

A Time to Reflect and Reset

By [LawVision](#) on December 27, 2023

As we approach the end of another year with all that entails at our firms – setting compensation, collecting money, scrambling to close deals, and myriad other things – it’s sometimes hard to step back and remember where we’ve come from and all we have to celebrate.

A few years from now, when we look back on 2023, we may come to see it as the beginning of a great reset in our industry, with the shape of things to come just beginning to form. Consider what we’ve seen over the past twelve months:

- The first year of what is likely to be the “new normal” for work life post-Covid. No, we are not fully back in the office, but almost everyone is back to some degree, and we’ve started to settle into a durable balance. Also, our “new normal” will likely to be much more casual than the industry we used to know (unless you are heading to court!).
- Leaders have begun to come to grips with a changing mindset around the purpose of work and the personal goals of the next generations of lawyers and professional team members. How this emerging trend will reshape our firms is today only a blurry vision – but we know it will become an increasing focus for all.
- The first year of experimentation with generative AI. The initial hype and angst have settled down into a deliberate effort to understand and manage the change these new technologies will bring to our industry. That change will likely be profound, though carefully measured and gradually introduced. As Bill Gates is so famously quoted, “*We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten.*”
- A year of transitional economics as firms adjusted to a slower pace on the deal side and an increased tempo on the litigation side. Our practices, and our demand for people, are more balanced than they were just two years ago. Income growth may be slower, but most firms will report a good year. Again.
- Industry consolidation may be increasing as the size and number of significant firm combinations seems to be growing. Simultaneously, 2023 witnessed several significant dissolutions, including firms with long and venerable histories, while major practice group moves shifted the competitive position of other firms. The intensity of competition is growing, and partners and practices are looking hard at whether their platforms can support their clients’ and their own goals.

Our industry is in a period of change – moving from where we were to where we will be. We can be confident for the *industry* that these changes will be positive. We can build a better, more enduring, more flexible, more satisfying, and more profitable marketplace that supports a wide variety of business models catering to the interests of different professionals and their differing clients. The firms thriving in this new market will be the ones with the greatest clarity around and their real role in this marketplace – sometimes at the cost of saying “we’re not X and are going to stop pretending to be.”

For those that don’t, well...

When we step away from our industry, we see an unsettled world with wars continuing, people displaced, institutions politicized, and populations polarized. On top of all that, we see political leaders who don’t always listen to the people they are elected to serve. Change will come, and it is up to all of us to engage where we can to help guide our communities

toward a better balance. For lawyers, the opportunity to play a positive role in assuring equal justice applies to all is enormous.

As we end this year, we see tremendous opportunity and positive challenges for all of us, but also great vigor and resilience across the industry. Our cultural challenge, as always, will be to navigate the line between those who want to hold on to the past – to the structures and approaches that have made us so successful historically – and those who recognize what brought us to this point might not be what is needed to succeed in a changing market. We will never pursue change for change's sake, but we must recognize that change is inevitable, and our job is to embrace the right changes to assure that our organization will thrive.

For us at LawVision, it is our privilege and pleasure to work side-by-side with you – our clients and friends – to assure your firm's ongoing success. It's an infinite game with no finish line. We look forward to supporting the next steps each of you take and to helping you navigate the future that unfolds from those steps.

As 2023 closes out, we wish each of your firms a successful year end and a great start to 2024. For each of you personally, we wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season and a happy New Year!