

Expanding The Legal Function: Redefining the 21st Century Legal Career

The legal profession is undergoing a period of unprecedented transformation, driven by technological advancements, globalization, and changing business needs. As a result, the traditional role of the lawyer is expanding, and legal professionals are increasingly being called upon to provide a wider range of services beyond the traditional practice of law.



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12) by Richard L. Hermann

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In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the evolving legal landscape and the expanding roles and responsibilities of legal professionals in the 21st century. We will discuss the key drivers of change, the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, and the skills and competencies that legal professionals will need to succeed in the years to come.

The Key Drivers of Change

There are a number of key drivers that are shaping the evolution of the legal function. These include:

- **Technological advancements:** The rapid pace of technological change is having a profound impact on the legal profession. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other emerging technologies are automating many of the tasks that were once performed by lawyers. This is freeing up lawyers to focus on more strategic and value-added activities.
- **Globalization:** The increasing interconnectedness of the global economy is creating new challenges and opportunities for legal professionals. Multinational corporations are faced with a complex web of laws and regulations, and they need legal advisors who can help them navigate these challenges.
- **Changing business needs:** The way that businesses operate is changing rapidly. Companies are becoming more agile and customer-centric, and they are increasingly relying on legal professionals to help them achieve their business goals.

The Expanding Roles and Responsibilities of Legal Professionals

As a result of these key drivers of change, the traditional role of the lawyer is expanding. Legal professionals are increasingly being called upon to provide a wider range of services beyond the traditional practice of law. These expanded roles and responsibilities include:

- **Legal strategy:** Legal professionals are increasingly being asked to provide strategic advice to their clients. This involves helping clients to

identify and mitigate legal risks, and to develop and implement legal strategies that support their business goals.

- **Legal operations:** Legal professionals are also playing a more active role in legal operations. This involves managing the day-to-day operations of the legal department, including budgeting, staffing, and technology.
- **Legal risk management:** Legal professionals are increasingly responsible for managing legal risks for their organizations. This involves identifying, assessing, and mitigating legal risks, and developing and implementing risk management strategies.
- **Legal innovation:** Legal professionals are also playing a leading role in legal innovation. This involves developing and implementing new technologies and processes to improve the delivery of legal services.

The Challenges and Opportunities that Lie Ahead

The expanding legal function presents both challenges and opportunities for legal professionals. The challenges include:

- **Competition:** The legal profession is becoming increasingly competitive. Legal professionals need to develop new skills and competencies to differentiate themselves from the competition.
- **Technology:** The rapid pace of technological change is creating new challenges for legal professionals. They need to be able to adapt to new technologies and to use them effectively to deliver legal services.
- **Globalization:** The increasing interconnectedness of the global economy is creating new challenges for legal professionals. They need

to be able to understand and navigate the complex web of laws and regulations that govern international business.

The opportunities that lie ahead for legal professionals include:

- **New roles and responsibilities:** The expanding legal function is creating new roles and responsibilities for legal professionals. This provides opportunities for legal professionals to develop their careers and to make a significant impact on their organizations.
- **Technology:** Technology is creating new opportunities for legal professionals to improve the delivery of legal services. Legal professionals can use technology to automate tasks, improve communication, and access information.
- **Globalization:** The increasing interconnectedness of the global economy is creating new opportunities for legal professionals. Legal professionals can work with clients all over the world, and they can access information and resources from all over the world.

The Skills and Competencies that Legal Professionals Will Need to Succeed

To succeed in the 21st century legal profession, legal professionals will need to develop a wide range of skills and competencies. These include:

- **Legal knowledge:** Legal professionals need a strong foundation in legal knowledge. This includes a deep understanding of the law, as well as the ability to research and analyze legal issues.
- **Business acumen:** Legal professionals need to have a strong understanding of business. This includes an understanding of financial



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