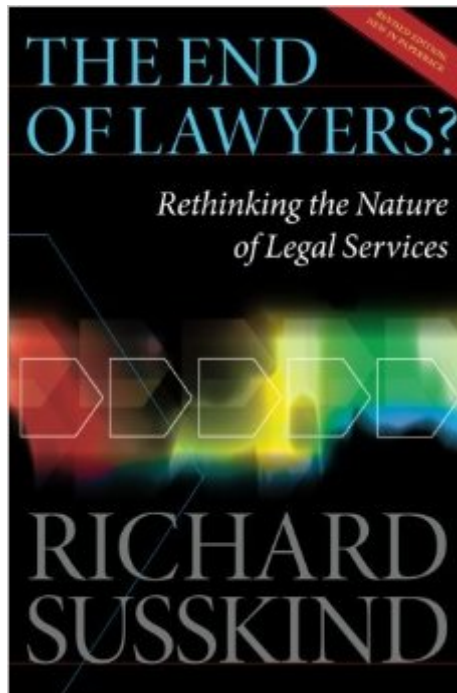# The End Of Lawyers?: Rethinking The Nature Of Legal Services

Synopsis

This widely acclaimed legal bestseller has provoked a tidal wave of debate within the legal profession, being hailed as an inspiration by some and as heresy by others. Susskind lays down a challenge to all lawyers, and indeed all those in a professional service environment. He urges them to ask themselves, with their hands on their hearts, what elements of their current workload could be undertaken differently - more quickly, cheaply, efficiently, or to a higher quality - using alternative methods of working. The challenge for legal readers is to identify their distinctive skills and talents, the capabilities that they possess that cannot, crudely, be replaced by advanced systems or by less costly workers supported by technology or standard processes, or by lay people armed with online self-help tools. In the extended new preface to this revised paperback edition, Richard Susskind updates his views on legal process outsourcing, courtroom technology, access to justice, e-learning for lawyers, and the impact of the recession on the practice of law. He analyzes the four main pressures that lawyers now face (to charge less, to work differently, to embrace technology, and to deregulate), and reveals common fallacies associated with each. And, in an entirely new line of thinking, Susskind argues that law firms and in-house departments will have four business models from which to choose in the future, and he provides some new tools and techniques to help lawyers plan for their future.Susskind argues that the market is increasingly unlikely to tolerate expensive lawyers for tasks (guiding, advising, drafting, researching, problem-solving, and more) that can equally or better be discharged, directly or indirectly, by smart systems and processes. It follows, the book claims, that the jobs of many traditional lawyers will be substantially eroded and often eliminated. Two forces propel the legal profession towards this scenario: a market pull towards commoditisation and a pervasive development and uptake of information technology. At the same time, the book foresees new law jobs emerging which may be highly rewarding, even if very different from those of today. The End of Lawyers represents a compelling vision of the future of the legal profession and a must-read for all lawyers. Indeed this book should be read by all those whose work touches on the law, and it offers much food for thought for anyone working in a professional environment.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Revised ed. edition (September 17, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199593612

Customer Reviews

This book is addictive! Susskind has done it again with an extremely engaging blend of advice; his fourth innovative book since Expert Systems in Law first appeared back in 1987.The End of Lawyers? Susskind tells us that the question mark in the title should hint that he is not out to bury lawyers but to investigate the future of the profession. And investigate he does. We are treated to eight chapters rife with observations, predictions, useful anecdotes, marvelously detailed case studies, and presented with the kind of insight that only an IT expert with Susskind's decades of experience could execute.The eight chapters include:1. Introduction - the Beginning of the End?2. The Path to Commoditization3. Trends in Technology4. Disruptive Legal Technologies5. The Future for In-house Lawyers6. Resolving and Avoiding Disputes7. Access to Law and to Justice8. Conclusion - the Future of Lawyers.This book points to a possible future in which conventional legal services will be much less prominent and explores how commoditization and IT will shape twenty-first century legal services. One of my favorite topics is the obviously disruptive force of websites now in play from which anyone may obtain legal guidance and advice. Susskind provides a masterful description of the evolution of disruptive technologies, the path to commoditization of legal services, and provides concrete advice - three keys to success when it comes to making money from online services.And should you think that this is of importance only to those lawyers who populate big law, you would be dead wrong. Susskind provides numerous examples of solo practitioner and small firm innovations.

Please note the question mark in the title.Susskind, a British information-technology consultant and futurist, is not necessarily predicting the end of the legal profession in this thought-provoking but overly long and convoluted book. He is predicting that within a couple of decades, lawyering will have changed in ways that the typical law firm partner of 2009 can hardly envision.The engine of change, as far as Susskind is concerned, is the Internet and information technology in general.

Susskind points to 10 "disruptive technologies" - among them ideas as prosaic as automated document assembly and as visionary as the provision of legal advice through open-source technology - that will alter the face of the profession."Information technology is now part of the universe of lawyers," Susskind writes. "It is not a parallel universe. Disruptive legal technologies are too important to be left to technologists ... they are applications of technology that challenge the old ways and, in so doing, bring great cost savings and new imaginative ways of managing risk."Susskind believes, for example, that except for the most customized, top-of-the-line engagements, legal work done by top firms in the United States and the United Kingdom will soon be largely standardized through the use of intelligent document assembly programs, the deployment of more paralegals and nonlawyers, and other innovations. Even high-end corporate work, he says, can benefit from standardization. The result will be lower costs to clients, a broader availability of legal services to the public, and possibly the end of the big law firm as we know it today.Susskind is quite aware of the cutting edge of legal marketing.

In The End of Lawyers? Susskind explores and extrapolates trends in information technology and attempts to visualize and present how these trends may affect lawyers. After all, lawyers at a basic level sell access to information, and computers hugely change how information is accessed and distributed/sold.The title, with its inclusion of "end" is meant to be provocative. Lawyers tend to be somewhat mired in the past and resistant to change. I'm a lawyer, and there is resistance to changes in the way legal services are prepared and sold. There is a view that legal services are somehow different and special.The first four chapters (The Beginning of the End?, The Path to Commoditization, Trends in Technology, and Disruptive Legal Technologies) lay out how information technology has affected other fields which were similarly resistant to change, and how provision of legal services has already changed in responce to new developments in computers. Susskind breaks down different aspects of legal services and discusses potential for changes in the way these are provided. For example, rote drafting is easy to picture as being done by computers. Even in a system where the lawyer physically types out each standard contract or pleading, that lawyer is probably using a form book and a form book translates directly into a cut and paste computerized form. However, even complicated anaylsis can be done differently. For example, medical diagnosis by computer can be done by having the patient answer yes or no to a series of questions. This works well even for complex conditions.

The End of Lawyers?: Rethinking the nature of legal services The Tech Contracts Handbook:

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