

Speaker 1: [\(00:03\)](#)

Welcome to the Vandenack Weaver legal visionaries podcast brought to you by interactive legal here's your host Mary Vandenack

Speaker 2: [\(00:12\)](#)

Welcome to today's episode of Vandenack Weaver, legal visionaries, a weekly podcast discussing updated legal news, evolving methods of providing legal service and law practice issues. My name is Mary Vandenack founder and managing partner at Vandenack Weaver, LLC. I'll be your host. As we talk to experts from around the country about closely held business tax trusts and estates, legal technology, law firm, leadership, and wellbeing. Before we start today's episode, I want to thank our sponsor. Here's the message from interactive legal.

Speaker 3: [\(00:51\)](#)

There's always a resistance to change, particularly with attorneys, attorneys like to look back at what's worked in the past, and that makes a lot of sense. But when you realize that with a good automated drafting system, you can do a better job for your clients. Deliver documents on a timelier fashion in a more consistent, in a more costly manner. If you're not a subscriber to interactive legal, I urge you to go to [interactivelegal.com](http://interactivelegal.com) and click on requested demo. And you'll be contacted about having a demonstration of interactive legal for you, which can be done right over the internet. Don't have to leave your office. No salesperson will call. We can arrange it at a time and convenient for you. So please go to [interactivelegal.com](http://interactivelegal.com) and click on request and demo.

Speaker 2: [\(01:40\)](#)

Today's episode is on future-proofing your law practice. My guest is Reid Trautz, senior director of the practice and professionalism center at the American immigration lawyer's association. He also co-authors the future-proofing column in the ABA law practice magazine. So, I'm going to admit that I'm gonna give and take a little credit here. So I got involved in the American bar association serve many years ago, but it all started when I started my own law firm and I went to dinner with retracts and Dan Pennington, and we had a really great conversation and they kept a little track of me. And eventually I got this call and said, Hey, we'd really like you to get involved. And the next thing I knew I was on a plane on my way to one of their meetings serving on the magazine board. Ultimately, I became editor in chief a few years back. We made some changes to the magazine. And one of the things that Reid I and Dan Pennington are all are passionate about are helping lawyer's kind of rethink the way they practice and thinking about the future and really evolving practice methods and things like that. But so anyway, when I became editor in chief, then I asked Reed to and he and Dan Wright, our future's calm, and it's a great column in the magazine worth reading. So, can you talk to us a little bit about the magazine column read?

Speaker 4: [\(03:03\)](#)

Sure. I'd love to do that. And, all the credit goes to you because the light went on when you called and said, Hey, there's this idea for this column. And we've loved doing it for the last several years. You know, the column is about preparing your practice for the future, right? We get so busy in the day-to-day work, client needs, but we must take some time for ourselves away from the billable work and invest into understanding what's changing the practice of law. What do consumers want? And that's

what this column is about. It helps lawyers, identify and understand those factors and trends. Uh, not only so you can meet the client's needs of today, but also to keep your practice relevant, ethical, and profitable into the future. And so the column appears@lawpracticemagazine.com

Speaker 2: [\(03:54\)](#)

And some PR, and some of those issues, you've actually interviewed people who are doing some really innovative and amazing things, right. And so, it's totally worth a read. So read which factors or trends do you think are currently really changing the practice for solo and small firm lawyers?

Speaker 4: [\(04:12\)](#)

Well, there are a number of factors, but I have to say that legal technology continues to evolve lawyer reregulation and how lawyers and others are regulated in the delivery of legal services, changing consumer needs, which is related to generational switches. We're going to see a big change in the generational switch coming up here, and global flattening the ability to, uh, um, send work and have worked on, uh, anywhere around the world. Those are really among the strongest trends that are, uh, impacting the practice today.

Speaker 2: [\(04:54\)](#)

So can you talk about the lawyer reregulation and what's going on with that? I'm familiar with like Arizona, I believe has currently allowing, um, not historically, right. We've only allowed licensed lawyers to own and practice engage in legal practice. And that's one of the changes that's happening. So, what's going on with regulation generally.

