



## The Business of Law: No More Mr. Nice Guy

March 25, 2011

I was having coffee with a lawyer friend the other day, each of us chatting about what we were up to. The “future of law” topic inevitably came up in conversation, since the current evolution of law practice drives everything I do. So we talked about my personal favorite topic, [UK’s Legal Services Act \(LSA\) and the coming of Alternative Business Structures \(ABS\)](#). He was unfamiliar with this business, so I explained what they were. When I finished, he shrugged his shoulders and said: “But that’s in England”, meaning, of course, it had nothing to do with us.

Wrong answer.

The corporate world is globalized. It doesn’t get hung up on things like jurisdiction and nationality. The only question is who will dominate the legal services industry, not what country they come from. There is significant money to be made in the commoditization of legal products, which used to be strictly within the wise domain of the \$500 per hour man, and the wolves are at the door. Already, they are [jockeying for position](#) in the UK. And in the US, a bill has been put before the North Carolina legislature proposing to allow [non-lawyer investment into law firms](#). This is a global economy hungry for new market share. Law had never been a profession subject to marketplace dynamics, but then neither was the practice of medicine, and look how they’ve learned to . . . restructure.

Which is why thought leaders in this arena no longer ask “if”; they are only now considering the “how”: how will law firms evolve in the fluid dynamics of a changing profession? How do they keep their hold on the legal bread and butter that’s threatening to find a home on giant corporate server farms?

For answers to those questions, it has been a banner week. There has been a series of posts by those whose job it is to figure this stuff out, and together they paint quite a colorful picture of what could be. It’s worth your time to get the perspective that the legal profession is being perceived within the global marketplace, not separate from it. Private money will soon be invading your private professional domain, and already has outside the direct-investment scenario (think Thomson-Reuters/Pangea and now, [Asian Legal Business](#), a leading Asian Legal Publisher). How much of it you want to hand over is up to you.

- [“Bet the Farm” versus “Law Factory”: Which One Works](#) – Ron Friedman and Toby Brown
- [Law Firm Investment Portfolios](#) – V. Mary Abraham
- [The Law Factory Debate: Another Perspective](#) – Steven Levy
- [Legal Billing Rates: The Next Wave](#) – John Wallbillich
- [The Stratified Legal Market and its Implications](#) – Jordan Furlong
- [Deep Thoughts on the Future of Law Practice](#) – Jim Calloway
- [Future of Law Practice](#) – On-Demand Video with Jim Calloway and Sharon Nelson