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## LegalLOOP

# Can LexisNexis pivot with changing technology?

I'm writing this article as I sit in LaGuardia airport, waiting for my flight back to Rochester after spending a few days in New York City compliments of LexisNexis.

While here, I attended the LexisNexis Influencer's Summit, a conference sponsored by LexisNexis that was attended by legal journalists and bloggers. The morning sessions focused on the company's analysis of the legal market and an overview of its big picture strategy, while the afternoon sessions featured the latest updates to existing products and descriptions and demos of the company's newest software products.

I really enjoyed this conference, primarily because it was a synergistic meeting of very interesting, smart people with a common interest in legal technology. There were the knowledgeable and enthusiastic LexisNexis folks, e-discovery experts, legal technology journalists, law librarians, knowledge management specialists and more.

One of the best parts of the conference was that it facilitated a wonderful exchange of knowledge and ideas. The discussions that occurred between attendees and presenters throughout the day offered many valuable insights and perspectives about the future of the legal profession and how technology will be used in the practice of law.

Of particular interest to me as I listened to the various LexisNexis presentations was how this huge corporate entity that has long been a mainstay in the lives of lawyers planned to compete and maintain its foothold in the face of unprecedented change in the legal marketplace — change driven largely by a vast array of new technologies which offer legal consumers more options, combined with a depressed global economy.

My overall impression was that, for the most part, the folks at LexisNexis had a very good grasp on the effects of technology and how to best position their company in the next decade to take advantage of its core products while innovating to create new ones. For example, one of the most intuitive things the company is doing is maximizing and increasing the utility of one of its greatest

strengths — its impressive collection of content, ranging from information databases and case law to substantive analysis and news-related data.

So, in order to maximize its investment in content, LexisNexis has recently acquired companies such as Law365, which are focused on providing very specific types of content to users. In other words, LexisNexis understands that content is king.

To that end, the company is wisely organizing many of its newest software releases around the idea of making relevant information from its content databases readily accessible and available to legal practitioners through software using predictive coding and analysis. In a future article, I'll discuss in depth one of its more impressive new offerings of this type — software that provides a one-stop shop for everything that a specific type of litigator could need.

However, even though this company is innovating, I did see vestiges of the “this is how we've always done it” school of thought, most notably when it came to their flagship legal research products — an area where there is a decided amount of competition from low-cost or free alternatives such as Fastcase or Google Scholar and thus in this arena, innovation and flexibility is a must for LexisNexis to compete.

Specifically, when we were shown a demo of Lexis Advance, their newest, completely revamped legal research platform, it was explained that users could purchase a limited 90-day right to access a case or cases outside of their plan for “only” \$18-25 a pop, depending on the case. Once the 90 days expired, the user could save a pdf of the case, but would lose access to the updated Shepard's information related to the case.

This was somewhat perplexing to me since the purported rationale for charging for the case when it was most likely available for free elsewhere online was so that the user could access the propri-

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etary Shepard's data.

This nickel and dime 'em to death strategy is a remnant of the days when Lexis and Westlaw had virtual monopolies in the legal research sphere. It makes no sense nowadays given the low cost research alternatives now available and the fact that lawyers — especially solos and small firms — are struggling to stay afloat in this ailing economy. This tack is likely to simply engender resentment from loyal LexisNexis users who have committed to spending a significant amount of their allotted overhead on the company's legal research product.

So, rather than eking out every last dollar from these already cash-strapped solo and small firm lawyers, why not acknowledge the reality of the 21st century — that they have other choices? Instead of interrupting their research flow by forcing them to go elsewhere online to search for a free version of a case or making them resort to begging in an online forum for someone who has access to the case to send them a copy (something that happens

often), I would suggest allowing users unrestricted access to a small number of cases outside of their plan each month. Reward them for their loyalty; don't alienate them with outdated money-making tactics.

That criticism aside, overall I was quite impressed with the direction LexisNexis is headed, especially when it comes to their innovative software products that draw upon their well-rounded content — making it easily accessible and useful to targeted legal practitioners, as I'll discuss in a future article.

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