Speaker 4: [\(05:16\)](#)

So I think at its Genesis, the way you know, re-looking at how lawyers, and I'll say it, non-lawyers or others are regulated is really happening because we have not seen in the past 30 or 35 years, really any change for consumers in terms of lowering the cost of legal services, right. There's been numerous studies done. And, uh, they find there just isn't that access to justice that the courts and others are looking for. So now they're looking at, well, how can we change the way the profession is, is regulated. We allow others to deliver those legal services in a secure, in a professional manner. And so, as you said, we're seeing Arizona really at the forefront has basically, will allow many people to come in, uh, and provide service. And the big one as of the last week is legal zoom and legal zoom is now saying, instead of being an independent network of lawyers, they now want to employ lawyers through Arizona to provide legal services.

Speaker 4: [\(06:32\)](#)

We're seeing regulatory sandboxes. Those are experimental, you know, not quite full blown, but experimental pilot projects in Utah and we're seeing the states look at this now from New York to Florida to Illinois, many more states are saying, should we change our regulatory scheme to, and right now, uh, Canada, just the, uh, law society of in, uh, Ontario just changed and they're going to be allowing, have a sandbox. So, about half the lawyers in that country are now under these new regulations that allow for others to provide legal services. So this is something a trend to continue to watch, and I think we'll have a greater impact as we go forward in the next few years.

Speaker 2: [\(07:24\)](#)

One of the things that get said about some of these changes and like what's going on in Arizona is that, well, what's going to happen. There is they're going to serve the commodity market, and that's going to help increase this access to justice. But if your legal zoom, is that really what you're going to go after is the commodity market, or are you going to go after the high-end market? I mean, like, look, you're an investment bank, right. And now you're in Arizona. And instead of like having not been able to practice law, you know, do it happen in the healthcare community, aren't you going to hire like the newest grad out of law school and have them do what lawyers traditionally have done outside and not have to deal with law firms anymore?

Speaker 4: [\(08:07\)](#)

I believe that's, that is where this trend is going to take us. And all we must do is look at a company like Deloitte, right? One of the big accounting firms, they already provide legal services in 80 countries. they do a lot of their work in Canada. I'm very familiar with the immigration process. They do, they do US-based immigration, but they do it in Canada where they're allowed to do it because they can't do it in the United States. And they have hundreds of lawyers doing it. So, uh, I think we're seeing it from the top of the market that will impact larger firms. And we're seeing it at the consumer side of the market where legal zoom will start to get in. And then the market will fill in from there with others who are coming in to provide services that are different from the way lawyers now provide.

Speaker 2: [\(09:00\)](#)

So do you anticipate that the legal profession is going to go the way of the medical profession, where we're going to have lawyers all employed by some system?

Speaker 4: [\(09:09\)](#)

I think that's going to be a trend, but I think that's, that will take a long time. There still is a lot of local influence in the practice of law, right? I know we have, you know, big national firms, but for most consumers who need services, they need it in their local community. So it's going to be a while before we have, uh, I think those large, you know, ultra or large firms employing, you know, thousands of lawyers in hundreds of offices across the country.

Speaker 2: [\(09:42\)](#)

Well, let's talk about what is changing with consumers. And I must tell you, I was talking with a couple of my associates yesterday. And so, this is not my term, but they said they're like closer to the fortyish age in the millennial group. And they said, they're being referred to as the geriatric millennials. And I thought, what? And that came up in the context of, they like listening to Fleetwood Mac or something, but I do know them. We have a younger, just out of law school associate. Who's like, I plan on being able to get my will done through Instagram. I'm like what? That's never going to happen, or we're gonna use blockchain. So, you do have, and even with some of my clients who are older, I represented a lot of trust in estate work. And so, I have a lot of clients who are older, they're have different expectations about the way we deliver services. So can you speak to what's going on with consumers and particularly because I think lawyers sometimes think about what they want to deliver rather than what the consumer wants and how can you get that mindset shifted to really have an awareness of what consumers are looking for.

