



# Ideas for rethinking your law practice

The changes facing the legal professional may seem daunting, but all lawyers can rise to these challenges and embrace the opportunities they present. There are many ways to respond, some are quite small and easy, and others require a significant investment of time and money. Some can be done by individual lawyers, and others require changes at a firm level.

Every journey, and even the longest journey, begins with one step. Before you begin the journey to evolve your practice, ask yourself what you love and hate as a consumer when you patronize businesses. Keep these thoughts in mind as at one time or another your clients may have had similar pleasure and pain reactions to your services. The following list contains some options you can consider for transforming your practice:

## Convenience

Today everyone seems quite busy and the instant gratification provided by online shopping and internet searches has greatly shortened our collective patience.

- Obviously, you cannot be available to your clients at all times, but you may be able to use client portals, chatbots or other technology tools to provide on-demand access to client information and even some legal advice or services.
- Some lawyers schedule weekend and evening appointments for their clients or potential clients, if requested. If your firm caters mainly to individual consumer clients, you might consider having regular evening office hours one day per week and closing at noon on Friday. Some individuals may have pay docked or have other negative work consequences from scheduling appointments during regular business hours and would hire you just because the firm is open every Thursday night.
- Appointments by a secured videoconference will likely become increasingly popular in the future.

## More for less

Clients are demanding more for less and will continue to do so. Lawyers often hear that observation as a demand that lawyers receive less. Fortunately, this scenario can be a win-win if you use technology effectively along with different methods of service delivery.

- Automation of routine document creation combined with fixed fees.
- “Unbundled” or limited scope services let you share the workload with the client. Visit [practicepro.ca/limitedscope](http://practicepro.ca/limitedscope) for resources to help you accomplish this.
- Being a current (or recent) client of the firm confers the benefit of free notarial services, access to a client-only portal with videos featuring free general information or advice, downloadable documents and even a few free forms.

## Client-focused

You may believe that you have always had a focus on clients, but in reality that focus was often on the client’s legal matter.

- A key focus of the initial engagement interview is determining what the client wants. Set clear expectations and advise the client about the range of possible outcomes and how you can assist them on the current matter, but at the same time remember to flag longer term considerations for them.

- Consider whether there are ways to give clients more price predictability (e.g., offer flat fees or other alternative fee arrangements). Setting fees for different stages of a matter can help accomplish this.
- Meet regularly with major or long term clients to get to know them better.
- Look for ways to build a deeper relationship with your clients. Ask yourself: How can I become their “lawyer for life”?

## Efficiency

Our focus has always been doing the legal work right no matter how long it took. Now we must be more efficient and provide these “perfect” legal services as expeditiously as possible.

- Take time to learn more about technology and how it can help you reduce costs and be more efficient.
- Invest the time to analyze and improve your workflows. Digital client files and paperless workflows are an important part of this.
- Most lawyers can talk faster than they can type. Consider using voice recognition software.
- Would outsourcing legal or back-office work allow you to be more efficient?

## Adapting and evolving your practice

Many lawyers have become specialists, focusing their work on one or more related practice areas. Consider how you could grow or change your practice by asking the following questions:

- Is there an area of my practice I should drop because it is not profitable or takes up too many resources?
- Is there a new area of practice I could consider developing given my skills, experience and interests?
- Consider how you can work with other lawyers in your office to make the options listed on this page happen at your firm.

The future is now. Many of the changes occurring in the legal services arena will happen regardless of whether lawyers want them to or not. Be a voice for change and take the steps that are necessary to evolve and adapt your practice. The resources listed in the other sidebars in this article will help you on that journey.

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