



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Eric Zimmerman

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions questions that affect us all.

Eric has been a member of the Loudoun County Bar Association since 1975. He has served that organization as Secretary and as past member of the Judicial Selection Committee. He also has been appointed by the local judges to serve as a Commissioner in Chancery for the Court. He currently serves on the Board of Governors for the Real Property Section of the Virginia State Bar.

Eric served as President of the Greater Loudoun Babe Ruth World Series at which time the National World Series for 16-year olds was held in Virginia for the first time. As a result of that effort he was named 1999 Loudoun County Citizen of the Year.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: The ease of acquiring and conveying information has made a significant change to the practice of law. Rather than having to maintain an extensive library of legal publications and treatises, one can access the same and more via the internet. Secondly, the speed with which one can communicate with others is astounding. When I began practicing law over 35 years ago, other than a telephone exchange, the only means of communicating a thought or position, whether to the client or to an opposing attorney, was by mail. That was accelerated by the facsimile machine, and now email gives instantaneous contact.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: In some regards I see a lack of civility. This is not always the case and in fact in the environment in which I operate (mostly on a localized level) the legal professionals with whom I deal are generally gracious. However, I am seeing more occasions that an "ends justifies the means" approach is adopted. Secondly, the internet is our best friend and our worst enemy. All too often lay persons feel they can handle their own legal matters without the assistance of an attorney. (See, for example, legalzoom.com)

Q: How will globalization affect your professional area in the near term?

A: Aside from the matter of access to information and communication, I do not believe "globalization" will impact my practice. Again, my practice is more local.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: I fear society will continue to erode the sense of value the public feels it receives from competent legal advice. As mentioned above, since so much information is available to a computer user, some of which information may be in error, people will avoid utilizing an attorney in situations that require one. On the other hand, my profession has to figure out a way to make access to such advice more affordable. Sadly, legal service has gotten too expensive for the ordinary person or family.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: My comment perhaps is not much different from most professions. The older I get the more I realize the irreplaceable value of experience. Law schools continue to churn out new attorneys, all of whom believe they are a gift to society (comes with the narcissistic territory), but they have no idea truly how to advise their clients, complete with nuances and credible arguments.