

Change is Afoot

Forging a better profession for us all



John T. Berry

No one needs to tell you that our profession is changing, and at an ever-increasing pace. It would be nice if those changes fit into nice neat compartments, which could be organized squarely within each Bar section or committee. It would also be great if we all could agree on the direction we should take on these forces, which are beginning to dramatically affect our professional lives. Not only will that not happen, it is becoming more evident as each day passes that many of these changes are out of our control, though not out of our possible influence.

Multidisciplinary Practice (MDP), Multi-Jurisdictional Practice (MJP), Unauthorized Practice of Law (UPL), revolutions in technology, economic globalization, greater time demands on us all, and even new pressure on each branch of our government, all unite to make for a challenging and exciting future. We can do what lawyers do best—grab these issues and help shape our profession's future or wait and let others do the shaping.

A difference of opinion on these important subjects is to be expected. In fact, those different perspectives will allow us to learn, grow, and change in a positive way. This leap into a new profession will not be easy, but we at the Bar are trying, with your help, to put in place an organizational structure and a positive attitude to help you be an integral part of these decisions.

Some of you may be thinking that there already has been too much change in our profession. "Thank you very much, but I've had enough." Well, if we have lost our way—as some would suggest—in regards to integrity, competence, and a sense of civility and public service, then we can regain it if we want it badly enough. I sure do!

Every move we make surely will affect other parts of our profession. Do you happen to still have one of those Rubik's Cubes around the house? Like all difficult puzzles, each move you make causes future success to be more or less likely. In our changing profession, each decision we make about what UPL cases we prosecute, what ways we relate to other professions, what ways we prepare law students for the real world, all affect the others.

Our Bar is in the midst of seeking input from every source possible so that we will have a better idea of everyone's position on these important forces influencing our profession. It is clear that we must do more than just react to the "crisis *du jour*" (as my good friend Bill Smith once described Bar work).

It seems just as important to take the time and energy to have a coordinated approach to all those important questions facing us. Maybe then we can reduce the number of times we have to deal with daily crises.

This approach is akin to the use of a zoom lens: one moment you are focused on fine details and the next you move back to see all the surrounding landscape. It is high time to spend a little more time on the landscape.

In upcoming articles we will discuss some of these major issues facing our Bar. We will be asking for your ideas and for your help

in forging the best approach to each question. I would think we will hear many different suggestions and at times we may hear a resounding "stay away, it is none of your business." I look forward to the dialogue and hearing your viewpoints. Any thoughts on UPL? MDP? MJP? NFL (oops). Send them our way now as we discuss them in more detail.

By the way, is there anyone out there, or more likely anyone's child, who can help me get this Rubik's Cube back to its original state? ♦

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Share your thoughts/concerns

Please forward comments to voice@mail.michbar.org