Forbes / Business / #BigBusiness

FEB 26, 2018 @ 09:01 AM

546 ®

2 Free Issues of Forbes

Technology: Law's Collaborative Catalyst



Mark A. Cohen, CONTRIBUTOR

I write about changes in the global legal marketplace. FULL BIO ✓

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

Continued from page 3

Legal Hackers chapters host free, public events--including meet-ups, workshops, demo nights, and hackathons--in order to build community and foster creative problem-solving at the intersection of law and technology. This social objective is emblematic of the new global community. It is a reminder to the legal profession that it is intended not only to serve individual clients zealously, competently, and ethically but also to protect and defend the rule of law.

Legal Education is Being Reimagined and Realigned with The Marketplace

A handful of law schools are in the vanguard of curriculum reform designed to prepare the future lawyer. Bucerius (Germany), IE (Spain), and The University of Miami's 'LawWithoutWalls,' are examples of law programs that have aligned their curricula to the marketplace, providing students with a global industry perspective, core practice skills, exposure to core legal delivery competencies—project management, data analytics, impact of technology on legal delivery, business basics, collaboration, etc.—experiential learning, and other in-demand skillsets. These institutions meld legal, technological, and business training to provide graduates—and

those already in the marketplace-- the skills required in a rapidly changing marketplace.

Each of these institutions has forged close ties with the marketplace. Technology is the bridge connecting them to law firms, corporate legal departments, and law companies that collaborate with and often employ their students. This practice, often referred to as 'tech transfer,' has been in place in engineering and medical schools for some time. Its growing adoption by progressive law schools evidences a recognition that the Academy—like most traditional law firms—has become misaligned with the marketplace. The institutions cited here--and a handful of others--are taking steps to bridge that divide. Incubators are popping up at law schools (as well as firms) around the world, offering another vehicle for the Academy to leverage its resources and align itself--and students--with other stakeholders in the legal ecosystem.

Ryerson University in Canada is another example of the collaborative power of technology. The Toronto-based University launched its 'Legal Innovation Zone' (LIZ) a few years ago, incubating legal tech companies, serving as a *de facto* ground zero for the energized Toronto legal tech community, and sponsoring events including talks by global legal thought leaders. The LIZ supports, fosters, and develops solutions and techniques to improve legal services and to expand access to them.

This week, the Canadian Common Law Program Approval Committee of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada granted the law school proposal preliminary approval, paving the way for Ryerson to launch a law school. The world may not need another (traditional) law school, but it will surely benefit from Ryerson's progressive approach that combines law, business, technology, experiential learning, social commitment, and a close alignment with the Toronto, Canadian, and global legal business communities. Technology is the mortar cementing the relationship between Ryerson and the community and the cornerstone of the new law school's advancement of the LIZ mission.

Conclusion

Technology is often seen as disconnecting people from one another-- promoting detachment, isolation, and fostering a *faux* intimacy by creating virtual 'relationships.' But technology is also a cohesive force—especially in the legal industry. It has spawned innovation in a precedent-bound culture, replaced parochialism with globalism, transformed a zero-sum ethos into one where 'everyone wins' solutions are sought, and imbued the industry with a new energy, focus, and resolve to address its wicked problems and to improve legal delivery. At the same time, the pervasive use of technology in law is a clarion call to hone emotional intelligence--'people skills.' Becoming a 'trusted advisor' is about building client trust and confidence with demonstrated expertise, judgment, outstanding service, and compassion. These characteristics separate humans from machines, and both are required to solve law's wicked problems and to improve legal delivery for all.