Redefine your practice of law and be open to the possibilities.

Practice 2.0
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Change is not just coming, it’s here. Lawyers listen with trepidation and no small amount of angst to news about LegalZoom and Avvo providing low-cost legal services and to news that limited license legal technicians (LLLT’s) are authorized in some states. It is particularly frustrating to struggling solos, to new lawyers seeking and perhaps not finding work, clients or positions, and well, to many others. But does it have to be?

Everyone enters the practice of law with differing expectations. For some, the lure of big firm practice with its commensurate big pay check is the reason they became lawyers; there is certainly nothing wrong with that. We are a profession of variety – we need all kinds of lawyers in a variety of settings. But what if you are not of that mindset; what if your desire to practice law and provide service to your clients is paramount . . . then isn’t it frustrating to think of WalMart being the next big law firm? Particularly when you know that you are available, skilled and willing?

Think about redefining your expectations of the practice of law. Do lawyers have to bill $200 an hour or more? Do lawyers need a brick and mortar office and the traditional trappings of a law office? For some yes, but if you don’t need that, you are poised to fill a need that exists for access to justice for those who think that they cannot afford a lawyer and build your business in a new way.

But how? Am I suggesting that you go broke providing pro bono services to all? No, of course not. You have bills to pay, families to support, and perhaps student loans to repay. Lawyers today have a number of tools at their disposal that make lowering the cost of legal representation possible. By leveraging the wonders of technology, the ability to work from almost anywhere (but please, not Starbucks), and using alternative fees, it is possible to provide lower cost legal representation in a variety of practice areas. The
ability to use document assembly software and provide limited scope representation provides an opportunity to build a practice that will weather the LegalZoom storm.

Let’s be realistic. You will still have to charge clients. You may, however, be able to charge less while still making enough money to live, and live well. You will need to carefully manage your time and be clear with your client about what they will get for their fee. You will need to be realistic about how much you can do “on a shoestring” while still providing competent legal representation. Every case may not be one in which limited scope representation is possible; every case may not be the one in which using document automation will work; but some will be. Will you become rich? No. But will you “make a living” and start building a practice? Yes, you will.