

Chapter 1 - The Necessity for Automating the Practice of Law

Technology and Law Practice Trends

Without a doubt, the information and communication revolution is having a significant impact on the practice of law.

Clients

- *Client collaboration* - Many firms are already collaborating with their clients using group computing, Internet, and mobile devices.
- *Client brokering* - Social networking is creating borderless interaction, clients are retaining lawyers through intermediaries.
- *Unbundling of legal services* - Clients are increasingly asking lawyers to handle only a certain part of a legal problem.

Competition

- *Globalization* - Physical borders no longer limit law firms in having clients throughout the world.
- *Small boutique firms* - By using outsourcing, contract attorneys, the Internet and technology small firms are competing with large firms.
- *Multidisciplinary Practices (MDPs)* - Business consultants and lawyers are providing a variety of services.
- *Kiosks and web self-help* - Self-help kiosks and web sites are starting to proliferate as routine, fairly easy legal tasks.
- *Numbers of lawyers* - The increase in lawyers will continue as law schools continue to graduate more lawyers.
- *Nonlawyers* - Paralegals and document preparers will continue to service clients with low-cost legal services.

Lawyer

- *Virtual law firms* - The Internet, mobile computing, application service providers (ASP's), wireless communication, and other technologies are enabling lawyers to work virtually.
- *Constant learning* - lawyers will have to constantly learn how to use the new technologies in an ever-changing legal environment.
- *Quality of life* - issues concerning a balanced lifestyle will increase as technology allows for more flexible work schedules.
- *Contract lawyers* - Lawyers will have the option of choosing to work as a "free agent", part of a network, or as an employee.

Law Firm

- *New Fee setting methods* – The firm has to address client pressure to use different fee methods, other than the traditional billable hour.
- *Technology leverage* – There are significant technology advances that the firm will have to implement.
- *Shared knowledge/intellectual capital* – The “intellectual capital” will be recognized and the need to capture and share the knowledge.
- *Mobile attorney* – The firm will have to address the issues raised by telecommuting and how to manage the mobile attorney.
- *Content tools* – Document assembly, document management, knowledge management, expert systems, etc.
- *Case management* – PIMS, group computing systems, extranets, intranets, and application servers.

Technology

- *Internet* – As the wide bandwidth infrastructure is put into place, the Internet will become a more powerful tool.
- *Paperless, borderless communication* – E-mail, videoconferencing, digital documents, electronic filing will all support the paperless, borderless communication.
- *Computing applications* – Computers are becoming more powerful and smaller in size. Use of voice recognition, etc.

Litigation

- *Digital presentation* – Paperless trials, slideshow presentations, animations, simulations, and graphics.
- *Case preparation* – document depositories, outliners, databases, full text, images, and real-time updates.