

2022 Trends Will Impact 2023 Law Firm Plans

It looks like 2023 is the year that “what is old seems new again.”

By Carol Schiro Greenwald | December 16, 2022 at 11:45 AM

We all agree that this year has seen tremendous changes in law firms’ use of technology, practice area adaptations and hybrid office hiring obstacles. I asked my panel how these forces are influencing their 2023 goals and strategies.

Technology

Technology-facilitated remote work is most often cited as having a major impact on lawyers’ practices.

- Appellate brief writer, [Zara Watkins](#), [On Point Expertise](#), tagged Zoom and Lexis AI enhancements as most impactful. “Zoom has allowed me to network more than I was able to before because it doesn’t require me to go away from my desk and commuting to a location. The AI enhancements to Lexis make my legal research faster and more accurate.” At the same time, she says the biggest challenge for 2023 is “is how to mentally process all of the new technology and tools coming at us nonstop.”
- [Kyle-Beth Hilfer](#), Hilfer Law, intellectual property and media/marketing lawyer, says: “The biggest impact comes from virtual connectivity. That is both a blessing and a challenge.”
- For [Barry Heyman](#), also in the entertainment/intellectual property and media practice area: “One of the technologies most impacting my law practice has been the ascent of legal marketplace companies which

connect lawyers with prospective clients. I've found it to be an effective way to connect with more clients." "As technology continues to accelerate, the scope of matters I handle continuously evolves. Keeping up with all the changes in technologies and business models can be challenging."

- For Sarah Gold, [Gold Law Firm](#), a business law attorney: "The biggest challenge in terms of my work processes is finding better tools to do things. I enjoy the challenge, but it can be a terrible time-sink." "[I am a]lways trying to find the next best thing to do workflows and tasks. It's the only way to keep up with the demands of my practice."
- Tracey Daniels, [Daniels and O'Connell, P.C.](#), a real estate law firm, says: "Changes in technology, and the corresponding changes to keeping information protected have been a big, but necessary expense. We spend a lot of time evaluating our technologies to make sure they are efficient as well as time training lawyers and staff to be vigilant about potential cybersecurity threats."

Virtual vs. In Person

"Transactional legal practice has become more virtual than ever. This has allowed me to run my practice in a far more flexible way than before," according to media/entertainment solo, Adam Weissman, [The Law Office of Adam N. Weissman](#).

COVID-required virtual offices meant the absence of commuting and traveling to in-person activities. Lawyers used the extra time to fit more into their day. Now, as [Tara Fappiano](#), special needs education law lawyer, says: "For the past two plus years, my work life has adjusted to and become dependent upon the convenience of taking meetings and handling litigation through a remote model. I have been able to meet

with clients and other attorneys, mediate, and network from the comfort of my office. That allowed me to fit much more into the average day. Now, as I am returning to in-person work, I need to set new expectations for clients, colleagues, and even family members about how much I can take on with this return to an in-person world.”

Alla Roytberg, [Roytberg Traum Law and Mediation, P.C.](#), a family and matrimonial law attorney, would agree. “I believe my biggest challenge in 2023 will be to successfully navigate the “blended” practice. Before COVID our professional lives were primarily in person. During the past two years we shifted to online. Zoom allowed us to include many more activities within a single day because all we needed to do was shift from one meeting to another on a screen. Right now, as in-person meetings become more common, it is challenging to find a balance between online and in-person meetings without sacrificing the number of clients and the increased participation in professional organizations that we built up during the virtual years.”

Practice Area Challenges

For Jim Landau, [Prince Lobel Tye LLP](#), a cannabis and business litigator: “Integrating my cannabis licensing practice into my pre-existing commercial litigation practice is challenging.” Sarah Gold is also entering the cannabis law field “as a complement to what I do now in the business transactional space, but it will probably lead to a good percentage of new work.”

Andrew Peskoe, Chairman, [Golenbock Eiseman Assor Bell & Peskoe](#), says: “The much-anticipated general slowdown in deal work has already caused broad layoffs at national firms. Our corporate group remains quite busy but I do see the drop in pipeline activity. So, the challenge for my team is to market our services intelligently, taking full advantage of

our substantial cost advantage at a time when existing and potential clients are most cost-sensitive.

“Similarly, because we are deeply engaged at a ‘business’ level in the industries we serve, we need to lean-in to sharing business opportunities and market insights with clients. At the same time, my partners need to remember that the normal downward turn of the broader economy is the time to again add clients—clients we will win by cost savings and fleet afoot service, and then keep in the next upturn because we do a great job.”