Speaker 4: [\(10:50\)](#)

I, I agree with him, Mary and I think the best example is we look at the way other services in the marketplace are being delivered and how those have evolved. Right? I mean, how many of us remember travel agents? Right, think about when you used to go and get your pharmaceuticals, you'd walk into a store and now you're getting them delivered online. You're getting your groceries delivered online, right? This, the, the, the millennials, that generation, uh, that is, uh, really started in 1981. It was people born from 81 to 97 is 87 million people, strong that's larger than the baby boomers were. And those people are now are just starting into their, biggest, consuming, like the time in their lives, where they consume, where they spend the most. And they're all used to being online. They're used to you know, getting services through a phone app or certainly through a computer. And so, we've got to look at that and say, are our systems, our traditional delivery methods within the legal profession? Are they there to meet those needs? And that's all, that's all about. Futureproofing, it's evolving your current systems and processes to meet the needs of consumers. And those consumer needs are changing.

Speaker 2: [\(12:20\)](#)

We are going to take a brief break from our episode for a word from one of our sponsors, Carson, private client

Speaker 5: [\(12:27\)](#)

Planning focuses on liquidity management and charges you a fee based on a percentage of your assets. But entrepreneurs typically invest in their business resulting in light liquidity. That requires a unique strategy at Carson private client. We provide a proactive and holistic strategy for building and protecting your wealth. Our mission is to alleviate the stresses and the burdens of coordinating all those financial strategies. Carson, private client will work with your current team of advisors to customize a strategy that manages all aspects of your life and wealth, giving you back the time to focus on what matters most complex needs require sophisticated solutions. Reach out to our office at 4027798989. To schedule your consultation. Investment advisory services offered through CWM LLC, and sec, registered investment advisor. Okay.

Speaker 2: [\(13:27\)](#)

Continue our episode. So, can you talk about the changes in technology in the legal profession and what you think has the legal industry kept up with technologies? That's something we really need to look at.

Speaker 4: [\(13:43\)](#)

So to some degree, are the technology we've kept up as a profession. Yes, we've been behind other places, but other areas of, of business in our areas of commerce. But I think more and more we've adapted and adopted the technology. We don't have the best technology, which is why the current, um, investment, the venture capital investment in legal technology really is going to be helpful because I think that's going to help us get better products. But at the end of the day, the technology we've been adopting really helps us deliver services. And I think what we need is more client-facing technology technologies that help the client gain access to information. And so that while they need a lawyer, they also want to use the technology to access what they need. And only to the extent that they need it. Right. So, if they want to download a document, they can do that.

Speaker 4: [\(14:44\)](#)

If they want to, you know, create that themselves or fill it in themselves fine. But if, then they also want to have a lawyer review that they can add that as a service and pay for that. Adam, there are very few firms that are able to do that today, but frankly, I think that's where we're headed over the next five, 10, you know, even 20 years, this isn't going to happen overnight. But if we're, if we're, you know, early on or mid-career, it is going to impact us and, and we need to make those changes starting now, rather than later site. Whoops, I'm way behind. Um, no one wants to spend that kind of time and money, then we need to invest it now. Okay.

Speaker 2: [\(15:28\)](#)

And I think part of it is, and in law practice and I do a lot of trust estate and tax work, right? There's a relational component. I think sometimes that attorneys think that, well, the relation, no component requires that I deliver services this way, when there's other ways to relate and to continue those relationships. Now I know that I'm hearing next week. Um, as we're recording this, I'm heading off to a legal technology conference. I'm personally fascinated with the artificial intelligence concept. And part of that is because so often if I'm talking to a client, I'll just use a simple example about a healthcare power of attorney, which frankly I'm actually passionate about, because I think what happens at the end of the life at the end of your life has a hugely big deal. But a lot of people look at that as a template.

