

The world is changing fast, driven by increasing consumer expectations and enabled by technology. It will take talented technologists sensitive to the professional concerns of lawyers, who are willing to change, and leadership from bar associations, courts, and law schools to pave the way to effective use of technology to best serve legal clients in the years to come. [CR](#)

