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You say you want an Internet revolution

"The Internet has been the most fundamental change during my lifetime and for hundreds of years. Someone the other day said, 'It's the biggest thing since Gutenberg,' and then someone else said 'No, it's the biggest thing since the invention of writing.'"

— Rupert Murdoch

To many lawyers, the Internet and the technologies that have sprung forth from it are mere child's play.

Those lawyers seem unable, or unwilling, to grasp that a fundamental shift has occurred, one that affects every aspect of every business, including their own. Those lawyers are ignoring reality, to their detriment.

It is indisputable that Internet-based technologies are changing the world as we know it at an unprecedented rate. Lawyers must adapt and realize that this rapidly changing phenomenon can, and is, affecting the practice of law.

In New York, for example, lawyers must learn how to file pleadings electronically. E-filing is now mandatory for certain types of cases in certain counties in New York, as explained by one of my co-panelists at the New York State Bar Association's annual meeting, Jeff Carucci, the statewide coordinator for e-filing.

As he explained it, if you have access to a computer and an Internet connection, you must e-file your documents. E-filing is mandatory for certain types of cases in the affected counties and, essentially, there are no exceptions.

The mandate should be an eye opener for most New York attorneys — clearly change is afoot if the state Office of Court Administration is embracing e-filing. The Internet no longer can be ignored by lawyers in New York.

Two Internet technologies predicted by many leading pundits to be of paramount importance in the coming year are social media and cloud computing. I wholeheartedly agree with that prediction; however, it's possible my view is slightly skewed since I'm writing a book about each of those topics, as they relate to the legal field. Both will be published by the American Bar Association by the end of the year.

Nevertheless, I hold firm in my belief that both technologies are game changers on a grand scale. Neither would exist if not for the Internet. They are part of the Internet revolution, and are



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changing the world as we know it.

Social media is changing the ways in which people communicate, connect, create and collaborate. Participation in social media is growing at an exponential rate and people of all ages are now participating. My 84-year-old grandfather recently joined Facebook. It's for that very reason businesses large and small are taking notice of social media and engaging with their customers on social media platforms.

Just last week I posted on Twitter that I was enjoying JetBlue's free wifi hotspot while waiting for my flight. Moments later I received a non-automated response on Twitter from JetBlue. Now that's customer service!

Similarly, cloud computing is changing the ways in which business is being conducted, allowing small businesses to compete with much larger ones. It levels

the playing field by making it possible for small businesses to share computing resources rather than having local servers or personal devices to handle applications.

In my opinion, cloud computing and social media are not passing fads, rather they represent a fundamental shift in the ways information is collected, processed and disseminated.

In recent years I've had countless conversations with lawyers about the technologies and have expressed my belief that they are game changers. Much of the time, my assertions are met with skepticism, and a fairly universal look that can be described only as mocking cynicism. The lawyers who respond in that fashion then haughtily inform me these, and other Internet technologies, are irrelevant to their practices.

A handful of lawyers, however, respond with curiosity. They ask questions and inquire about additional sources of information.

Those lawyers — the curious ones — will survive and thrive in the Internet age, regardless whether they choose to incorporate social media or cloud computing into their practice. Their willingness to learn about emerging technologies, rather than defensively dismissing them outright, makes all the difference.

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