

How Will Legal Education And Training Keep Pace With Change?

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Dell Technologies authored a report projecting 85% of jobs that will exist in 2030 have yet to be invented. "The pace of change will be so rapid that people will learn 'in the moment' using new technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality. The ability to gain new knowledge will be more valuable than the knowledge itself." Many lawyers might think this does not apply to them, but think again.

Deloitte released a report on the legal industry predicting "profound reforms" over the next decade. Several factors were cited including: automation, the rise of millennials in the workplace, and changing client demands. Deloitte projected a 39% loss of legal sector jobs. That will be offset by new positions in data analytics, legal technology architecting and design, risk mitigation, and other yet-to-be-identified fields. . The "profound reforms" are already underway.

The transition of law from lawyer-centric, provincial, labor-intensive guild to a customer-focused, global, digitized industry requires new skillsets and training. Technology and business are now tools of the legal trade and legal education and training have lagged the marketplace. Clients demand efficient, predictive, cost-effective, accessible and scalable delivery of legal services.

"Knowledge of the law" alone is insufficient for all but a handful of elite lawyers. "Practice" is narrowing as "the business of delivering legal services" is expanding. The latter requires a suite of new skillsets that have yet to become standard fare in legal training. Bill Henderson, a leader in aligning the Academy with the marketplace, sums up the state-of-play: "Legal education and the legal profession are at an inflection point where traditional models of education and practice no longer fit the shifting needs of the market." Most law schools continue to focus on doctrinal law and how to "think like a lawyer." Their curricula are light on practice skills, marketplace changes, and business of law skills. The challenge confronting the industry is how to identify, mine, train, deploy and scale talent to fill the gap. Fortunately, there are a handful of training programs that are paving the way for the legal industry's future whose contours are being shaped.

LawWithoutWalls is a part-virtual experiential learning program designed for practicing and aspiring lawyers. LWOW uses team building, mentorship, and an interdisciplinary approach to forge collaborative relationships for participants. LWOW provides participants with skills required of today's lawyers and legal professionals-teamwork, communication, leadership,, innovation, cultural competency, business planning, technology, and networking. The Institute for the Future of Law Practice (IFLP) is "a partnership between all members of the legal ecosystem-corporate law departments, law firms, alternative legal service providers, and legal academics-to help modernize legal education and dramatically upgrade the skills of the next generation of legal professionals." They stage a series of "legal boot camps," exposing students to inter-disciplinary real-life problem solving with an emphasis on augmented skills [...]

American law schools are somewhat hamstrung by the ABA's control of legal licensure and legal education. The ABA's recent rule change that encourages experiential learning, is encouraging, but the organization remains beholden to its dues-paying members, not the industry they serve. Legal education/training must be geared to satisfy the demands of those in need of access to legal services, not the narrower profession. Professional training is a baseline, but it must be augmented by industry training.

Law's skills gap is the byproduct of the culture war between lawyers and the broader legal industry. Lawyers are having a difficult time embracing the profession's transformation . Legal education and training must "mind the gap" and respond to the needs of the society its students serve.