A Cloud-Based, Client-Centered Future for Law

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Last week, we wrapped up our first virtual ClioCon, the largest virtual legal conference to date, and by all accounts, the best one. And while this year was different from conferences of years past in so many ways, I still came away feeling energized, invigorated, and determined as ever to transform the practice of law, for good. Coming together virtually with 4,500 of the most innovative legal professionals in the industry, from every US state and over 40 countries, tends to have that effect.

Highlights from the conference are readily available from the Clio Blog and from top legal industry journalists such as Bob Ambrogi and Molly McDonough. You can also listen to interviews with some of our incredible keynote speakers on Clio's Daily Matters podcast—*New York Times* best selling author, and business and marketing visionary Seth Godin, and #1 *New York Times* best selling author of Grit and TED Talk Sensation Angela Duckworth. Be sure to check out my upcoming interview with civil rights attorney author, speaker, and producer Ben Crump on the podcast as well. Every talk at the conference gave lawyers and legal professionals the tools they need to succeed in our increasingly VUCA world.

VUCA, an acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, was first used by the US military to describe the nature of the world and challenges it faced after the end of the cold war. Today, it is often used in business and investment contexts to describe complex organizations, problems, or situations. We've been living in a VUCA world for some time now, and the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically increased this volatility and uncertainty. But with the right mindset, we can build a better normal for the legal industry than we had before—even if it's not what we envisioned in the past.

A VUCA Prime mindset, one in which the acronym shifts to vision, understanding, clarity, and agility, is what law firms need to succeed. By leveraging VUCA Prime, one can counter volatility with vision, uncertainty with understanding, complexity with clarity, and ambiguity with agility. VUCA Prime is a framework for adaptability, and adaptability is everything in today's environment. By steadying themselves and finding their own paths forward, lawyers can provide much needed legal services in this uncertain time, while also ensuring business success for their firms. And the best part is, there's no need to do this all at once. Constant, small steps in the right direction, led by a VUCA Prime mindset, will lead to an aggregation of marginal gains and outsized benefits for lawyers and legal professionals.

Let's take the rapidly deteroriating ability for consumers to afford traditionally priced and packaged legal services as an example. The *2020 Legal Trends Report* found that 61% of consumers said they would not be able to afford to deal with a legal problem, and 66% of consumers say that if they had to hire a lawyer, they would want to pay their fees on some sort of payment plan. Offering alternative fee structures is just one way that law firms could open themselves up to more business and more clients, at a time when the report also found that 23% of consumers say they expect to need a lawyer in the near future, compared to just 16% at the beginning of the pandemic.

The findings from this year's *Legal Trends Report* give us the data we need to make strong decisions, to create understanding out of uncertainty. 50% of consumers say they're more comfortable with technology now than they were before the pandemic, and 56% believe that most legal matters can be dealt with remotely, and would prefer to do it over a video call. Plenty of lawyers moved to the cloud at the start of the pandemic, but the future demands a much more fundamental shift. I believe that the future for law firms is a cloud-based and client-centered one.

Cloud-based and client-centered law firms leverage technology to provide excellent, effortless client experiences at every stage of the client journey. Rather than simply using cloud-based practice management software and one or two other cloud-based tools, successful firms of the (near) future will run their entire firms in the cloud from end-to-end, including client intake, onboarding, meetings, billing, and payments. They will also find new meaning or purpose for their offices if they choose to keep them. And, they'll put their clients at the center—a philosophy which, as I explain in *The Client-Centered Law Firm*, differs from putting clients first, in that it inspires law firms to focus on efficient, productive back-office processes *as well as* good client service. After all, each drives the other.

It's clear that things are changing—but lawyers can drive change towards a better normal for the industry, rather than being at the whims of the changing world around them. By responding to client needs and driving further adoption of the cloud, law firms will contribute to a better normal both within the legal industry and beyond. I look forward to continued collaboration with innovative lawyers and legal professionals as we continue on the path to build a better normal, and I can't wait to hear more stories of their success.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the

people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.