Speaker 2: [\(16:14\)](#)

So we've looked at, okay, well, it's not really, this is about when you're dying. So, let's have a serious conversation. But at the end of the day, what I explained to the client is almost always the same. There are some differences in how they view it, must figure out, you know, what are their religious beliefs, if that applies bioethics, things like that. But I'm really, we're looking at the artificial intelligence in terms of those services, in the hopes that that'll give a little more client facing that we could take that information out. And instead of like spending an hour with me going through that, and sometimes our, it does a value in the relationship, but help deliver them some pieces of the information that they can think about differently with all these different forces at work. So, the changes in technology, the changes in the industry changes in the way consumers want services delivered. What can, what guidance can you give lawyers in terms of their practices?

Speaker 4: [\(17:10\)](#)

So on, on the most practical level, I would say now is the time to start building in time in your, uh, in your week in your monthly schedule, build in time to look at these changes and to, , identify places in your practice that that can be changed, make it an evolution. It doesn't need to be a revolution at the very end where you realize, oh my goodness. You know, I'm, I'm irrelevant now. Um, so it's building in time now, uh, to pay attention to these things and to say, where can we start in our, our practice and, um, out, you know, one, one way is to look at automating different parts of your practice. Uh, many lawyers are moving to automating their intake systems, using a number of different tools, um, to, you know, have clients set their own appointments to have electronic signing of their representation agreements and all through that process.

Speaker 4: [\(18:18\)](#)

But I think one of the areas that I'm really excited about when you talk about artificial intelligence are really, uh, what I see, you know, what are chat bots and what I'm calling paralegal, chat bots. And these are, you can build them now, uh, they're systems already, uh, that companies that do this after pattern and, uh, Joseph and a few others that are allow you to take what's in your brain and put it out, uh, into a computer system, uh, so that the computer can do this. So, for a paralegal bot, you could have a whole series of questions that you ask a client on intake for a trust and estate. And those chatbots can either the client can either respond by putting inputting that, you know, with a keyboard or they can speak that into the, into the computer. And so, they can spend that time doing that entire process, click a button, send it back to you or your paralegal to review it. So rather than you having to spend time, you know, 45 minutes or an hour with that interview, the computer has done it. And you only need to spend a little bit of time paralegal cleaning up the work or inputting it into your system, or maybe it automatically goes into your system. So, we're seeing those tools right now happen, and it's becoming familiar with those tools. You may not adopt it today, but you're looking at your systems. You're looking at your process and saying, this is something we're going to do in 20 20, 22 or 2023.

Speaker 2: [\(19:57\)](#)

And better yet is the part where we like to have that's those, that information come in from a source and actually then connect and become answers files in our document drafting system. Right. That's kind of the best-case scenario. So read, you have a quote from William Pollard on innovation. And I don't know if I pronounce that name correctly. So, let me know if I haven't, but I really like you to share that and your thoughts on innovation.

Speaker 4: [\(20:23\)](#)

Sure. William Pollard was the CEO of, of service master, which includes companies like Terminix, true green, Merry maids, a number of things like that. Um, and we've seen those companies' kind of grow in, in the consumer world. And he writes that the arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. And history is filled with success, stories of innovative and failures of those who just stood pat. So, it's a, it's a good lesson to say, let's not practice law. Like we really have for the last, you know, many, many decades let's look at how we can do this in the future. Because as we see with this generational change, that's coming upon us, the consumers are wanting that change. So, let's deliver it. Let's do it now so we can remain profitable and don't become irrelevant.

Speaker 2: [\(21:28\)](#)

So if you're a law firm that really has an embrace innovation yet, how can you get started?

Speaker 4: [\(21:35\)](#)

So, you know, there are a number of obstacles, right? We have ethical concerns, always this ethical. Can I do it this way? We have concerns about change. All, you know, lawyers. We don't like change. Um, we have, uh, you know, we're not sure all our partners are on board with us. If we're in a small firm, do some want to change others, don't you have to work through some of those issues. And there, they're workable. Um, but you need to then start with clients and really talk to them and say, what are the obstacles does deliver services the way you want them, right. Have some focus groups with some of your close clients maybe do a, a quick survey of potential clients in your market who, who maybe

haven't contacted your firm and find out, you know, what, how do they want their services to deliver? so you, you create this list of, of what obstacles really, or, or things that consumers want, right. And create that list and then say, what can we change in our practice? What of these things can we do to create a more inviting practice that is, um, delivering services in a way that more consumers want today?

