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The future is now

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It's time for the legal profession to pull its collective head out of the sand when it comes to technology, the Internet and Web 2.0.

Technology is here to stay and ignoring it no longer is an option.

Law firms and lawyers who turn a blind eye to technology do so to their own detriment, and their failure to acclimate to rapid technological change is going to catch up with them in 2009.

Like it or not, technology has infiltrated nearly every aspect of life. All kinds of information, including the very latest news, is available online. Phone numbers, addresses and contact information for of every type of business is readily accessible on the Internet. Shopping can be accomplished quickly and securely with the click of a button. Music can be downloaded from iTunes. Movies and television shows can be instantaneously streamed through Netflix or Hulu.com directly to a high-definition television via a laptop.

Likewise, technology has infiltrated the legal profession and leveled the playing field in ways never before seen. Small offices now can compete on even footing with large law firms.

Entire offices can be operated remotely using reasonably priced Web-based tools and applications. Documents can be stored securely on remote servers. Law offices can use Web-based practice management and time and billing applications such as Rocket Matter in lieu of the complicated and expensive software traditionally used by the legal profession.

Virtual law offices now are a reality and the value of online real estate has increased exponentially in recent years. With just a little effort, and minimal expense, solo practitioners can create a strong online presence that competes with that of larger firms.

A well-written law blog and polished profiles and content at JDSupra, Avvo, LinkedIn, and Facebook can do wonders for a lawyer's search engine ranking. Online networking with lawyers and other professionals through Twitter and other online networks can lead to a steady stream of business.



By way of example, over the last six months I've received referrals from other lawyers across the country as a result of networking on Facebook and Twitter.

Potential clients from across New York State have contacted me through my blogs, Twitter and Avvo. I've also had former clients call me after locating me via Internet search engines.

I've been preaching about technological change for years now, as have many other cutting edge, influential lawyers from whom I've learned a great deal: Carolyn Elefant (www.myshingle.com), Susan Cartier Liebel (www.solopracticeuniversity.com), Grant Griffiths (www.homeofficewarrior.com) and Kevin O'Keefe (www.lexblog.com), to name just a few.

It seems the legal field is finally starting to sit up and take notice. Facebook has become mainstream. Law blogs are all the rage.

When I began blogging in 2005, no one knew what a blog was. Now law firms, big and small, are launching blogs at an unprecedented rate.

The legal profession is just beginning to acknowledge the power of technology and the Internet. That's a start, but reluctant acceptance simply is not good enough.

The legal profession must learn to embrace, not fear, the changing landscape. There is still a demand for legal services, and there always will be — technology has not changed that fact. Technology has altered the playing field and the rules of the game by changing the ways in which legal services are marketed, sold and purchased.

The change is not temporary, but permanent. Lawyers who accept and embrace that fact and position themselves for the future — rather than denying its reality — will prosper and profit in 2009 and beyond.

Will you be one of those lawyers?

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