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While it's probably not something we think about much, [innovation](#) has profoundly shaped the legal field and the practice of law as we know it today, enabling us to conduct our work more efficiently, accurately and cost-effectively

Twenty-five years ago, chances are you couldn't imagine delivering legal services to clients remotely – without a brick-and-mortar workplace – or requesting alternative fee arrangements from outside counsel or working from home two days a week. Yet today, virtual law [offices](#), flexible fee arrangements and mobile work opportunities are accepted as valuable options.

At its core, innovation delivers some form of value that people want – or need. It can be an idea, a process, product, service or technology. Innovators in the legal field are developing outcomes that drive modifications to successfully meet the growing demands of clients and gain strategic advantage in today's competitive environment. And while many reflect on important technology-driven tools that have impacted the legal profession, such as e-filing, e-discovery or document [management software](#), noteworthy non-tech innovations continue to enhance the profession as well.

Developing the [Legal](#) Innovators of Tomorrow

Recognizing that new and fresh perspectives are needed to affect necessary and positive change within the legal services arena, many [law](#) schools now offer programs designed to promote entrepreneurship and innovation. Courses and workshops provide students with critical knowledge and problem-solving, design-

thinking and other skills essential to legal innovation. Examples of programs designed to develop legal innovators include:

- [LawWithoutWalls](#), founded by [Michele DeStefano](#), professor of law, University of Miami School of Law, features collaboration among lawyers, entrepreneurs, law and business students to explore innovation in legal education and practice.
- Suffolk University Law School's [Institute on Law Practice Technology & Innovation](#) offers students opportunities to leverage technology and other innovations to advance the delivery of legal services.
- The American Bar Association's [Center for Innovation](#) has launched its Innovation Fellows program in which participants develop and implement new projects that address critical needs in the legal sector.
- At Stanford Law School, researchers, lawyers and entrepreneurs collaborate with technologists to advance legal technologies through its [CodeX](#) Programs explore advanced legal document management methodologies and forward-looking infrastructure innovations in the legal industry, with an emphasis on introducing enhanced efficiency, transparency and access to legal systems.
- Various legal issues and business considerations relevant to the development, financing and operation of solo or small law firms are explored in the "[Entrepreneurial Lawyering](#)" course offered at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law.
- The objective of the [Institute for Innovation Law](#) at the University of California Hastings College of the Law is to identify and advance the knowledge, skills and resources required to promote innovation within the legal profession.

Today's legal [professionals](#) need a broad range of competencies to maintain successful careers within an ever-evolving field. Beyond legal knowledge and analytical abilities, lawyers and paralegals require business acumen, tenacity, adaptability, technological proficiency, logical reasoning, and a host of soft skills, such as sound judgment and persuasiveness, collaboration and project management capabilities.

I also believe the 21st century legal professional needs to possess an attitude and willingness to think and act differently – approaching legal matters and developing solutions in creative and non-traditional ways. To address the many challenges faced in the practice of law today, it's critical that legal professionals apply fresh and innovative strategies that can enhance the value of the legal services they offer. That's a key competency that drove the legal innovations of the past – internet-based legal services, deposition transcript software and document review technology, such as technology assisted review, to name just a few. And as the practice of law changes at an accelerated pace, new technologies are introduced and the business environment becomes increasingly complex, the legal profession will continue to be shaped in large part by innovators who possess the intellectual

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curiosity and persistence to pioneer positive change.

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