Speaker 2: [\(22:59\)](#)

And I think it's true for any business, but for some reason, lawyers particularly seem to struggle to really ask clients those questions. And I think it's just, sometimes we don't really want to hear bad stuff about ourselves, or I'm not sure what that factor is. I know that even we, in terms of asking for reviews and asking for more feedback, it's like a little disconcerting, but extremely important. Cause I think like the amazon.com theory is, you know, there's the theory of be informed by your consumer, but Amazon actually says will be created by your consumer, you know, whatever you think of Jeff Bezos and supporting that. I'm not giving an opinion on, but they've done it. They've created a successful model by really saying, what do consumers want? So, you know, each of the suggestions you've given read can be topic of a whole podcast in and of itself. And a lot of these you've written articles or had columns on almost every topic that we've talked about. So, if we had to summarize here's the keys to successful innovation, what would that list look like?

Speaker 4: [\(24:02\)](#)

So I'd first say, yeah, you have to be open to ideas. You must be curious, right? its creativity is a part of innovation and we are creative lawyers are very creative. We come up with solutions for our clients all the time. We now must inject some of that for ourselves, right. Um, we can't expect success on every, every project or everything we undertake. Right. And we have to know that that the F the first time we try it, it may not be the best, but that doesn't mean we have to wait until it's perfect to launch it within the firm or to, you know, provide it to clients. Um, you know, Amazon was not the Amazon. It is today. A few years ago, we see the iterations of that. We can do that in our own firm. We must align our effort with reward.

Speaker 4: [\(24:55\)](#)

So those who are working on innovation and those who are making that extra effort to help make, ensure the future of the firm, they should be getting some of those rewards. Um, we need to learn about design thinking. I think if one thing people did right after this podcast is to, um, uh, Google design thinking and learn about what that process is for creative problem solving. I think that is we'll give people a clear roadmap and give them confidence that they can evolve into the future. And as we just talked about, rely on existing clients to help you innovate. Every firm has a few good clients that you can go to and ask them for help, because they've been with you a long time and they just may not have suggested the changes that you need, uh, and they can help you. And finally, don't let yourself fall into the trap that you look around and say, well, no one else is doing it. Why should I? And the simple answer is you want to control your future. You want to be in control. Don't let somebody else plan your fruit future for you. It's up to us as lawyers up to us as firms to make those adjustments, to meet the consumer demands that are here and it continue to evolve, uh, in the coming years.

Speaker 2: [\(26:20\)](#)

And I'm just going to highlight a couple of points. I think part of it is really engaging everybody at the law firm, getting them in, invested in innovation. Sometimes we're running through the day, busy worrying about billable hours and getting things done. But one of the points you make is it does take some time and you must invest that time. But I do know that over the last year, I did help many clients with business exits and certain estate planning strategies are related to that. And when they come out of those businesses, they're often looking for different advisors for a variety of reasons to advisors they didn't need before. And I can tell you that in at least three instances last year, the winning advisor was the advisor who had the best technology solutions. And that for me was eye-opening in the sense that it's like, wow, okay, consumers really do care about that. Well, any last thought read,

Speaker 4: [\(27:15\)](#)

Just one of my favorite quotes from David master is your billable time determines your income, but your non-billable time determines your future invest. Some of that non-billable time that you have into the future of your law practice.

Speaker 2: [\(27:31\)](#)

Well, thanks for being with us today. Read as we reached the end of our episode, I want to thank our sponsors, interactive, legal, and Carson, private client. That's all for now. Thanks for listening to this week's episode and stay tuned for our weekly releases,

Speaker 6: [\(27:51\)](#)

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