Amy Goldsmith, partner, Tarter Krinsky & Drogin, sees her practice mix changing in response to increasing tech-based threats to law firm security. She says: “My practice areas are intellectual property, privacy and cybersecurity. I’ve seen the latter become a larger piece of the pie and I think that will continue in 2023. Data breaches are rising rapidly and companies should plan to be proactive rather than reactive.”

Lawyers with court-focused practices face a variety of challenges. For Sarah Gold, “[t]he lack of in-person appearances cut into my per diem income as I wasn’t needed. That seems to be returning slowly.” Similarly, for Alan Schwartz, managing partner, Law Offices of Alan J. Schwartz, P.C. “Bail reform in New York, has destroyed our emergency arraignment practice since people no longer have the same need for their own attorney at arraignment.”

On the other hand, Charles-Eric Gordon, Investigative Counsel, (sleuth32@aol.com), anticipates an expansion in his practice as more people and businesses in a post pandemic return to normalcy, begin consulting their attorneys, especially with regard to Surrogate’s Court matters requiring the tracing of missing heirs, beneficiaries and witnesses to wills.

For Mark Seitelman, managing partner of Mark E. Seitelman Law Offices, a personal injury firm, COVID led to major disruptions due to remote work issues and a decrease in business. “Business losses and fewer newer new cases staring March 2020, and continuing. There have been long stretches with no new matters. During the height of the lock-up, there were no accidents because everyone was at home.” In addition, “[w]e have had an increase in clients who do not want to travel to the office. Therefore, my costs have gone up for outside investigators. Also, we have had to send employees to the clients’ home and hospital for the initial interviews and investigation.”

For Annamarie Bondi-Stoddard, managing partner, Pegalis Law Group, LLC, focused on medical malpractice cases, the court system lockdown created backlogs and complications. “The delay in trials have definitely had the most impact on our firm. Our biggest challenges for 2023 will be getting back up to speed on completing the pre-trial discovery for our existing cases that are in suit. Also, getting trial dates for the cases that have been trial-ready dating back to 2020.”

Hiring Difficulties

The papers are full of advice for companies trying to attract and keep employees. Law firms also have staffing issues. Joel Weiss, managing partner of Weiss & Arons, an intellectual property boutique, says: “Our biggest challenges in 2023 are finding qualified lawyers to do the work. We have rising client demand and not enough skilled attorneys to get the work done. We are hiring people from high-tech or life sciences disciplines and training them to become lawyers. That way we can satisfy our large work load in the short term and develop future generations of IP attorneys to continue to run the practice.” Similarly,

- Jim Landau says: “For 2023, our biggest challenges are the retention and hiring of talented and diverse junior attorneys.”
- Tracey Daniels says: “We would like to grow and hiring has not been easy.”
- Alan Schwartz is looking for ways to keep the staff engaged. He says: “I’m thinking about more social activities to engage the staff, and perhaps even our first firm retreat.”
- Joel Weiss’s challenge is “HIRING, HIRING, HIRING. Finding great people and getting them on our bus.”

Howard Schragin, partner at [Sapir Schragin LLP](#), an employment law firm, neatly summarizes the interaction of all these disruptions on the future of his firm. He says:

- Remote work has impacted the operations and culture of the firm. With the proliferation of remote work, the increased use of virtual meetings and expanded use of technology (electronic filing, virtual conferences, etc.) by courts, there is less need to come to the office just to sit at a desk, work on a computer and talk on the phone—all things that can be done remotely.”
- The need to understand and apply technology is critical to create process efficiencies.
- Competition has changed in character and scope. In the ten years since we started the firm, the number of firms in Westchester County practicing employment law has probably doubled. Couple that with the increased competition from outside of Westchester County and the level of competition for legal services in the employment law field is unprecedented. Because of technology (emails, text messages, virtual

conferencing, digital marketing) the scope of competition has expanded beyond Westchester County to the entire New York metro and tri-state area. Our firm, based in White Plains, loses more potential clients to firms in the City than we do to firms down the street.

- Difficulty in hiring talent. The firm's biggest challenge is to get the proper staffing in place to ensure that our work is getting done effectively and efficiently and by the appropriate staff.

Conclusions

The major trends impacting the legal world—technology advances, the ability to work productively while virtual, designing a successful hybrid office, the rising independence of employees and COVID-related delays in the court system—have challenged both solos and small firm leaders. They are adapting by focusing on the post-COVID opportunities to resume in-person activities while still using virtual technology to save time and money.

Boutiques are looking to add new services related to their core services. Court-focused practices are looking to eliminate their case load back-up. It looks like 2023 is the year that “what is old seems new again.”

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<https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2022/12/16/2022-trends-will-impact-2023-law-firm-plans/>